

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

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ISSUE 85



LUCID

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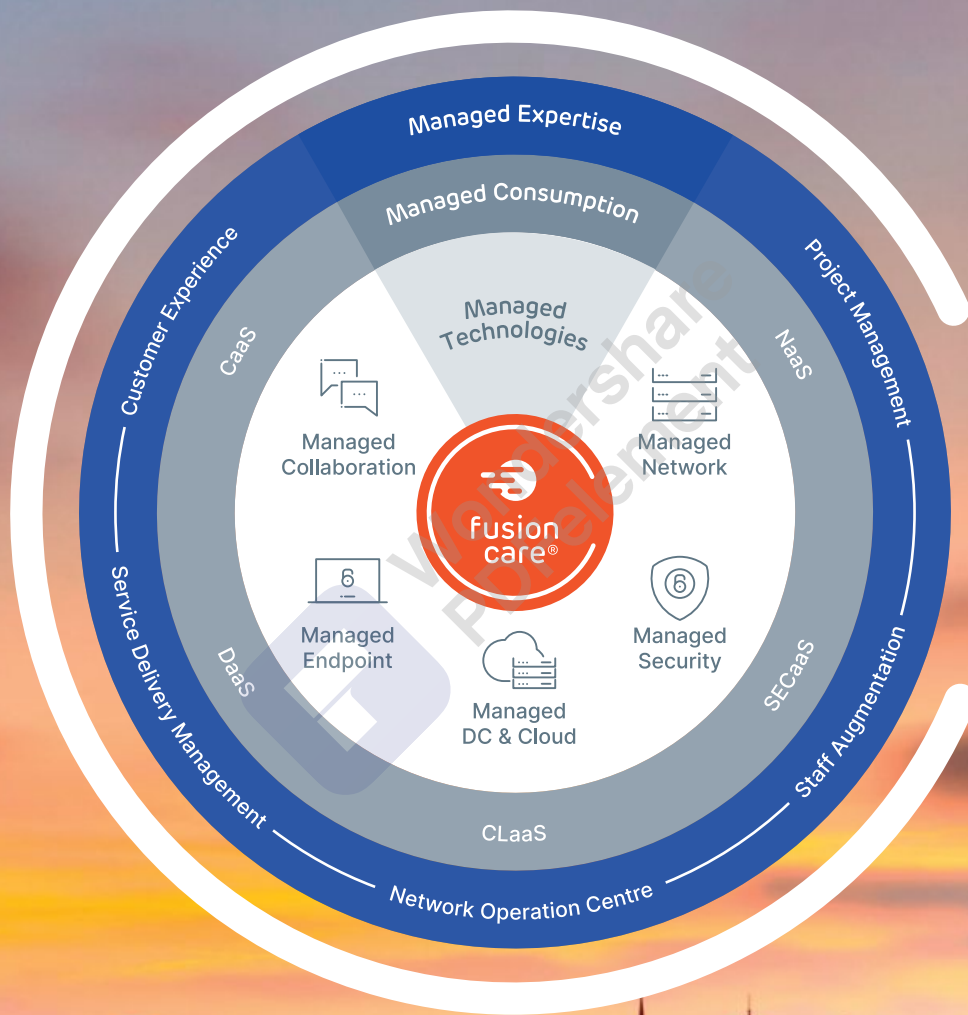


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FOREWORD

Welcome to the November edition of Northern Insight.

We are delighted to bring you another vibrant issue full of features, business commentary and articles pertaining to our wonderful region.

Our cover stars are Lucid Technology Solutions, the longest established technology company in Teesside who have constantly added to their service portfolio to meet changing customer needs.

We also showcase the Asian Business Connexions Anniversary Dinner celebrating the significant and sustained contribution of the Asian community from across the North East.

Look out also for some great pictorial features from some sparkling business events, whilst on our travels, we visit Jesmond's new Lovage restaurant and also make a welcome return to Low Fell's Rosa 12.

Issue 85. Another landmark on the Northern Insight journey.
We hope all readers find something to interest and enjoy.

M.J. Grahamslaw

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

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Employee ownership secures a bright future for JDDK

Employees of Newcastle-based JDDK Architects are now owners of the multi award-winning practice following a 100% share transfer to an Employee Ownership Trust (EOT).

EOT's were introduced in the UK in 2014 after a government review identified that employee-owned companies were often more resilient and sustainable. John Lewis is probably the most well-known employee-owned company where the EOT model provides for each employee to be a part-owner of the business.

At JDDK Architects the practice is still run by the current management team, whilst the company is owned by the EOT with its trustees making decisions which are in the best interests of the employees who are the beneficiaries of the trust.

Nicky Watson, JDDK Director, commented,

"Like many forward-looking organisations, we are aware of the challenges of not only increasing employee engagement but also opportunities for succession and have taken advice from many sources, including our accountants, Haines Watts, who have helped set up the EOT alongside our solicitors, Muckle LLP."

"As a very close-knit, collaborative team of creative people, this felt a natural progression for us and continues in the spirit of equality and professional innovation which is already embedded in our practice. The EOT splits ownership from management which removes potential barriers to succession, ensures retention of our business ethos and values, increases the influence employees can have on the business and creates opportunities for greater reward for their skills and efforts."

"Importantly, to our clients, contractors and fellow consultants, it will be very much business as usual, dealing with the same individuals and teams as before and we've actually received a very positive reaction from those we have informed."



Marine Engineer Gives Time to Maritime Volunteers

Glen Jones, a marine engineer who has worked all over the world on some of the largest vessels afloat has relocated his business to the North East and pledged his expertise and support to a local nautical charity.

Glen has had a career spanning more than 30 years in the marine industry. His career from sea to shore took him through deep sea voyages, shore side placements in Singapore, Cyprus and latterly Dubai, where he worked for Drydocks World Dubai as Ship and Rig Repair Director.

Now, based in North Tyneside, his new business venture DOCKSPEC Marine provides global practical expertise to the marine, offshore and renewable sectors. He also provides inspection, financial specifications, and expert opinion to the underwriting and loss adjusting sectors.

Researching his local area led him to the Northumbria Unit of nautical charity, The Maritime Volunteer Service who operate two small vessels on the Tyne.

"Seeing the work these volunteers were doing on the river, I wanted to be involved in helping the community. I thought it would be beneficial to help them with their vessel compliance and specifications for keeping them seaworthy, safe, and immediately operational," said Glen.

John McDonald, Deputy Head of Northumbria Unit was delighted that Glen had offered the support of DOCKSPEC Marine to the MVS.

"Having a qualified marine engineer to give us advice is priceless, and we look forward to learning from Glen's experience of working with vessels all over the world."



Performing Arts Students Take a LEAD from Sunderland Training Provider

A former PE teacher with a passion for developing the educational needs of children and young adults has fulfilled a business ambition by securing a national contract to make the performing arts and sport more accessible to all.

Sunderland based Steve Mann set up LEAD Education in 2016, creating educational opportunities and quality assurance programmes which made a real difference to

the lives of young people.

Initially building his programmes based on his PE and sport related background, Steve brought LEAD Education into vocational and employability training before seeing a gap in the market for producing quality performing arts qualifications and training.

In 2018, Steve targeted dance schools across the region, building up his cohorts and a reputation for delivering and managing the quality assurance of the BTEC education programme. One of LEAD's first clients was Sunderland based Worx Academy who recognised that the model that Steve was operating based on sport could be successful with the performing arts.

"We are not only creating a great learning environment but real opportunities for career development and I'm very proud of each of my students and the incredible team helping them succeed," said Steve. This new contract from SCL Education has been a game changer and I'm looking forward to helping as many young people as I can live their dream."



Promotional Merchandise Company hits Ruby milestone

A family run, North East based, promotional merchandise company is celebrating an impressive milestone with the celebration of 40 years in business.

Pro-Ad, well known for its huge choice of products, was set up by Carlo Nardini in 1982 providing bespoke product solutions. As the customer base has grown to cover a wide range of industries across the UK, so has the company that now boasts seven staff (soon to be eight), over 100,000 products sourced from the UK or around the world when required and an annual turnover of £1.5m.

Wife Helen and son Loren have been instrumental in the success of the company over the years

alongside Carlo, having become good employers and a team synonymous with quality and first-class customer care. Carlo said: "Pro-Ad has allowed me and the team to make good on our passion of finding the best promotional products and branded clothing solutions. Lots of our team have been with us for many years, and the company's growth, success and longevity are testament to their hard work, so I want to thank them all.

"I would also like to thank our customers, particularly those loyal ones who have been with us through the years. It is an exciting time as we look to the future, but for now, we need to celebrate what we have achieved."

To celebrate the milestone the team will be having a celebratory dinner, have been raising funds for charities in the community, and are resurrecting their annual merchandise show, which hasn't been run for the last four years, to be held in March 2023.



Sintons Extend Newcastle Eagles Sponsorship

Sintons has continued its support of the North East's most successful sports team through reaffirming its commitment to Newcastle Eagles for the 2022-23 season.

As the most successful team in British Basketball League (BBL) history, the Eagles are a huge name on the national and international sporting stage with their multi-purpose arena home also now globally renowned for hosting world-class events.

The basketball club it remains committed to its North East roots, with the Eagles Community Foundation supporting schools and thousands of children in the region who take part in sport and physical activity.

The law firm has also supported the club and foundation with legal work, including the landmark move into its new home on the city's Scotswood Road, overseeing the construction and corporate aspects for plans to become reality.

Now, Sintons has affirmed its status as a corporate supporter of the BBL team for another season.

"The Eagles are a huge asset to the North East, both through their unrivalled levels of sporting success and also the commitment they make to the local community through the Eagles Foundation," says Christopher Welch, managing partner of Sintons.

"It has been a great privilege to work with the Eagles team for a number of years now, supporting them in the development of the club and its infrastructure - not least through the major investment of creating a new stadium, which has also been highly significant for Newcastle as a city - and giving them our backing on the court.

"We are delighted to commit our support for another season and look forward to attending matches at the Vertu Motors Arena and cheering the Eagles on to yet more success."



Opencast's Mike O'Brien 'Honoured' by Entrepreneur of the Year win

Mike O'Brien, co-founder of independent Tyneside tech consultancy Opencast, has been named as the Entrepreneur of the Year in the prestigious annual Entrepreneurs' Forum Awards.

Mike's award win was confirmed on Friday 7 October at a black tie awards dinner and ceremony at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead.

Mike, was one of five winners on the night to receive their awards from host compere Alfie Joey.

EF's Entrepreneur of the Year award recognises an experienced entrepreneur "who has shown incredible resilience and strength, particularly this past year, to lead their business to outstanding success through innovation, teamwork and leadership skills".

Commenting on Mike's award win, the Entrepreneurs' Forum said: "Mike co-founded Opencast in 2012 and has grown the business into one of the largest tech companies in the North East. Opencast has been named in the GP Bullhound Top 100 list no less than five times in the award's nine years and is on track to become a future FTSE 250 company."

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RECRUITING SALES ROLES



HOW TO HIRE SALESPeOPLE – AND WHAT TO AVOID...

Recruiting has never been more challenging and whilst not a recruiter myself, I am one of the many recruiting for new roles in my organisation. Since we launched, the labour market has seen significant changes, the economic climate has shifted considerably and the expectation from both sides has changed. Our organisation has gone through a number of reiterations as we all have, our principles when hiring sales professionals has whilst adapted, remained steadfast.

The default method for an organisation looking to grow is to hire a sales professional, often one with their own contacts in the industry – still referred to as a ‘little black book’. This individual often comes with an eye watering remuneration package, growing expectations, a fundamental dislike for using a CRM system and can vastly over promise and unfortunately then under deliver after an expensive twelve month-plus stint.

The counter opposite is to grow your own, hire without experience and train up but this takes time and if you’re in the mindset of growth – patience is not something many of us possess.

So, whilst I can feel your eye rolls, you sharing stories of poor performing sales people, stories about things that can only be discussed over a large glass of red (and believe me I have my own!) just give me a second...

We ultimately hire salespeople to help grow our business, be it a particular market or sector. We have and be honest with ourselves here, and check our expectations are not wildly unrealistic – we expect immediate results often in a market where our brands are unknown and unproven. We expect a sales professional to defy the odds and achieve what we couldn’t in a matter of weeks. And we expect them to do this often without guidance, without the tools to be effective, efficient, productive and generate a return on investment within the first quarter.

Side note – when recruiting, if a sales professional with experience ever asks you what ROI is – run! (yes this happened to me).

Like with any role, we’ve got to give our people a fighting chance to achieve what we envision. We have to provide the tools, the processes, the systems – the infrastructure to succeed for it really is in both our interests that they do!

We launched The Just Williams Sales Academy to professionalise the sales industry, creating a standard for sales professionals because we

all have 'those' stories – my other business is a sales and marketing business so believe me I know! Start with the end in mind – if this is your first hire, and that can be the most challenging as often you don't have a tried and tested platform to review; have a business plan of 12 – 36 months, some clearly defined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a profiled target audience/client profile/ideal customer. Ensure your sales professional's role is well defined and the targets set are realistic, you have a customer journey mapped out, an established CRM system and a marketing team ready and waiting. If you don't have this – outsource or create it asap!

Shortlisting – we have a multistage approach to shortlisting and now using a blind recruitment technique. Our interviews consist of four parts from online, to vlogs to face to face and finally an internal assessment. Thorough, yes, essential, absolutely. Keep your eyes peeled for those who have role hopped, those without any form of social media presence – in sales in this era, taking an omnichannel approach is simply essential. References are of course essential and do your research!

Why not send your questions to your candidate before they arrive? Or ask them to produce a vlog as part of the final interview process and combine this with an internal assessment – covering all bases.

Interviews - We have a front desk at Fusion Hive and will always pre warn the Facilities Manager if we have interviewees coming in to ensure they engage with everyone in the building in an equal manner, to see how they interact and ensure they are communicative in multiple ways (cats out the bag – I'll keep you posted how are next lot get on!) I always like to ask questions surrounding current reading material, ask them to discuss their Continued Professional Development plan, voluntary and charitable activities, where their networks lie and how they've achieved returns. Do they have a mentor and who do they turn to for guidance. Producing a 30/60/90-day plan at the final stages provides

you and them with a clear overview of their abilities to plan ahead and a ready-made action tracker and overview of activities.

I am not a professional recruiter so to those who are, I apologise but I do know what makes a great salesperson and whilst haven't always got it right in my own organisations, have learnt how to spot those who possess what it takes (well, most of the time!).

With up to 66% of time spent on administrative related activities (Hubpot, 2021) it's vital you provide the system, process and administrative support where possible to enable your salesperson to do what they should do best. So be prepared to answer questions from them as well. Hiring a sales professional requires time, effort and resource but they could be your most valuable asset. You are looking to grow your business and this person possesses the key to enable that.

But what happens if you don't have the infrastructure, if you don't know your future market, haven't got all your systems and processes mapped out, or can't afford an experienced professional or maybe you've had a bad experience? Hiring is not always the option, and, in this market, no one would blame you for considering alternatives. So, can you train up existing members of your team or outsource your sales provision?

Even if you have hired someone and you are looking to succession planning on a customer service and sales front – without doubt THE most essential element of your sales strategy is to ensure continued professional development of your customer-facing team. The way we engage with people is changing, the expectation of our customer is growing, and the market is getting tougher. Investing in the development of these individuals is crucial to both their success and that of your organisation.

Hiring and training come hand in hand – we have a range of face to face, online and mentoring programs to support your sales process, sales professionals and sales managers. From 2023 we will be launching monthly

webinars and roundtables for those looking to learn, connect and grow within the customer service and sales industry.

If you'd like more information, get in touch or follow us on socials to find out more. If you are recruiting and looking for advice, we are always happy to help so do reach out.

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

“

...Why not send your questions to your candidate before they arrive? Or ask them to produce a vlog as part of the final interview process and combine this with an internal assessment – covering all bases...





COVER STORY

LUCID – EASILY UNDERSTOOD; COMPLETELY INTELLIGIBLE OR COMPREHENSIBLE

Established for over 33 years, the Lucid team has grown from two to over 20. The growth and ever-changing dynamics of technology has allowed the company to expand and focus on the provision of a wider range of support and services.

But what makes Lucid...Lucid?

As the longest-established technology company in Teesside, Lucid has consistently added to and grown its service portfolio to meet changing customer needs. You only need to consider the rapidly changing working world we have all seen in the last two and a half years to see why that has been such an integral part of the company, and its clients' growth.

Long term, strategic partnerships with clients such as Barrier Ltd, Cleveland Cable and Superlec are perhaps the simplest way to demonstrate the quality of service that Lucid provides across the board, trusted with the crucial backbone of some huge businesses who need their systems to function, and most new contracts have come about as a result of word-of-mouth feedback from existing customers.

But perhaps the real, stand-out characteristic which sets Lucid apart from its competitors, is its penchant for being just that. Lucid.

The sales team doesn't simply sell things, but works on a process of understanding what its customers need and explains things in a language that non-technical people can understand. Like many industries, IT is a minefield of abbreviations, technical terms and basically – jargon. So no snake oil salesmen here... the team will always explain the pros and cons of any technology choice, so the customer always knows what they are buying, and most importantly – why.

With a growing team, client base and service offering, Lucid is a partner that can be relied on. It is one of the few IT companies in the UK with a female director on the board,

it delivers all services in house (whereas many providers will outsource some), and over the last 33-plus years, the company has deservedly earned an excellent reputation.

From cyber security solutions that protect your business, managed IT support, connectivity, mobile phones, VOIP, cabling and so much more – Lucid can even provide software and web design services which make the company the ideal partner.

Managing Director, Paul Alsop explains: "We don't believe in long term contracts and 'trapping' customers. The businesses we work with stay with us because they want to – they understand the value and we build relationships which keep them fully operational. In most instances, in the event of an IT hiccup we will have seen it and also resolved it before the client even realises there was ever a problem. It's just what we do."

But 'lucid' doesn't just refer to explanations of the solutions offered. The company has an ethos of transparency, honesty and simply making life easier.

Paul continues: "When you run a business, you need to be able to work. Any down time is an issue, and that's where a reliable and strategic partner comes into play. From the get-go, we discuss not just where a customer is now, but also where they want to be, enabling us to design bespoke IT solutions that are scalable and can meet a business' needs as it grows. Communication is key."

Lucid is based in Norton and currently employs over 20 people, with plans to recruit several more roles in the coming months. The company provides managed IT and telecoms services to businesses of all sizes from one man bands to large organisations, with the aim of helping companies simplify and take control of their IT.

“

...We don't believe in long term contracts and 'trapping' customers...

**For more information see lucidgrp.co.uk
email info@lucidgrp.co.uk or call 01642 792567.**



Paul Alsop with Cheryl Spears



Logico Charity Race Night

Award winning north east transport consultancy and training provider, Logico, were delighted to host a race night at Newcastle Racecourse in aid of the Bradley Lowery Foundation on the evening of 30th September.

The night was a fantastic opportunity to promote awareness of the fantastic work the charity is involved with and to raise vital funds for their ongoing projects. A huge thank you to all who came along and enjoyed the evening.

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Rikki Ledger, General Manager

LOOKING FOR A PREMIUM MARQUE? LOOK NO FURTHER THAN LOOKERS

This hasn't been the easiest time for the car industry. Covid caused all sorts of problems as showrooms were forced to close, and then there was a shortage of microchips which affected the supply of new cars.

But, there was...and still is...high demand for quality used cars.

Especially those at the premium end of the market. Which is why Lookers...one of the UK's largest car dealers...has opened a very special dealership here in the North East.

Lookers Premium.

"At Lookers we represent 33 manufacturers and have over 150 dealership sites, which means we have thousands of cars being bought and sold by the company over the course of 12 months," said Lookers Premium Brand manager, Rikki Ledger. "Many of these will be from volume manufacturers like Ford, Nissan, Vauxhall, Volkswagen etc, but a decent percentage come from the premium brands such as BMW, Jaguar, Audi and Mercedes and a surprising number from top-end marques like Bentley, Porsche, Land Rover, McLaren, Ferrari and Rolls Royce. Consequently, we decided to bring all of these prestige luxury, sport and, in some cases, rare cars together under one roof...Lookers Premium...and it's based at our new dealership in Jesmond, Newcastle."

Needless to say that buyers of premium cars expect premium service...and that's exactly what you'll get at Lookers Premium. If you call into the dealership on Portland Road you'll be met by one of the team who will give you as much or as little help as you need. Some buyers just want to browse quietly on their own while others would like some guidance.

If you go online you can check out the entire range of what Lookers Premium has to offer. If you see something you fancy, you can either click for further details or if the car is exactly what you're looking for, you can reserve or buy the car there and then.

"We offer a concierge service," adds Rikki. "Every car has a full video walk-through. Customers can view the video and make a decision purely from what they see. If they love the car, we'll take it to them... anywhere in the UK...there's no need for

them to travel to Newcastle. We can even help with organising finance.

Every car we sell has been meticulously prepared. It has undergone a thorough 115 point check to ensure that everything is in order. We don't do anything 'off the peg'...each customer will receive bespoke service."

In other words, Lookers Premium has some very special cars on offer which you are unlikely to find at other dealers...and that includes manufacturer main dealers. Such is the buying power of Lookers that they can be ahead of the game.

And if they don't happen to have in stock exactly what you're looking for, they'll find it for you. Just give them your exact model specification wishes and they'll put wheels in motion. It's all part of the Lookers Premium bespoke service.

Oh, and if you already have a premium or prestige car, why not get the expert technicians at Lookers Premium to look after it for you? Your car will be in good hands.

Lookers Premium...premium brands....premium service.

If you are in the market for a premium brand car, you really do need to check out Lookers Premium. Either go onto their website... www.lookers.co.uk/premium...or call into their dealership on Portland Road in Newcastle. You can also call them on 0191 287 8321.

“

***...We don't do anything
'off the peg'...each
customer will receive
bespoke service...***



The Big Interview

David Armstrong

In this month's feature we chat with...

DAVID ARMSTRONG

Managing director of Access Training

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I was always good at maths, so I wanted to be an accountant. When I was around 15, I did some work experience at Haines Watts Chartered Accountants and that spurred me on to follow that ambition. I became Chartered at the age of 24, which is something I'm very proud of.

Tell us about your current role?

I'm managing director of Access Training and I was previously the finance director, so I'm still responsible for a lot of the accounting and financial processes.

My job, essentially, is all about creating clear and consistent objectives and putting the right people in the right place to achieve them.

What is your proudest business achievement?

I was incredibly proud of being appointed as a director in 2017. There's a huge amount of trust and responsibility that comes with that title, and I thrive on that.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy and apprenticeship standards in 2017 was a significant change. Levy paying employers want to get the best return possible on the tax they're paying and we are now enrolling more senior staff on higher level apprenticeships than ever before. There's been a big shift away from the days when most apprenticeships were school leavers going into entry-level roles.

What are you currently working on?

We're delighted to be part of the North East Workforce Skills programme - a European Social Fund project that allows us to deliver fully-funded training to the region's workforce. It's a great opportunity and we've seen some truly exceptional results. We offer a wide range of short courses, mainly around business management principles, that employers can benefit from.

Tell us about the team you work with?

We've got an outstanding group of people at Access who love what they do and who they work for. The culture is great and there's a huge sense of pride in how we affect people's lives and careers. We've grown in numbers a lot over the last couple of years and we've been able to recruit some really talented people.

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

We started working with Scaleup North-East when we made the decision that I would become managing director at the start of 2020. They work with companies

who are either experiencing or anticipating growth and guide them through the potential challenges that come their way. I found this really useful and it helped me to focus on what exactly we were trying to achieve, and why.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Becoming the managing director of a company is a weighty challenge, but the timing of my appointment made it even more testing for me. I was appointed on 1st April 2020 - a week after the start of the first lockdown. We all knew it was coming so we were fairly well prepared for the huge operational changes ahead but it certainly added an extra spice to the new role!

Saying that, I actually found starting as MD in a pandemic was quite helpful in some ways. The scale of the challenge meant that the team really needed strong leadership and there was already a real need to modernise our processes. I'm not one to throw my weight around, so the circumstances offered me the chance to achieve modernisation in a much more natural and collaborative way.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

That would have to be my dad, Malcolm Armstrong. He has worked at Access for over 35 years, and I've been here since 2011. We've always had a brilliant relationship; it can be difficult working with family (or friends) but we never struggled with that and I genuinely appreciated having the chance to work alongside him. The reputation and culture of Access that we're all so proud of is largely down to him and his vision.

Outside of work it would be Jimmy Glass. As a Carlisle United fan, the goalscoring-keeper-saviour is an absolute legend.

How do you unwind outside of work?

Most of my time outside of work is now spent with my two young children - a three year old and a nine month old. We spend as much time as we can outside on adventures - we relish a muddy puddle!

Favourite Book and Boxset?

I read Bob Mortimer's autobiography, "*And Away*" on holiday this year and I giggled all the way through. He's an incredibly funny man - and from the North-East, which helps!

Boxset wise, I loved *This Is Us*. The relationship between each of the characters was hilarious and gut-wrenching in equal measure.

2022 Annual



Awards & Dinner

ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

...A NOT FOR PROFIT SOCIAL ENTERPRISE...



The Asian Business Connexions Anniversary Dinner event is, without doubt, the largest celebration of Asian businesses and individuals in the North, attracting significant VIP's and celebrity speakers. In 2022 we have more of a reason and need to come together and celebrate the significant and sustained contribution of the Asian community from across the North East.

For more information, visit www.abconnexions.org





ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Words from the Chairman...

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



Ammar Mirza CBE Chair and Founder of Asian Business Connexions

NEWCASTLE RE-UNITED

Growing up in the West End of Newcastle brings back fond and, equally, frightening memories. My late parents owned the shops at the top of Pitt Street, opposite Newcastle United. Each Saturday we would see the throng of thousands of White fans in their black and white tops walk past the shop. Some abusive, but in the main rowdy and excited. I never felt any connection to them or the stadium at the end of the street.

Murray House a local community centre, was across the other end of the road. Some of earliest memories were going to the centre and enjoying the activities and trips that were facilitated from there. Possibly the only day trips we experienced as kids outside of school. We would always find getting in and out of the centre like running the gauntlet, ensuring we didn't get beaten up by the racist young people that would hang around there waiting to bash some kids for fun.

Roll forward a few decades and how things have positively changed. I have always considered Newcastle United Football Club and St James' to be a positivity barometer for the city and wider region. In Newcastle, and across the whole of the North East, we are passionate and proud supporters of football, to the point that for many it's almost a religion. Certainly, for my younger brother, who would sell his right arm or leg to watch a game. What happens in the stadium can and does reflect what happens outside of the stadium across the whole of the population.

Today, I am so proud and excited to see the transformation within Newcastle and the North East. Not only has the recent change of ownership delighted fans, but it has installed a new, diverse management board to represent the diversity within the city's own communities. I am even more thrilled to see one of ABC's own award winners, Zoe Hingston an inclusivity champion, now appointed as Newcastle United Football Club's Head of Inclusion and Diversity.

Isn't it wonderful to see this revolution happening in the stadium in the city centre, the heart of the city and in fact region, in many ways. Now, it's had a transplant and has come back beating stronger, faster, better and more inclusive.

And it is a real privilege to have Sir John Hall a long-term supporter and a real inspiration and friend, join us at the awards to present a special award to Newcastle United's Mehrdad and Amanda. Sadly, they were unable to join us on the evening but Dominica O'Neil – Director of Talent – kindly stepping in to say a few words.

The overall atmosphere at Newcastle United is electric and everyone feels connected regardless of background, colour or religion. My son was a Mascot at the Everton Game where he said it was the "best day of his life", my elder brother attends every match with his wife who wears traditional Arabic dress. I feel part of something special which is the most important aspect of inclusion and certainly not something I ever dreamed could happen when I was a child watching the football fans from our shop across the road.

Only a few weeks ago, Newcastle City Council confirmed their commitment to tackling the systemic, embedded racism within the city and the local authority itself, led by one of this year's ABC nominees, Councillor Irin Ali. Their goal is to make Newcastle an anti-racist city.

For the past few years, ABC have had a similar goal, working towards our Inclusion By Default campaign and aiming to make the North East the most diverse region in the UK. This year, we have worked with the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ethnic Minority Business Owners led by Diana Chrouh, the North East Local Enterprise Partnership and MP Chi Onwurah in the development of an Inclusive Pathway to Business Support. We have worked to develop international relationships and trade links with Turkey, India and Pakistan and I have been privileged to attend so many military events in my role as Honorary Colonel of the 101-regiment Royal Artillery, who all attended the ABC celebrations in full force. And what a treat to have the Fifth Fusiliers band play for us at the event. I am immensely proud of our Armed Forces who continue to support and selflessly defend every member of our community.

Once again, this year has been turbulent. Who would have considered that we would be celebrating the Queen's jubilee in the summer only to have a new King and three Prime Ministers by the Autumn? And yet, through it all, the North East has continued to thrive, grow and develop into a region that I am prouder and prouder every year to call my home.

Well done to all of the finalists and winners this year, especially the Chairman Award and Lifetime Achievement Winners – Lt Col Andy Black, Dr Nicola Hutchinson, Sir John Hall and Bahal Singh OBE. I know the judges whom I am very grateful for, had a very difficult job in selecting the winners.

Our goal at ABC is to continue connect, support and promote all communities. As without having a goal you cannot score... (We also want Newcastle United to win the league and I am sure with our new friends in charge and our supporters this will happen.)

We look forward to welcoming all of our stakeholders and supporters to our event on the 19th October 2023.

God Bless.

Ammar Mirza CBE

Founder and Chairman



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Chairman's Award Winners...

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault

**WINNER****ANDY BLACK**

Lieutenant Colonel Andy Black BEng PGCE FlntLM has been a supporter and advocate for ABC for many years. He is the Head of Army Engagement for the North East & Yorkshire, working with communities and key stakeholder to create a more supportive environment for the Armed Forces communities. He is a passionate ambassador of the Cadet Apprenticeship Pathway scheme which helps to create opportunities for both businesses and cadets to benefit from apprenticeships and is a trustee of the PIE Project.

**WINNER****NICOLA HUTCHINSON**

Nicola Hutchinson is the Chief Executive Officer at the Academic Health Science Network for the North East and North Cumbria (AHSN NENC), leading a team of nearly 100 people.

As well as earning a PhD in Chemistry from Durham University, Nicola is a champion of innovation in the NHS and across the North East to improve patient outcomes and support economic growth.

**WINNER****SIR JOHN HALL**

Sir John Hall is the former owner of Newcastle United football club whose management saw the club to great success and is now the club's Life President.

Sir John is a strong supporter and investor in the growth and development of the North East and serves as patron and trustee for the PIE Project charity and has been a good friend to our Chairman for over 25 years.



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If you would like to find out more about how the AHSN NENC can support your business please email enquiries@ahsn-nenc.org.uk or visit our website ahsn-nenc.org.uk



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CHANGE IS NEEDED**

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Happy and well: less stress and illness

Balanced and fair: more opportunities for everyone

**CHANGE IS GOOD
CHANGE IS POSSIBLE**

IT'S IN OUR HANDS

Cost of living debt
crisis fears over
energy bills



Child poverty
gap now worst
for 20 years



Unemployment
inequalities

North East faces
biggest chasm



Living Wage
pay gap reality

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difference and make work better



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GET ACCREDITED OR
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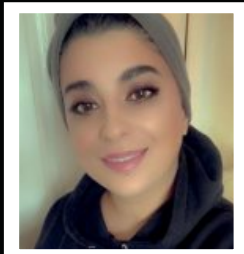
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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

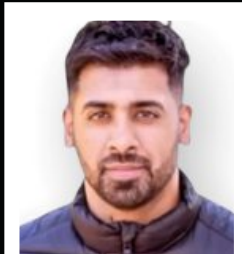
Finalists 2022... Independent Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



ANNAHITA RAFIZADEH

Earlier this year, Annah took the nerve-wracking step to leave her management position at Vodafone where she had worked for 12 years to open her own aesthetics business. She offers over 20 advanced treatments across 5 cities and runs her own clinics in Fenham, the MetroCentre, Middlesbrough, Glasgow and Edinburgh.



KAMRAN ALI

Kamran runs Hijama clinics in twelve cities across the UK with plans to expand the Europe. He has signed a contract to open a training academy in Newcastle in hopes to help people take advanced courses without college degrees. He has delivered courses across Europe and started working with a charity.



SANGEETA CHOPRA

Sangeeta Chopra owns Namaste Taste of India and Jewelz of India. She started her business in 2018, persevering through COVID lockdowns to her recent expansion into bigger premises to allow her to diversify her products and services. She now sells Asian and Fusion clothes and jewellery as well as food, specialist grocery and kitchenware. She is also mother to two boys who motivate her to go further.



FUNKY INDIANWALI

The Funky Indianwale provide authentic, traditional Indian catering services and was founded by husband and wife team, Kam and Nedhi Chera during lockdown, through deliveries and Zoom cook-along classes. Since then, they have worked, among others, with Bamburgh Castle, Rolls Royce, Durham University and Newcastle University. They also provided the catering for the men's and ladies' Indian International Cricket teams on their UK training camps and tour.



RANJEET KHANDA

Middlesbrough-born Ranjeet is the owner of ground-breaking online dispensary Linthorpe Pharmacy, whose bespoke prescription service is headquartered on the town's Riverside Park. Discovering a local gap in the market, fully-qualified Ranjeet launched a delivery-only service last year.

Newcastle Community Cohesion Award...

Amanda Staveley and Mehrdad Ghodoussi are the owners of Newcastle United Football Club, which they took over last year.

Since then, they have restored fans' faith in the management of the club building it steadily and securely investing in the infrastructure for the long-term good of the club and the city, driving more job opportunities and with a mandate for inclusion and diversion.

Their award was kindly collected by Dominica O'Neil and presented by Sir John Hall.

WINNER



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Finalists 2022... Business Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



MY DELHI

My Delhi opened a restaurant in South Shields that had belonged to their father 50 years previously, expanding into Newcastle Upon Tyne a few months later. During the pandemic, they managed to keep their doors open and provide take away services, supporting the local communities by providing free food to the elderly, the vulnerable, the young people with learning difficulties. Since then, they have won several awards and are just about to launch their fifth restaurant.



SHAHI FOODS

Shahi Foods was established in 1984 by Khalid J Bhatti. They specialise in Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi food, growing from a frozen food supplier to a catering business under the leadership of Khalid's sons Rizwan and Farhan. Shahi covers the North East region and have worked with national and international charities, local councils, universities and many more.



PARVIN KUMAR

Barely a year old and Soami's Trio in Consett, have already been nominated for Good Food Award 2023 and also received the Open Table Popular Dinner Choice awards in 2021 and 2022. The eatery is full of great reviews on social media and TripAdvisor, which is testament in itself of the fine offering from this establishment.

Soami's Trio, serves three different cuisines cooked by chef and owner Parvin Kumar who is well experienced and trained in hospitality since he was sixteen. The three cuisines are Indian, Mexican and Thai.



If you're looking for help and support to start or grow a business, the North East Growth Hub is here to help.

We provide access to:

- A team of highly experienced Growth Hub Connectors who provide bespoke guidance on support and finance options for you and your business
- An online directory of business support, guidance, finance options, and events available in the North East
- A network of business owners who have been in the same position as you – people who can help solve your problems and maximise new opportunities.

If you're an existing business, please contact the North East Growth Hub on 0191 561 5468

If you're a startup, you can find more information on the North East Growth Hub's Startup Toolkit, or for further support, please contact England's Business Support Helpline on 0800 998 1098

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Finalists 2022... Third Sector Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault

**WINNER**

AMJID KHAZIR

Amjid Khazir is the Director and Founder of MEDIA CULTURED C.I.C. He specialises in countering extremism and promoting social unity through education, inclusion, safeguarding and equality programmes. Media Cultured's 'Promoting Unity and Tackling Extremism' workshops have been delivered to thousands of pupils and hundreds of educators across the UK.



SPICE FM

Spice FM is a local community radio station that has been 24/7 since 2008. Spice FM started broadcasting with the aim to serving the diverse population of Newcastle and surrounding areas. The radio has firmly established itself as an alternative local choice by developing an excellent reputation for delivering a diverse range of programmes broadcasting on 98.8fm in the

Newcastle area, online via the website, and on your smart phones via numerous radio player apps which can be found on the Play store or App Store. Spice FM went DAB in the region in 2022. The radio station is operated by two enthusiastic and committed (non paid) Directors Sandeep Kapoor and Amit Bahanda who run the station whilst holding down full-time jobs. They are supported by a team of volunteers.

KORT & SPICE FM

Kort (Kashmir Orphan Relief Trust) established in 2005, following a call for urgent need after a deadly earthquake saw close to 90,000 people killed, and left thousands of children orphaned. It took time for some children who were affected by the deadly earthquake to emotionally recover. Since then, KORT have constructed the KORT Educational and Residential Complex which was completed in 2016. This complex consists of a school



for up to 1,500 orphan children, a separate building which includes laundry, cooking and dining facilities where up to 600 orphan children can dine at one time, separate hostels for 500 orphan girls and 500 orphan boys, and an onsite mosque for 1500 worshippers that has washroom and ablution facilities for disabled people.

Find out how we're helping regional businesses innovate, overcome challenges and grow.

go.ncl.ac.uk/businesspartnerships

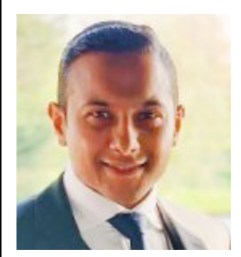
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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Finalists 2022... Professional Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



JABIR AHMED

Has worked in the financial services sector for 10 years, helping clients navigate the difficulties of COVID. Works for the Department of International Trade helping to ensure that the UK is the number one destination in the world for Foreign Investment with the Financial and Professional sectors.



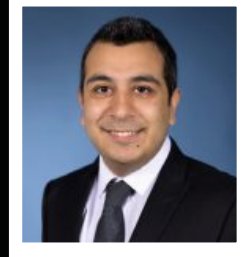
MAHNUR ROUSHAN

Mahnur is the Operations and Services Coordinator at Young Asian Voices. She strongly believes in being there for people and endlessly striving for creating springboards to opportunities, career choices, progressive pathways, and empowering them to be leaders.



SHAJIDUL HAQUE

Shajidul (Shaj) Haque is a British-Bangladeshi professional MMA fighter and head coach of ACE MMA Martial Arts Centre in South Shields. Shaj is currently the number 1 ranked UK Flyweight and is working towards becoming the first Bangladeshi-born MMA World Champion.



RISHI ARORA

Rishi is the Global Accounts Receivable Manager and UK Financial Reporting Lead at OsecoElfab, driving positive changes in operational and financial controls. He has been particularly successful in improving and modernising the financial systems of the company.



WINNER

AMIT PANDIT

Amit Pandit is the founder of APT Search, and international talent solutions provider within the global eDiscovery/ Legal Tech, Cyber Security and Data Privacy markets. After 20 years away from the region, Amit has returned to Newcastle, relocating the company and creating jobs locally. Since returning, he has grown his team to six permanent members and worked with over 25 countries. He ensures that diversity, inclusion and equality strategies are embedded through the process.

People's Choice Award...

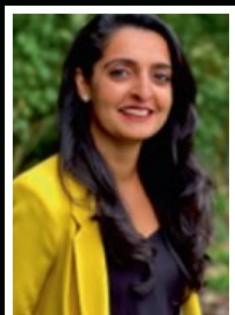
YAWAR HUSSAIN - Chosen and voted for by the Spice FM listeners

A British citizen for 35 years. Providing community services for over 25 years in the Asian community. Yawar has been working as bureau chief for Urdu newspapers in Newcastle for many years. As well as his journalistic work, Yawar has been working with Spice FM for 20 years on Urdu service and religious affairs, and has been involved with charity shows and hosting lots of events.

WINNER



Health & Life Science Nominees...



FOZIA SALEEM

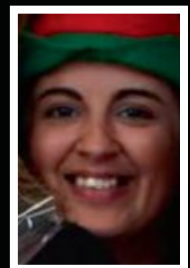
A results-driven PhD scientist with over 14 years management experience in the global life sciences sector in R&D, CRO and GTM environments. A proven track record of delivering profitable innovations to market, by effectively leading multifunctional teams and continuously satisfying senior stakeholders.



WINNER

HYDER LATIF

Hyder Latif is the Research Operations Manager for NIHR Clinical Research Network North East and North Cumbria. He has worked in clinical research for over 10 years, including as part of South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust's cancer research team and as Trial Manager with Newcastle University.



SAHDIA HASSEN



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Special DR NAS KHAN OBE Award

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault

**WINNER**

Daud Mohammed
Award Winner

Just like previous years, this year's awards will also see a recipient of the very special Asian Business Connexions (ABC) Awards Dr Nas Khan OBE award.

The Dr Nas Khan OBE award was created in memory of one of the region's leading entrepreneurs and philanthropists, which recognises the outstanding achievements

of those who are dedicated to achieving community cohesion and equality in the North East. Dr Khan arrived in Britain from Pakistan at the age of 14 unable to speak English but worked his way up through Jennings Motor Group before becoming its owner in 2005, overseeing its development into one of the region's most successful businesses.

Dr Nas was awarded an OBE in 2017, in recognition of his business and community work. He sadly passed away in 2018, aged 58. Here at Asian Business Connexions, in order to celebrate the memory and the phenomenal work and achievements of Dr Nas Khan, this dedicated award acknowledges the outstanding efforts of those who are dedicated to supporting their own communities.

This year's recipient of the Dr Nas Khan OBE award is Daud Mohamed. Daud was a hugely respected community leader with an amazing amount of talent, humility, and intelligence. He

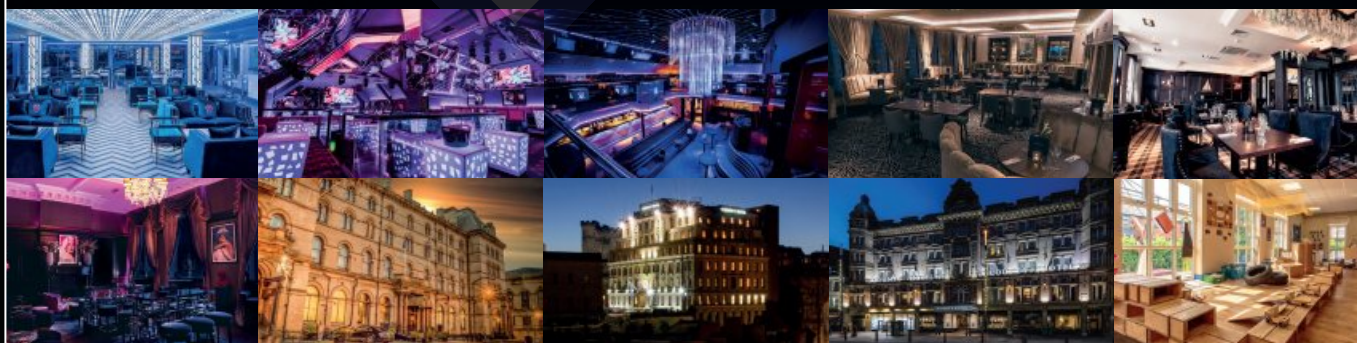
was an active board member of ABC, and very connected to the organisation and the work it does. Daud led the family practice Ariston Accountants supporting many businesses and organisations across the region. He supported the Save Our SME campaign throughout the pandemic and was also a board member of Spice FM.

Daud will be proudly and lovingly remembered by all that new him across the region. The award was graciously received by Daud's family on the evening.



Dr Nas Khan OBE

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Finalists 2022... Public Award

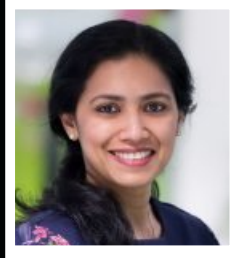
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WINNER

IRIM ALI

Elected to the Newcastle City Council in 2008, making her the first BAME woman to be elected in the North East region. She now sits in the Cabinet of Newcastle City Council, providing strategic and political leadership to the Public Health Directorate during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as the Council's Equality Champion, she is introducing Newcastle's first ever Race Charter to combat institutional racism.



JUNA SATHIAN

A Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Visiting Academic at Imperial College London within the fields of Nonlinear Optics and Laser Physics. She is active in outreach, influencing the younger generation to develop careers in STEM and encouraging more girls to study science. In 2022 she was elected to Newcastle City Council, representing the Blakelaw Ward.



HABIB RAHMAN

Habib won his first election in 2010 as a Labour Councillor for the Elswick ward, becoming the third City Councillor of South Asian heritage, going on to break many barriers. In 2018 becoming the City's first Black Asian Minority Ethnic Cabinet Member in the Council's history and in 2021 he was elected as the Lord Mayor of Newcastle upon Tyne, the first Muslim, Black Asian Minority Ethnic Lord Mayor in its 800-year history.



WINNER

NITIN SHUKLA

Nitin Shukla has worked in the public sector for 35 years, including leading Gateshead Council's diversity and inclusion strategy and implementing the Equality Standard for Local Government ensuring hard to hear groups were systematically involved in service design and delivery. He is currently Programme Lead for equality, diversion and inclusion and hate crime in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner for Northumbria to ensure the EDI is at the heart of the OPCC.

Lifetime Achievement Award Winner...



WINNER

Bahal Dinda Singh went to a village school and then to college in Ludhiana and tells his family stories of riding a bicycle to school (20 mile round trip), seeing an electric bulb for the first time and his freedom fighting days.

He was jailed for distributing anti-British leaflets during the uprising. He was into politics and attended meetings/rallies with likes of Gandhi, Nehru, Jinah, Patel. Being from a poor background a career in politics would have been hard so he made the hard decision to leave India and travel to Uganda. With his family he made a success of his time in Uganda eventually becoming a Headmaster in Jinja Uganda.

The family were forced to leave Uganda when Idi Amin expelled the Asians from Uganda. On arriving in UK he decided to settle in the North East and ended up in Gateshead as there was an adult day centre for people with learning difficulties, where his elder son could attend. He has been in the same house with the same neighbours for almost 50 years now. The 50th anniversary of arriving into UK being this November.

He worked as a chemist at the Monkton Coke works and he took retirement after the national miners' strike was over. He set up and ran a voluntary organisation, Gateshead Visible Ethnic Minority Support Group, which is still running and has received numerous awards including the Queens award for voluntary services and an MBE.

He is now aged 99, turning 100 in Jan 2023 and doing pretty well for his age.



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

We are ABC...

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault

As a not-for-profit social enterprise our mission is to connect, support and promote the Asian and wider communities. Looking to start a business, have an existing business or just want to talk business, we can help. We can help you navigate through the funding

and business support landscape and assist you in accessing the right support at the right time. An inclusive, action-orientated organisation that has made demonstrable impact for over a decade, membership is open to everyone – ***you don't have to be Asian!***



CONNECTING

ABC is the first point of call for all Asian businesses and others wanting to engage with them, locally, nationally and internationally.

Our network is now 100,000 strong and we can get a message out to over 1million people across the whole of the Northern Powerhouse.

Receive regular invites to the hugely popular, sell-out ABCurry Club events, business seminars and much more.

SUPPORTING

Exclusive discounts from other member businesses. Access to discounted business services worth thousands.

Working with the All Party Parliamentary Group for BAME Business and regional public bodies we lobby government alongside developing a range of practical support programmes.

We have trained thousands of local people, helped establish hundreds of new enterprises and are recognised as the foremost Asian social enterprise across the North of England.

PROMOTING

We are connected globally with a number of trade bodies and government agencies, providing an credible platform to link people and places.

Our range of partners ensure that we can get a message out to every single member of the Asian community. From Spice FM on radio, to Asian Standard on print and our own online presence, we have a wide and inclusive reach.

We are proud of our Asian cultural heritage and our communities. But as an organisation we have the honour of being born in the North East.

Our positive campaigns – AWESome Women, Inclusionbydefault and FABupNorth – promote people and empower inclusion and diversity.

ABC will celebrate the work ethics, achievements and cultural diversity of the Asian and wider business community. By establishing a network built upon trust and social inclusion, ABC will ensure that the representation of the Asian and wider business community is fair and equitable.



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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

Thank you to all our supporters...

Connect, Support and Promote - #Inclusionbydefault



Thank you all of our supporters who helped to make this event such a success. It truly was wonderful to see so many people together in one room, having fun and celebrating together.

Asian Business Connexions goes beyond the awards ceremony. We would be delighted to have you as part of our special community and become more meaningfully engaged in our shared ambition of making the North East the most inclusive region in the UK by 2025.

To get more involved, please visit: www.abconnexions.org or give us a call on 01661 823234



For more information, visit www.abconnexions.org



Sally Hart

CONTINUED GROWTH FOR GEORGE F WHITE

When it comes to attaining property advice, whether it be commercial, development, rural or residential, you can't beat a local and progressive firm with over 40 years' experience...

That's not all you'll get from property consultants George F. White - they provide a full range of in-house property services, delivered by the team of local experts. They work together to understand complex situations before designing bespoke solutions tailored to clients' needs, providing a scope of services wider than most national firms with a client focus and flexibility of a regional business.

They have offices across the North East and Yorkshire, including Alnwick, Newcastle, Durham, Barnard Castle and Bedale, as well as two new offices in Hexham and Berwick that opened earlier in the year. Continued growth is on the agenda as they aim to almost double this year's growth by the end of their next financial year, as well as increasing the team by 15% over the next 12 months.

The firm believes that their team is the secret to their success, with support for career development being a top priority. Take Sally Hart for example, who after eight years with George F. White, has been promoted to Managing Director, and she's off to a flying start with the recent announcement of a record turnover figure.

"Originating as a family run firm and evolving into a corporate model within an SME has given the business the foundation to grow across all the services it currently offers," said Sally. "One of my first aims when I joined the business was to ensure that the company could take advantage of opportunities more quickly. We invested heavily in IT which, as it turned out, safeguarded our operations during the COVID pandemic.

We have completed two high profile and successful mergers this year. We acquired the Berwick based residential sales and lettings business Tyne and Tweed and have increased our agency turnover from £600k to £1.4m. Earlier this year we welcomed Johnson Tucker LLP into the firm. This gives us one of the largest commercial property teams in the North East and is a sector where we want to grow our footprint both in the region and beyond because it is showing excellent signs of recovery following the pandemic.

We have opened a new office in Hexham as we were experiencing a lot of demand in that area across all of the property sectors. I'm delighted to see this new location open as it allows us to increase our client base in Hexham and the surrounding Tyne Valley, Cumbria and Western

Scotland. Overall, I have to say that we're in a really exciting period of growth. The future is looking really strong for George F White."

In a historically male dominated sector, it is refreshing to see more women breaking through as industry readers. She's incredibly proud of being a woman who has climbed to the top of the property tree and is making a difference to the industry as a whole. It's no surprise therefore to discover that Sally has been shortlisted for the WIN Awards (Women, Inspire, North East which are also known as the NE Business Women of the Year Awards), and the Forward Ladies Award in the Transformational Leader category.

"I aspire to be a positive role model, not only within the George F. White Group, but also within the property industry and the North East as a whole. The rural and commercial sectors of the property business are typically male led and I want to be seen to break down these industry norms in order to encourage junior females to consider the many areas of the sector as a profession they could thrive in. Inspiring others is important to me. I hope I can encourage others in whatever industry they have a passion for and am committed to investing time in this. My mission is to ensure women know that anything is possible."

If you want any sort of advice regarding property or are looking to buy, sell or rent, the best idea is to get in touch with one of Sally's team at George F White. There's certain to be one of their offices near you.

For further information plus local contact details log onto www.georgefwhite.co.uk or call them on 0333 920 2220. You can also email via the website.

“

*...My mission is
to ensure women
know that anything
is possible...*

Square One Law advises FORE Partnership on carbon friendly Tower Bridge office development

Real estate investors FORE Partnership has secured funding from private equity firm KKR to deliver a carbon friendly 110,000 sq ft office and retail development next to Tower Bridge, London.

The project will see the transformation of a 1990s constructed building next to Tower Bridge into an eco-friendly and sustainable workspace with a view of the Thames.

Square One Law LLP advised FORE in respect of all the construction contracts for the development. This has involved the negotiation of a bespoke design and building contract with the contractor Willmott Dixon Construction Limited.

The building will be net zero carbon in operation and will run solely on electrical power, making it one of the few buildings in Europe to achieve this. The building also aims to achieve a platinum WELL building certification as well as a BREEAM rating of 'outstanding' in respect of the offices.

Bal Manak, Construction Partner at Square One Law, commented: "Building sustainability, both in terms of their everyday impact on the environment and the construction methods employed to build them, are an increasingly important element of achieving net zero. This building will



really set the standard for low carbon office developments.

"This was a very complicated and multi-dimensional deal, with conflicting interests at stake. We worked alongside all the parties involved including the lenders, the contractor, and the professional team and their lawyers to ensure we completed the deal in a transparent and commercially effective and efficient manner.

"It was our priority throughout to make sure that we always had our client's back and provided commercial solutions throughout. We're looking forward to following the progress of the development, which is targeted to finish in late summer 2023."



Jonathan steps up into top job at NEL Fund Managers

A well-known North East dealmaker has taken over as the new chief executive of regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers.

Jonathan Luke has served as the Newcastle-based firm's portfolio director for the last four years and was promoted to deputy chief executive earlier this year as part of NEL's succession planning preparations.

His predecessor, Dr Yvonne Gale, will be working alongside Jonathan over the coming months to help complete a smooth transition before taking up a non-executive director role with NEL.

Jonathan joined NEL in 2004 after a career in the regional banking sector, and holds the CFA Institute's Investment Management Certificate.

As portfolio director, he has provided a direct link to the firms in which investments are made, reviewing their progress and acting as a sounding board for their management teams, and has regularly chaired NEL's Investment and Portfolio Committee meetings.

NEL Fund Managers is responsible for running two of the five funds which make up the £120m North East Fund Supported By The European Regional Development Fund.

Since taking on responsibility for investing the £18m North East Growth Capital Fund and £9m North East Small Loan Fund in 2018, it has made more than 250 investments across the region and during the summer, it took the total amount it has invested from the two funds past £20m.



A £17m boost for Tees Valley

Over the last decade, Tees Valley has received over £17m worth of funding from dormant assets, and there could be more to come.

Figures from The Community Enterprise Growth Plan Coalition – a group of voluntary sector and community representatives, enterprises and social investors – have demonstrated that the Tees Valley has received £17m worth of funding from dormant assets residing in the UK's financial system, including over £10m in Stockton-on-Tees and over £4m in Redcar and Cleveland.

Organisations like Big Society Capital and Access – The Foundation for Social Investment – have used the money to give social enterprises access to the finance and support they need to grow businesses tackling the region's most challenging social problems.

Head of engagement at Big Society Capital James Westhead said: "We were founded ten years ago with money from dormant bank accounts (money sat forgotten in UK banks) and are working on a campaign to encourage further commitment of dormant assets to social investment.

"Social investment helps to create jobs, grow businesses and tackle complex social problems. By giving local entrepreneurs access to the finance and support they need to grow their business models – often in places where standard forms of investment are hard to secure – it enables them to boost the local economy, get more people into work and help people struggling with the cost of living."



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PLANNING FOR SUCCESSION AS WELL AS GROWTH: UNDERSTANDING YOUR BUSINESS EXIT OPTIONS



Steve Plaskitt

Whether you're a shareholder or a business leader, it's crucial to plan for succession. As the UK faces the threat of a recession and continues to emerge from the pandemic, the long-term direction of the business should be high up on the agenda to ensure future proofing, as well as strategic continuity.

Despite this, succession planning can often be an overlooked topic. The pandemic has had a far-reaching impact, with more than two years of disrupted business, unpredictability, staffing challenges, supply-chain issues and negative implications for business funding. In our recent SME Barometer report, over a third of SMEs indicated they are pushing back plans to sell or retire.

Properly preparing your business for the future will allow you to maximise the value that you have built up, reduce unexpected tax liabilities and realise a fair return for the hard work that you, your employees and stakeholders have put in. However, in our experience, this value can be eroded significantly if the business hasn't been prepared for sale or exit at a sufficiently early stage.

Implementing a robust succession plan, demonstrable resilience plan and implementation timeline, is a crucial initiative, requiring a focus on change management, communication and cultural alignment that must be actively managed. It's imperative that you consider your options before you are forced to or are facing a distressed situation. It is never premature to be thinking about the future-proofing of your business and its longevity.

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



Richard Humphreys

TAKING THE LEAD ON PRIMARY CARE PRACTICE FINANCE

By Richard Humphreys, director at RMT Healthcare, the specialist medical division of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

In most primary care practices, it's fairly standard procedure for individual partners to take lead responsibility for different parts of the healthcare services they provide.

This might be because GPs have experience in specific areas, such as minor surgery or cancer care provision, have a wider related role within the local area through being part of the Primary Care Network or Integrated Care Board, or simply have an interest that they want to develop.

However, it's rarely the case that there is a named partner with overall responsibility for managing the business and financial side of the practice's operations, in the same way that a professional services firm will have a managing partner or director.

While the focus of any GP practice is obviously on the delivery of healthcare, the fact remains that it is also a business, and the performance of that business is the basis on which both these health services are provided and the partners draw their incomes.

Some practices choose to devolve this responsibility to the practice manager, and that may sometimes be a successful arrangement, while collegiate decision-making involving all partners is common.

But in our experience, the greater degree of involvement there is at partner level with a practice's finances, the more efficiently its finances can be run.

And if it's not something that's been considered in your practice, we would very much recommend that you at least investigate how it might work for you.

The process should start with a discussion at one of your regular partner meetings to see who might be interested in taking on the role, what it might entail, how regularly it might be passed on to a new incumbent and what the partners' financial priorities are for service provision, income generation and remuneration.

Taking on this role will of course require a time commitment from the chosen partner which needs to be factored in to the overall amount of time they have available for their other duties, some of which may need to be covered by colleagues.

But having someone in this position with the capacity to make swift, informed decisions based on agreed criteria, and with insight into

both the operational and clinical aspects of the practice's work should make the management of its finances much more efficient.

Further benefits could be derived from using accounting software systems which provide detailed management information that the business lead and their professional advisors can use to carry out cashflow and resource planning exercises on a quarterly basis, particularly with the impending introduction of Making Tax Digital in mind.

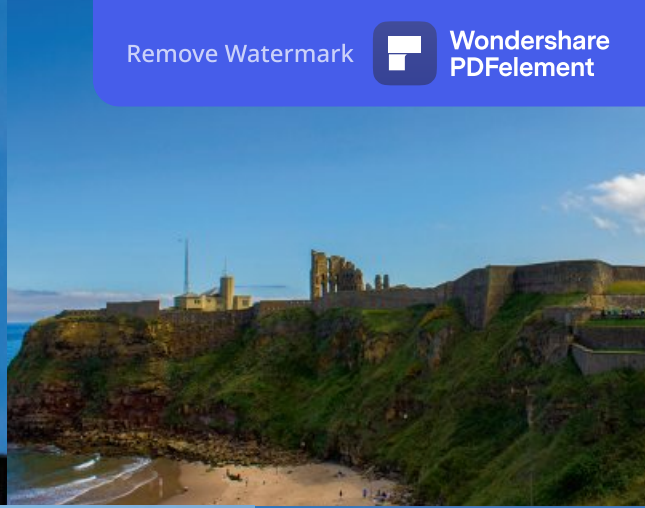
Not only will this provide greater certainty that your practice has everything in place it needs to deliver the services its community requires, but it will also help identify any unexpectedly large tax bills that might be coming partners' ways as a result of the extra profits that many practices have made over the last couple of years due to the additional service provision that the pandemic required.

Steps can then be taken to manage any financial issues arising in plenty of time, rather than having to deal with them hurriedly when they appear out of the blue.

Within primary care, the more patient data you have and the more clinical expertise you have to apply to it, the more likely is it that you'll get better decisions and outcomes.

The same principle applies to management information and strategic business decisions, and the more direct involvement that partners have with work, the better the outcomes will be all round.

For further information and advice on primary care practice management, and on all aspects of medical and healthcare finance, please contact Richard Humphreys on 0191 256 9500 or visit www.r-m-t.co.uk



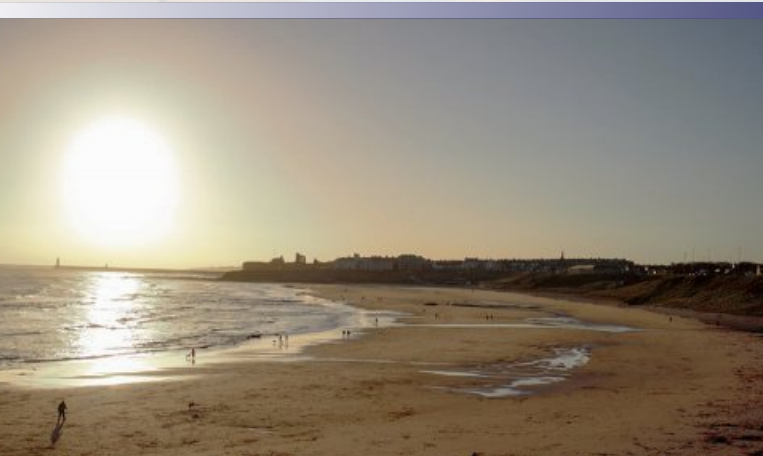
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HOW TO OBTAIN 45% TAX RELIEF ON PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS

Business owners tend to try and structure their income tax efficiently, but this can be enhanced further with a little planning.

Fundamentally, other than the £3,600 annual contribution available to everyone, you can only place funds into a pension if it is from earned income. This excludes rental or investment income and dividends.

For a business owner, the most significant proportion of their income tends to come from dividends as it avoids National Insurance contributions.

However, it is still possible to gain a significant income tax advantage from a pension contribution.

By way of an example, a business owner pays themselves a small salary of £1000 per month, £12,000 per annum, but has a further, say, £60,000 in dividends. They will be higher rate taxpayers paying 40% tax.

Let us assume that they decide to contribute £12,000 to a pension for themselves. I like to think of it as deferred income for later in life. They would actually pay £9,600 net as the pension provider would claim the balance from the His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC). However, their taxable income would be reduced by the full £12,000. This means that £12,000 of their dividend income would be taxed at 8.75% rather than 33.75%. That equates to a saving of £3,000 and gives an effective tax relief rate of 45% on the contribution made!



Peter Rutherford

The system is known as relief at source, and higher rate taxpayers need to inform HMRC of the contributions made to the pension to gain the higher rate of relief.

It seems to me to be very attractive to have the taxman contributing almost half of my annual pension contribution, which I shall go on to enjoy at some point in the future.

Remember too that the pension is invested in a tax advantaged environment and is not part of your estate for Inheritance Tax purposes.

A little careful planning can be well worthwhile.

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

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Howell Technology Group Corporate Golf Day

Hebburn based cloud experts, Howell Technology Group, welcomed over 50 guests including customers, suppliers, and partners to their first corporate golf day.

The event was held at South Shields Golf Club and saw customers and partners of Howell Technology Group brave the weather and enjoy some friendly competition while raising money for chosen charity, Changing Lives.







Andrew Marsh

PRICING IS A KEY TO SUCCESS

As the cost-of-living crisis looms over us and impacts from wars, pandemics and Brexit take their toll, there are still opportunities for businesses to not only survive but thrive.

One opportunity, which is often overlooked, is Pricing...or for those from the 80's The Price is Right!. Here Andrew Marsh talks us through getting pricing right in a challenging environment, so that companies can thrive whilst customers and individuals can afford what they need.

"Success of a company relies on a simple commercial cycle. If we offer goods, services or products at a reasonable price then people will buy, which in turn means you can make appropriate profits to re-invest and do even more things. However, the cost of your supplies is going up, energy and fuel is costing more, salaries are increasing, the mini budget debarkle, interest rates rising and pressures from keeping yourself affordable become paramount.

"How do you work out what is a fair price, what will keep you afloat, what will keep you competitive and what price will keep customers/ clients coming back for more?

"There is a simple process for this as shown below.

Your pricing philosophy sets the context. What are we selling? Not in terms of goods or a service in itself but the concept. There are three types – Inputs (i.e., time), Outputs (i.e., a laptop) or Value (Brain power or expertise that makes a difference).

Pricing is ultimately about what your clients are willing to pay, so you really do need to analyse and understand your buyers and their perception of value. In other words, find the emotional response not just the rational one.

Once we understand our client, we can set the strategy. There are five most commonly used strategies – cost plus, skimming, competitive, penetration and value based (premium). Companies can sometimes come around here as they believe only one strategy applies to them. Not true. Each different service or product may need a different strategy and even an establish product may need to evolve its strategy as the market matures.

"So, we are now clear on the strategy. Our next consideration is what tactics to deploy (if any), such loss leaders, geographical pricing to suit expectations, creating bundles and even offering FREE OF CHARGE!

"Do people really value free?

"Even when we complete all this thinking we can and do come unstuck because we fail to communicate it properly. We confuse the customer or make it too complicated. Finding the right method is, in my opinion, the real differentiator!

"Let's look at anchoring as a further example. And by the way, this is one of the most common tactics, especially in retail spaces. Anchoring is where you allow the customer to compare one product/service to other more expensive ones. The psychology suggests people will choose the one they perceive as best value, but how we order them can influence this. A common use is to provide three or five options (i.e., subscription

A, B or C) with lowest to highest. But what if we go highest to lowest? Believe it or not value perception is changed!

"But whatever you do you must measure it. Is that strategy right, are we getting the traction, is anything unexpected happening? Testing the water is always an important approach in pricing so getting that KPI feedback loop in place from the outset will really allow you to maximise the opportunities.

"My Vistage groups recently benefited from a speaker session with David Abbott, who talks about applying customer psychology insights to your marketing to get the best price. Or in the name of his book, *How To Price Your Platypus*. David is an international speaker and experienced marketer who has had senior positions in a wide range of industries. In his fascinating keynote he applies customer psychology to pricing challenges to help you take the way you price to a new level.

"Through his insights on price relatively, the power of zero, the power of expectations and more, his take aways including pricing things with GBP instead of £, and that figures positioned bottom and left feel like they are less. The same goes for using smaller fonts, four-digit prices without a comma and prices being precise seem lower than ones ending with a 0, 5 or 9.

"It is fascinating how the brain works and in fact there are 42 tricks to make a price seem lower, from influencing perception, starting prices higher to negotiate, giving other motivations to buy (a limited time offer), offer different ways of paying/payment plans, use the daily equivalent, expose two multiples of your price or create the need before sharing the price... Tiffany's for example, emphasise the jewellery before revealing the price, creating a sense of want, and when the price is shared, it seems unimportant in small print.

"Whatever tools you use, an effective pricing strategy is essential for continued sales success. Good examples of this are places like Pizza Hut and Dominos who regularly reposition their offers into bundles for families, sporting events, annual events and so on. They use these offers to drive their operating margins and keep customers keen, as they get sides and drinks included. As McDonalds say – do you want to go large?

"There are a number of pricing guides and help books out there as well as *How To Price Your Platypus*, and as a business you need to find the best in your industry to work with. In my experience though, value pricing is the most important strategy of all as it considers how beneficial, high-quality and important your customers feel you or your products are. That's as real as you can get."

If you need help in overhauling your pricing policy, then get in touch with Andrew on andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk



MAVEN'S NORTHEAST INVESTMENT TEAM WINS DEAL OF THE YEAR AT INSIDER MEDIA NORTHEAST DEALMAKERS AWARDS



L-R: Scott Whyte, CEO at PragmatlC & Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven.

The award follows a multimillion-pound investment in PragmatlC Semiconductor. Northeast Development Capital Fund and Finance Durham Fund managed by Maven invest as part of the recently announced \$50 million funding drive.

Maven Capital Partners has won the Deal of the Year Award (deal size above £10 million) at the Insider Media Northeast Dealmakers Awards, taking place in Newcastle on 29 September. This comes after Maven's successful £2.3m investment in electronics manufacturer PragmatlC Semiconductor via the Northeast Development Capital Fund and the Finance Durham Fund. The two funds have invested £1.3 million and £1 million respectively, and was part of PragmatlC's recently announced \$50 million funding, which brings total investment in the company to over \$200 million.

The deal was shortlisted in the category alongside six other major transactions, beating several other significant UK private equity firms. PragmatlC is a world leader in ultra-low-cost

flexible electronics. Its flexible integrated circuits are thinner than a human hair and can be invisibly embedded in objects, enabling innovators to create novel solutions to everyday problems that are not practical with conventional electronics. Its patented technology is being used by a growing base of global companies across diverse markets, including consumer goods, retail, healthcare, pharmaceutical, gaming and security.

PragmatlC has already established a billion-unit fabrication facility at the North East Technology Park (NETPark) in Sedgefield, County Durham, and the business plans to open a new 175,000 ft² site later this year in Durham, aiming to create 125 new highly skilled scientific jobs in the County over the next twelve months with up to 500 in the next five years.

The funding will be used by the Company to fit out its new site and significantly expand its manufacturing capacity to support the scaling of its microchip production. The capital will also be used for further R&D to continue advancing its ground-breaking technology platform.

Global microchip sales reached £445 billion in 2021 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10% over the next five years (source: Reuters), driven by demand in the developed economies due to the increased use of Internet of Things ("IoT") applications.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to support a high-profile tech business with a unique and revolutionary technology at the point of large-scale production. PragmatlC has ambitious growth plans, and we are delighted that funding from the NEDCF and FDF will help create a large number of high-tech jobs in the local area and a new manufacturing facility in County Durham. PragmatlC has developed disruptive technology with huge commercial potential due to the large addressable market and the increasing global demand for microchips."

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Business
Durham

EXPANDING FIRM MOVES BASE



A local award-winning accountancy and business advisory firm has moved into new office premises following a year of substantial growth.

Robson Laidler has relocated 36 of its 105 staff to new 6200sq ft office space at Mains House, on Chester le Street's Front Street, following a £180,000 office refurb.

The building, which is the former Gordon Brown Law Firm site, has undergone substantial internal renovation and features new collaborative working features such as an interactive media wall, silent office pods, standing desks for hot desking and agile working, a games room, dining area, showers, and bike storage.

The move will see the firm, which has taken on 15 new recruits in the last six months alone, increase its headcount further over the next 12 months, as it looks to meet growing client demand across the region.

Robson Laidler, which has a head office in Jesmond, Newcastle specialises in accountancy, tax and business advisory work for fast growing businesses. Under the leadership of managing director Graham Purvis the 102-year-old firm has reported a 13.5 % growth at the close of its last financial year and is on target to reach 15% growth in the current year with new business sale projections hitting £660k.

Operations director Nick Wilson who oversaw the office move said: "We've continued to grow our presence across County Durham and the move to our wonderful new office space will provide a stimulating and collaborative environment for our staff so they can in turn provide the highest level of service possible to our growing client portfolios.

"We know from research that collaborative and creative working spaces enhance the employee experience, which motivates them to provide a better service to their clients.

"Our new space is full of additional perks and amenities to help our staff be fulfilled at work as we strive to be an employer of choice.

"The new office is also testament to the

fantastic work our teams have put in to help us serve even more successful businesses in the region.

"Our growth plans are to continue building on this success by adding to our team and continuing to form and strengthen relationships with businesses and clients across the North East."

Robson Laidler has also committed to creating a number of apprenticeship roles to help more young people get their foot onto the career ladder and supporting them through their Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) training.

Nick continues: "We're committed to creating opportunities for local people and especially those looking to break into the industry, so it's fantastic to see our trainee programme already proving a hit among A-level leavers, having taken on four already this year."

Robson Laidler has also achieved B Corp certification, meaning it balances profits with purpose and was crowned the North East Accountancy Firm of the Year in June this year.

www.robson-laidler.co.uk

PROPERTY DEVELOPERS - HOW TO MAKE YOUR PROJECT SUCCESSFUL – FROM A FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT TO APPOINTING AN EXPERIENCED PROJECT MANAGER

For any property developer, a strict due diligence process is necessary for every project, and a feasibility assessment should be one of the first activities you undertake.

This is an assessment of the financial aspects of the scheme and is usually done by your Quantity Surveyor, considering the project's...

- Gross Development Value (GDV)
- Profit requirement
- Construction costs
- Land/Existing building purchase price.

Once the project is deemed viable, making sure it is successful from the outset is another matter. Your due diligence may show that the project is worth the investment, but how do you take things from there – from appointing your professional team, developing the design, making planning and building control applications, and properly appointing a builder?

Ashdan Consulting Chartered Surveyors Ltd can provide the answer to these and many other questions. With over 50 years of combined experience within the construction industry, our team can make sure you're on the track to success, and the earlier we are involved, the more value we can add

For any property developer reading this, your process should follow a similar direction as that outlined below, and if it doesn't – then why not

call us for help!

Once your due diligence has established the project is viable. The next step is to appoint your 'Power Team'. This includes the professionals needed to complete your development, and it should be established long before the builder is involved, but this can be the first stumbling block for many.

Your main team should consist of a Project Manager, Architect, Quantity Surveyor, Estate Agent, Planning Consultant, Structural and Civil Engineer, Building Services Engineer, Landscape Architect and Principal Designer.

Other specialities such as Environmental Consultant, Acoustic Consultant and more can be included if needed further down the line.

The first problem many developers face is how, and in which order to properly appoint these consultants. It is also essential to ensure that the appointments are the correct version and are executed correctly.

For many, their natural reaction may be to appoint the Architect first – after all, they are the ones who prepare the design that facilitates the construction of the project.

However, the first of your Power Team to be appointed should be the Project Manager. Not only is this the only management role within



your team, but they also help you by 'gluing' the project and its many components together and ensuring that effective communication and coordination between other members of your team is maintained throughout the project.

This not only allows you to feel more at ease knowing someone has it under control but also enables you to focus on other aspects of your business and other potential developments and projects.

Putting your development project in 'safe hands' is critical to its success.

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RECENT APPOINTMENTS

**Mincoffs Solicitors welcome new Chief Operating Officer**

A highly regarded business improvement specialist with decades of experience in the legal sector has been appointed to the management team at one of the North East's most prolific commercial law firms.

Jesmond-based Mincoffs Solicitors has welcomed Julie Parr to the firm

as its new Chief Operating Officer, following more than thirty years at Muckle LLP.

During her career she has led on a number of projects on risk, quality, data protection and process improvement, along with designing and developing an online debt recovery system.

She takes over her new position from former Chief Executive, Andy Woodhouse, who retired in July after 11 years with Mincoffs, and will assume responsibility for finance, HR and the day-to-day running of the business.

"I am absolutely delighted to be joining Mincoffs' management team," she said.

"I can clearly see how my experience in finance, service excellence, digital and data analytics will further enhance the great work that has already occurred.

"My experience will assist the firm in achieving their strategic growth objectives".

**Key promotion highlights career progression opportunities at RG Corporate Finance**

RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) has announced the promotion of Connor McBride to Corporate Finance Senior Manager.

Connor, a graduate of Northumbria University where he gained a BA (Hons) degree in Business Management, joined RGCF in 2019 as a Corporate Finance Manager.

Before joining RGCF, he qualified as a Chartered Accountant with global advisory firm PwC. During his time there, he worked with a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) providing outsourced finance services and strategic advice.

**AspinallVerdi continue growth in the North East with appointment of Ian Ramsay**

Independent property regeneration consultants AspinallVerdi continue to expand with the appointment of Ian Ramsay as a consultant in the firm's Newcastle-upon-Tyne office serving clients throughout the North East of England.

Ian joins the growing practice having completed his MSc in property development and planning at Nottingham Trent University and previously undertaking a bachelors in philosophy at the University of Newcastle. He also has a keen interest in historic buildings, having interned as an historic building surveyor at Nottinghamshire County Council.

His appointment coincides with the first anniversary of the opening of the Newcastle office of AspinallVerdi at The Core, Bath Lane, Newcastle Helix.

**Associate Director promotions for RMT tax experts Rachel and Chris**

Two long-serving members of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors' specialist tax team have earned promotions into new senior roles.

Head of Corporate Tax Rachel Warriner and Head of Personal Tax Chris Moir are now Associate Directors of the Gosforth-based firm and have taken on additional responsibilities for the management of the independent business alongside their everyday roles.

Rachel joined RMT in 2014 as Corporate Tax Manager and was promoted to become head of the corporate tax team three years later.

She has particular expertise in Research and Development tax claims, capital allowances claims, employee share option schemes and company reorganisations.


Chris has been with RMT since 2004, joining straight from university as a Personal Tax Assistant before becoming head of the firm's personal tax team in 2017.

His work covers tax planning, compliance and succession planning issues, and he has a particular specialism in inheritance tax including the use of trusts, tax efficient Wills, pre and post death planning and trust planning.

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RESOURCING

TAX AND NI IMPLICATIONS OF HYBRID AND REMOTE WORKING – HAVE YOU GOT IT RIGHT?



What is the background?

The popularity of employee flexible working patterns has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. There are a variety of working patterns which have evolved including:

- **Majority or all time** spent at the employer's workspace.
- **Distance/homeworking.** Where there is no requirement to work from an employer's workspace or no employer workspace available.
- **Distance/homeworking** – the choice of the employee. Where employees are allowed to work at a location of their choice.
- **Hybrid working.** Where some time is spent at the employer's workspace, but there is flexibility for rest of time.

Often these have been agreed contractually or have developed as a choice that employees have taken. The tax and National Insurance (NI) implications can be very different depending on which working pattern the employee has agreed or chosen. In addition, if an employee is working from home there may also be issues depending on where the employee's home is.

What is the issue?

Tax legislation enables an employer to reimburse an employee tax and NI free for the costs of their travel and subsistence to a place of work which is temporary in nature.

However, with the number of potential workplace permutations there is a risk that employers adopt the wrong tax treatment. For example, an employee who is distance/home working out of choice may potentially face a

tax and NI liability on their expenses in visiting their employer's workplace, depending on the frequency of visits.

It is often difficult to establish an employee's workplace and in some cases, what happens in practice and what is shown in the contract may be completely different. HMRC will look carefully at travel and subsistence if they undertake a review and will look to tax and subject to NI any they consider are in respect of commuting costs.

The situation is even more complicated where the employee's home is outside of the UK and the employee is intending to work remotely from another country.

What do employers need to consider?

Employers need to consider a number of aspects relating to their workers as follows:

- Identification of the workplaces of all employees.
- Review workers terms and conditions to understand the location where they are actually and contractually based and address any differences;
- Update their expenses policies specifying when and where workers travel and subsistence will be reimbursed so that employees are aware of when they can be reimbursed and the implications for tax and NI;
- Ensure that any managers or supervisors responsible for the approval of expenses are aware of the rules relating to the reimbursement of travel expenses;
- Ensure that any expenses claim forms, or corporate credit cards, are set up to identify

and capture the reimbursement of travel costs for the different employee work patterns:

- Review how the amounts reimbursed flow through to various nominal codes and are then picked up for reporting purposes;
- Ensure that any tax exemptions are applied correctly for subsistence related to business journeys;
- Report any taxable items (including any associated VAT) on either via the payroll, the P11D process, or PAYE Settlement Agreement; and
- Carry out an annual review into expenses to ensure the process is working effectively.

How can UNW help?

UNW's experienced team has unrivalled experience in helping employers review and then set up their systems and processes to ensure that they are fully compliant.

Our systematic approach towards these reviews helps identify any areas where errors could occur, and most importantly, how the employer can rectify matters for the future.

Often, an employer will appreciate a "mock" HMRC Employer Compliance Review where our specialists can carry out a "friendly" review based on HMRC's approach towards these types of issues. While the result is often to find areas of weakness, employers often value the proactive approach towards dealing with the issue.

If you would like more information about this, or any other employment tax related matters, please contact UNW's Employment Taxes Partner, Lee Muter, at leemuter@unw.co.uk

New role for Emmersons Founder

Jacqueline Emmerson, founder of multi award winning law firm EmmersonsSolicitors, has recently been appointed Vice President of Sunderland Law Society.

Voted Law Firm of the Year at the National Law Society Excellence Awards, Emmersons specialise in Divorce Law, Wills and Probate, Motoring Law and Residential and Commercial Conveyancing. They act for clients in all parts of the UK.

Jacqueline said "I am tremendously honoured to be appointed to this role. Sunderland is absolutely thriving and a fantastic place to work as a law graduate. We really want to keep the talent we have within the region."

As part of her new role Jacqueline helped organise a social event at St. Peter's Campus, Sunderland University which brought



lawyers and law students together for the first time since lockdown. Guests heard Sharon Appleby from Sunderland BID speak about the influx of new business into the City whilst Sunderland Student Law Clinic also talked about their free service aimed at those who may find it difficult to afford legal assistance.

Ryecroft Glenton trio triumph in Great North Run

Three members of the Ryecroft Glenton team have helped to raise almost £8,000 in aid of a breast cancer charity after completing the Great North Run.

Corporate Finance Partner Nick Johnson, Senior Manager Tony Gillham, and Corporate Finance Executive Sam Shields were among the 60,000 runners to tackle the iconic 13.1 mile course. The trio were joined by Nick's wife Andrea, and daughter Sarah, and Tony's brother-in-law Alvin Leung.

Together they raised a magnificent £7,821 for the Susan Channon Breast Cancer Trust, which aims to invest in those who provide care for breast cancer patients across the North of England.

The Susan Channon Breast Cancer Trust was founded by the family and friends of Susan Channon, a young mother, who died of breast cancer 20 years ago. Relying entirely on voluntary donations, 98% of the funds it collects are spent on improving breast cancer care. It supports doctors, nurses, and



health care professionals to visit UK centres of excellence to bring best clinical practice back to the region, attend national and international breast cancer conferences, as well as professional training courses.

Nigel Channon, who runs the charity said "the team have helped the breast cancer patients and Specialist Nurses in the way support is given at the Breast Cancer Clinic at the RVI. They have made a real difference."

The funds raised have been used in part to help with further training for specialist nurses, but also to purchase books to help children over the age of 3 to have a better idea on how their family life will change as a result of cancer.



Ashleigh and Jessica trade up to Hay & Kilner

Two young North East solicitors are taking their next steps forward in their careers after joining North East law firm Hay & Kilner.

Jessica Cousin and Ashleigh Barrett have joined the Newcastle-headquartered practice's award-winning corporate & commercial and commercial property teams respectively.

Originally from Hexham, Jessica holds a Master's degree in Law from Northumbria University and has specialised in financial and banking contracts during her career so far.

In her new role, she is focussing on commercial contract work for Hay & Kilner's business clients.

Also a Master's graduate from Northumbria, Ashleigh worked as a paralegal after completing her studies, specialising in residential conveyancing work, while since qualifying as a solicitor, she has worked in corporate conveyancing on a range of property projects.

She is now advising both landlords and tenants with leasehold property matters including the grant of a new lease, sale or purchase of an existing lease and the extension of a lease.

Jessica Cousin says: "Negotiating contracts for over five years has enabled me to gain a lot of experience which will be useful to a number of clients across Hay & Kilner's different specialist teams".

"I felt Hay & Kilner's reputation as a close-knit, professional firm would match my own style well and I've had a really friendly welcome from the team."

Ashleigh Barrett adds: "I've been keen to move towards commercial property work for some time and my new role gives me the chance to use the knowledge I've gained so far in meeting this ambition."



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SOLICITORS



Sintons Keith Land helps England to 3rd place

A leading lawyer from the North East has helped England to a third place finish in the Masters Hockey World Cup 2022.

Keith Land played throughout the over 45s tournament, held in Cape Town, South Africa, with England beating the hosts 4-2 in a third-place play off.

England lost their semi-final 1-0 to the Netherlands, who then went on to win the World Cup by beating Germany 3-0.

Highlights from the tournament for England included a 12-0 win against Zimbabwe and 4-0 win against the USA in the group stages.

Keith, head of employment at Sintons, was representing England again at World Cup level, having previously played in the 2017 indoor Masters World Cup. Most recently, he represented his country in England's victory

in the Home Nations tournament in June.

The impressive England performance in the World Cup 2022 marks another significant achievement for Keith in hockey, which he has played since he was 12 years old, following the lead of his father who represented England in the sport at the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo.

Keith also represents Morpeth Hockey Club and - in addition to his work as one of the leading employment lawyers in the North of England, as again confirmed by Legal 500 2023 - Keith travels the country to train with his England teammates, including at the national sports centre Bisham Abbey.

"We're delighted with our third place finish, to finish third in the World Cup is really fantastic. The team played so well, and while it was disappointing to lose in the semi final, we did lose to the eventual winners and I was very happy with how we did overall. It was a fantastic experience and one I certainly won't forget," says Keith.



Swinburne Maddison celebrates key director appointment – one of seven new hires for the firm

Durham City's leading law firm, Swinburne Maddison LLP (Swinburne Maddison) is celebrating a key senior appointment to its team in the newly

created position of business and practice development director.

Phil Hourigan, who has enjoyed a career spanning over thirty years with NatWest Group fulfilling area director positions in commercial banking across the North. More recently he was managing director for a large retail operation. He is well equipped to assist the management team in delivering Swinburne Maddison's business plan and ensuring continued growth and success for the firm.



Northeast family law firm named one of best by market-leading independent research

Silk Family Law has retained its top tier status as one of the leading firms in the UK in the Legal 500, announced this week.

All four partners were named in the research with Margaret Simpson awarded one of only two places in the Legal 500 Hall of Fame, Kim Fellowes and Ian Kennerley – who is also an in-house barrister - cited as 'Leading Individuals' and Wayne Lynn named 'Next Generation Partner'.

For more than 30 years, the Legal 500 has been analysing the capabilities of law firms across the world, with a comprehensive research programme which assesses the strengths of law firms in over 150 jurisdictions and has just released its findings for this year.

Silk is a specialist family law firm with offices in Newcastle, North Yorkshire and Leeds and this accolade cements its excellent reputation for dealing with all aspects of separation, divorce, civil partnerships, nuptial agreements and children issues.

Margaret Simpson said: "The team has worked tirelessly in some very challenging times and we could not be more thankful for the skill, commitment and hard work that everyone has shown here at Silk.

"I am delighted to once again be recognised as one of the regions leading Family Lawyers. I was thrilled to read the client testimonials cited in the research which said we provide clear, efficient, well-informed legal counsel and that as a team we work closely together. It means our clients feel confident knowing we are behind them when it comes to difficult and emotional family law cases."



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RELATIONSHIPS – PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

Emily Cannell, Partner and Head of Family at Mincoffs Solicitors, details the importance of remembering that marriage is not only an emotional union, but also a legally binding contract.

Saying 'I do' means that newlyweds are bound in law, as well as in the eyes of their family and friends.

The majority of people wouldn't sign a contract without knowing the terms it involves, yet many make a decision to marry without an understanding of the implications.

This is particularly true for finances, whether in relation to assets that they hold in their sole name, jointly with their new spouse, or those accumulated prior to the 'big day'.

In the unfortunate event that a marriage breaks down, the main disagreement often relates to financial matters, which can stem from pre-conceived reasoning as to what is fair and who should get what.

The same misconceptions can apply to couples who never actually get round to the big white wedding but instead purchase their dream home and start a family together.

Although the 'common-law' marriage is a myth, there are all sorts of issues that may



Emily Cannell,
Partner and Head of Family at Mincoffs Solicitors

arise if a relationship breaks down in respect of arrangements for children or jointly owned assets and resources, often made more complex by unequal contributions or promises and assurances by one party to the other.

For many, prenuptial or cohabitation agreements are still considered to be reserved for the rich and famous and are more 'New York' than 'North East', however they are growing increasingly popular and are an acceptable and cost effective way to protect against the unknown.

When making huge decisions such as buying a house, getting married or starting a family, it is always important to understand the long-term implications.

Whether someone is about to embark into new territory with an established relationship or in the unfortunate position that one has broken down, it is important to get early advice on financial claims, rights and entitlements.

After all, it does not necessarily have to be cynical to take advice before making a life changing decision, just sensible.

If you think any of the above relates to you and require more information or advice, Mincoffs Solicitors can help. Get in touch with Partner and Head of Family, Emily Cannell by calling 0191 2816151 or emailing ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk

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HAY & KILNER LAUNCHES REBRAND AS IT MOVES INTO NEW LUMEN BUILDING HEADQUARTERS

Leading North East law firm Hay & Kilner has unveiled a brand new look after moving into its new state-of-the-art headquarters.

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

And to celebrate the landmark in the firm's development, it has also revealed a fresh new brand identity which complements its high-quality new surroundings.

The 14,600 sq ft open plan office comes with iconic views over the surrounding cityscape, as well as a large social space and breakout areas, and a dedicated client suite that runs along the front of the building.

The move has enabled Hay & Kilner to bring its whole Newcastle team together in one place while also providing room for new recruits to join as the practice expands.

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

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

Jonathan Waters, managing partner at Hay & Kilner, says: "The Lumen offers everything that

we could ask for in a new headquarters building and we've all felt like kids waiting for Christmas as our moving day has approached.

"The quality of the office space, the facilities it provides and its position within our home city really are all second to none, and being in this modern open plan office environment is already delivering real benefits in terms of collaborative working and sharing ideas.

"Refreshing our brand at the same time as moving made sense and we've updated it to reflect the dynamism, relatability and service excellence on which we pride ourselves.

"The response we've had from clients and contacts to both our new home and new brand has been very positive and the buzz among the team about being in The Lumen is palpable.

"Our focus is now on growing the business by providing high quality advice and support to clients which meets both their commercial and personal needs, understanding what's important to them as people and bringing our different teams together wherever possible to deliver a comprehensive service that meets all their requirements.

"We have more than 75 years of history in Newcastle behind us and now have the perfect base from which to create many, many more."

www.hay-kilner.co.uk



Jonathan Waters



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CLR Law

THE DIVORCE BUSINESS

Dealing with divorcing couples where there is a business involved is a specialist area. At Sweeney Miller Law, we have experienced company and commercial experts who work alongside our family law team to ensure you receive the best outcome for both your company and personally.

First steps first

In most cases where a divorcing couple or one of the spouses owns a business, the first stage is to obtain a business valuation from a specialist forensic accountant who would be agreed by both parties. The expert would go through the accounts, assets, etc. including assessing any share valuations and whether drawdowns can be made, and in turn how this would affect the business.

So that the business can keep going and to enable both parties move on following the split, generally, the aim is to avoid your spouse from keeping any interest in the business. Each business and relationship is unique, so this may not always be the end goal for the splitting couple which is why we treat every case differently.

Impact of divorce on the business

If your spouse has not been involved in your family business, you will likely be concerned about sharing the family business in the settlement, you can be assured that this is generally rare unless the circumstances are extreme. As part of the divorce settlement process, we would assess all assets in the case and usually if there is enough capital from other assets, a share of the business can be avoided by offsetting any business value against those other assets.

That said, we do come across couples who are both actively involved in business together, and also situations where there is a 'silent' shareholder or director in the business and a share is necessary or sought as part of the divorce settlement. Where divorcing couples do share the business as part of the settlement, there are complex tax issues that need to be considered and expert advice taken.

Silent shareholders

Often, where a spouse is a silent shareholder, it is for legitimate tax purposes and they may have had limited or no involvement in the company. In these circumstances, it may be appropriate for the silent spouse to transfer their shares to the spouse who runs the business in exchange for a lump sum. If that happens, there are tax implications on transferring shares as there is a potential for a Capital Gains Tax liability to be triggered. We would therefore always recommend obtaining independent specialist tax advice on the transfer of an asset.

Working together in a business

Cases where couples have worked together in business are much more complex as there are many roles in the business that either side of the divorcing couple could be involved in. In turn, very difficult decisions need to be made regarding whether to continue with the business.

If the splitting couple do decide to continue with the business, we recommend that a shareholders' agreement is drafted, if there is not one already in place. This is a formal legal agreement

setting out each shareholders' obligations, rights and protections, including relevant details about the management of the company, aimed at avoiding any future arguments.

For the benefit of the company, it is important to ensure that any business decisions do not become political and linked to the divorce. Ultimately, some splitting couples may decide that it is impossible to continue working together and one party buys the other's shares, or they sell the business as a whole. This could be dependent on the age of the splitting couple, the value of the business and whether it is the best financial decision based on current market conditions.

Business as usual

We do also come across couples who both wish to carry on with the business but not with each other. This can be an extremely difficult decision as the business needs to continue to operate and thrive. In that situation, it is important to examine what aspects of the business each party deals with and see if the business can continue. The courts can make the decision that it is better for the parties to separate their business if it is clearly unworkable. In these situations, it may be beneficial to consider mediation at an early stage to try and reach an early resolution rather than potentially hindering the business.

Commenting on the challenges of divorcing couples where a business is involved, Head of Sweeney Miller Law's Family Team, Rebecca Cresswell said: "Clearly, each business and separating couple is unique and have different outlooks on their future endeavours. At Sweeney Miller Law, we deal with each client on a personal basis so that we can work towards reaching those goals. We also have excellent and longstanding relationships with accountancy, financial, tax and pension experts who can advise on the valuation and division of assets, including businesses, following a split ensuring that pragmatic and sensible solutions are quickly achieved."

Expert team

At Sweeney Miller Law, as well as an experienced Company and Commercial team to assist in dealing with your company on divorce, we have a large Conveyancing team that can help with the sale or transfer of the family home. We also have an Estate Planning team that can help you create a Will to reflect your new wishes following divorce, including dealing with company matters such as shares.

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, calling 0345 900 5401 or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk



“

*...we deal with
each client on a
personal basis...*

Rebecca Cresswell

YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

JONATHAN WATERS

Managing Partner at North East law firm Hay & Kilner

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born in Hexham and went to school in Newcastle, but moved away from the region to study at Leeds University and the College of Law in York. When I completed my studies, I came back north to join Hay & Kilner and worked my way up through the ranks before becoming managing partner in 2016.

What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

There tends to be a higher proportion of owner/managers in the North East than in other areas and they tend to have a more 'hands on' approach to their business which makes a direct impact on its fortunes. In turn for us, it means that the legal advice and guidance we're providing is having a similarly direct impact on their decision making and commercial success.

What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

The easy accessibility we have to both our major urban centres and a wide range of beautiful places, visitor attractions and all the fresh air you could ever want!

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

Motel One on High Bridge in Newcastle was a favourite meeting place when we were based in our previous offices, but having recently moved to our fantastic new headquarters in The Lumen building within the Newcastle Helix development, we're very much making the most of the top class meeting facilities it provides.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Blackfriars in Newcastle is a favourite venue for a business lunch, while Omni in Monkseaton village offers south east Asian dishes of the highest quality.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

I've lived at the coast for more than 20 years and being on the beach in the fresh sea air is still a favourite way to spend time – hard to comprehend that you're less than half an hour from the centre of Newcastle.



Jonathan Waters

Are the people really friendlier?

Having lived here most of my life, I'd probably define 'friendlier' as 'normal' – people visiting the region possibly have a better vantage point on this than me and an awful lot of those that we work with who are based elsewhere would very much agree that they are.

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

When you're heading north on a train and come across the railway bridge, the succession of bridges that are laid out to your right, framed by the Newcastle Quayside and Sage Gateshead, is an awesome sight. Looking across the causeway to St Mary's Lighthouse in Whitley Bay is another favourite, while Bamburgh Castle is a world-class location.

Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

The North East offers a huge range of opportunities, especially in a climate where

better work/life balance has become more important than ever for many business owners and skilled staff.

We have an extremely strong legal and professional services community which is called upon by top tier clients right across the country, while the Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter where we are now based is attracting some hugely impressive and exciting names from the UK and international tech sector.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

While I've not been permanently based anywhere else during my career, I've worked with many clients and projects right across the UK, and while a critical mass of businesses and capital may be more apparent elsewhere, the North East is capable of leading in several key sectors. The lifestyle and logistical advantages the region offers are also second to none.

www.hay-kilner.co.uk



Paul McGowan - Managing Partner, Collingwood Legal.

MAGNIFICENT SEVEN IN A ROW AS COLLINGWOOD LEGAL MAINTAIN “TOP TIER” STATUS

Newcastle based employment law specialists Collingwood Legal have again been ranked Top Tier by legal industry “bible” the Legal 500 2023 for the seventh year running. The Legal 500 is seen as the key independent legal ranking guide and is published annually based upon research gathered from an extensive process, involving interviewing clients and law firms across the UK.



In addition to the firm’s Top Tier ranking, five of the team: Paul McGowan, Paul Johnstone, Jane Sinnamon, Charlotte McBride and Helen Scott all received individual recognition ranking as key lawyers and “leading individuals”.

The guide includes fantastic feedback from clients including:

“Practice head Paul McGowan is ‘incredibly knowledgeable’, particularly on TUPE and whistleblowing issues.”

“Paul Johnstone inspires an ‘enormous amount of trust in his knowledge and ability’”.

The guide also includes client Testimonials:

“The team really understand our organisations culture and challenges. They are so helpful and quick to respond and can take complex legal

issues and get to the heart of them providing clear advice. Nothing is too much trouble and they actually feel like part of our team rather than an external supplier.”

“Paul McGowan is incredibly knowledgeable and approachable and has an ability to get to the heart of matters clearly and provide concise, tailored advice. Helen Scott and Charlotte McBride are also invaluable and incredibly helpful, credible and effective.”

“Hugely knowledgeable and expert. Pragmatic. We particularly value the expertise available in relation to equality matters.”

Paul McGowan Principal Solicitor and Managing Partner of Collingwood Legal said: “We are absolutely thrilled and humbled to receive this external recognition. It is testament to the

quality of our team and the service levels we strive to deliver for our clients.”

“2022 has been a hugely successful year for the firm and this “Top Tier” ranking follows our recent double success as winners of Employment Law Firm of the Year and Law Firm of the Year (one to five Partners) at this year’s Northern Law Awards.”

“We are passionate about what we do and aim to provide a fantastic service to all our clients. I want to say a huge thank you to all of our clients and contacts and for the feedback given during the Legal 500 research process. Thank you all!”

Collingwood Legal are specialist employment lawyers based in Newcastle upon Tyne.
www.collingwoodlegal.com

MUCKLE LLP GROWS TEAM WITH APPOINTMENT OF SIX NEW TRAINEE SOLICITORS



Back row, L-R: Tom Seed, Georgia Barber, Katharine Ronn, Jason Wainwright. Front row, L-R: Jess Gray, Cameron Horton, Sophie Cragg.

Muckle LLP is delighted to welcome six new trainee solicitors, taking its total trainee tally to thirteen.

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.

Local talent

As a firm, Muckle is keen to support local talent, and 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.

Katharine Ronn, taking her first seat in the Corporate team, is already enjoying life at the firm.

She says: "It's exciting to have started in Corporate; it's a busy team working with high-profile clients and a buzzing atmosphere in which to work. Everyone has been so welcoming and friendly, and I look forward to my future here."

Jess Gray, taking her first seat in Real Estate, is looking forward to putting her studies into practice and embracing the sociable environment at Muckle.

She comments: "After just a few weeks we have already learned so much,

and I can't wait to see what the next two years bring. Everyone has invited us to social events to make us feel part of the team, and I've even joined the Muckle book club."

Georgia Barber joins Jess in Real Estate. She comments: "The other trainees have given us great advice and I have definitely learned a lot already. I'm looking forward to playing for the Muckle netball team."

Cameron Horton returns to Muckle after completing a vacation placement a couple of years ago. He takes his first seat in Agriculture and says: "I'm looking forward to working closely with David Towns and the team. It's been so exciting to start life as a trainee finally– and to find that everyone is just as friendly as I had hoped."

Joining the Construction team, Tom Seed knows he made the right choice. He says: "I'm really happy to be starting my career here at Muckle. I'm impressed by how helpful and knowledgeable everyone is, which has made it so easy to settle in and start contributing."

Sophie Cragg joins the Banking & Restructuring team. She completed the Muckle vacation scheme last year and commented: "I can honestly say the friendly and supportive culture that came across during my placement is genuine. Everyone has been so warm and welcoming."

Investing in growth

Jason Wainwright, Managing Partner at Muckle, said: "We're committed to growth and our people are at the heart of that - so it's important to us that we continue to invest in attracting, developing, and supporting talented people.

"To be welcoming more young talent to the Muckle family is hugely exciting for us all, and I'm confident there will be no shortage of stimulating work experience to come for the trainees."

Find out more about what it's like to work at Muckle visit muckle-llp.com/careers

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TOP TIPS FOR GETTING THE RIGHT RECRUITMENT RESULT

By Sarah Furness, Partner in the specialist Employment Law Team at North East law firm Hay & Kilner

Anyone who is trying to recruit at the moment will most likely tell you what a long and difficult process finding the right person for their vacancy has been.

With the unemployment rate at historically low levels, a significant number of people deciding to change direction in the wake of the pandemic and work permit issues relating to Brexit, businesses in pretty much every industry sector are facing a struggle to find new recruits with the skills they need and at a cost which is affordable to them due to ever increasing salaries.

So, if you're in this situation, here are a few ideas that might help you achieve your recruitment objectives while also avoiding any potential problems and staying on the right side of the law:

- Consider how attractive your recruitment process is to applicants. Query is the application process user friendly, is the job role and the pay and benefits it attracts clear, are you presenting your organisation in a professional manner during the process by being responsive, approachable and professional? First impressions make lasting impressions!
- Think about ways to attract candidates to you. Of course, pay and benefits are important, but are you clearly advertising your business's approach to training, career development and progression? CSR, environmental/sustainability policies and home working are also important now to many job seekers.
- Make sure you fully understand and act on your recruitment and equal opportunities policies and shape your recruitment process within their boundaries. Job applicants can pursue discrimination claims if they are unsuccessful. Particular attention should be paid to the need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled candidates with questions about a candidate's health or attendance record usually being prohibited. All employees involved in the recruitment process should have undergone equal opportunities



Sarah Furness

training, while getting a legal opinion on any issues about which they're not sure makes great sense.

- Most job adverts/descriptions ask for very specific qualifications, experience and personal qualities, which some able candidates might find too prescriptive, so make sure to distinguish between what's essential and what's desirable.
- Having an equitable and rigid assessment process, where candidates are asked the same questions which are testing and relevant to the job, is essential, while involving two or more people in the assessment process will help ensure objective decisions are reached at its end.
- However impressive a candidate is and however keen you are for them to start work, make sure that you follow up on their references to confirm they are everything they say they are. Job offers should be conditional until references are verified along with other mandatory checks such as right to work checks and often, DBS checks. If job offers aren't conditional and you withdraw a job offer, you will probably have to pay the notice period referred to in the offer letter.
- Failing to provide feedback to unsuccessful candidates can increase the likelihood of claims that they didn't get the job on discriminatory

grounds. Keep notes of the shortlisting process, interviews and discussions afterwards, along with application forms, adverts and job descriptions, just in case they're required as evidence in any discrimination claim. Make sure they are however destroyed at some stage further to your data protection obligations!

- When a new employee does start, make sure they are provided with a full induction and training, and that expectations for their performance are set, agreed and reviewed. Detailed job descriptions can assist here. If expectations aren't being met, use the employee's probationary period to conduct regular reviews and clearly outline the improvements that need to be made and by when and provide full support. Failing an employee's probationary period should be the last resort so invest the time during the probationary period to make sure the time and money you spent investing in the recruitment process is not wasted!

For further information on recruitment issues, support with equal opportunities training and policies, or any other aspect of employment law, please contact Sarah Furness at sarah.furness@hay-kilner.co.uk, call 0191 232 8345 or visit www.hay-kilner.co.uk



LEGAL FIRM DOUBLES IN SIZE FOLLOWING ACQUISITION

One of the region's fastest-growing legal firms has doubled in size overnight after acquiring a 25-year-old counterpart. Dale Smith, founder and director of Grey-Smith Legal, talks to us about what the news means for his company – and why it's particularly thrilling for him.

I'm delighted that Grey-Smith Legal (GSL), part of the SDDE Smith Group family of companies, has just bought Cochrane's Law Firm, doubling our workforce and expanding our reach – all less than two years since we started out.

It's great news for GSL, which has seen a stellar start since our inception less than two years ago

when we launched our first office in Saltburn. The business has grown rapidly since opening its doors to clients in early 2021, and this is a proud moment in our journey so far.

And it's also great news for Cochrane's, which has built a fantastic reputation in the Stockton-on-Tees area over the last 25 years. Their outstanding customer service is set to complement our already award-winning Grey-Smith Legal team, and we'll be taking on its 15 colleagues across offices in Billingham and Stockton to expand our geographical reach.

The acquisition made perfect sense to us; our two firms are well aligned on the services that we provide to clients, which include residential and commercial conveyancing, as well as private client work such as wills and probate, lasting powers of attorney and independent legal advice.

This move means we'll now be able to offer legal services from Skelton, Spennymoor, Stockton and Billingham, and, thanks to this, the business is expecting to see revenue in the next financial year exceed £2.5 million. We also expect to continue to grow our colleague base from 25 to 40 across the next 12 months.

To ensure continuity, the Cochrane's Law Firm brand will now sit proudly alongside Grey-Smith Legal, meaning clients, colleagues and the communities that the businesses serve can rest assured of the same high levels of service they have come to expect.

We're all incredibly excited to be working with Jim Cochrane and his team, all of whom bring vast knowledge and experience that will greatly

support the growth and development of these two brands moving forwards.

On a personal note, as a huge football fan I am particularly thrilled to be working with Jim, who, prior to his career in the law, was part of Jack Charlton's Championship-winning Middlesbrough team, in 1974.

He followed that with a near decade-long year career in football, playing for another North East club, Darlington, until 1980, before turning his hand to a successful legal career.

Back to the law, and Jim said: "With the two firms being similar in size and make-up, it made sense to come together to create a larger firm able to provide a comprehensive legal service to the local communities, as well as further afield.

"My team and I are thoroughly looking forward to working with Grey-Smith and I'm positive that exciting times lie ahead thanks to the extra manpower, skills and investment that this acquisition leads to."

At GSL, it has always been our ambition to be one of the North East's leading law firms when it comes to conveyancing and private client work, along with our focus on providing exceptional client service.

As we continue to grow in the years ahead, we are keen to continue to attract, develop and retain the North East's best talent as well as providing opportunities for anyone looking to get started in the legal profession.

For more information on Grey-Smith Legal, and The SDDE Smith Group, visit www.sdde-smithgroup.com



Mamma Mia!

St James' Square Law Firm recently hosted a Mamma Mia themed charity ball in partnership with its Charity of the Year, The Chronicle Sunshine Fund, at the Grand Hotel in Gosforth Park.

It was a huge success that raised over £35,000 to help provide disabled children across the North East with specialist, life enhancing equipment that would otherwise be unavailable to them. From all the team at St James' Square and The Chronicle Sunshine Fund, a massive thank you to the wonderful guests who supported the event.







Healthwatch Praises Community Team

An NHS learning disabilities team has been recognised as part of Healthwatch Newcastle's Nominate a Star scheme.

The Newcastle Community Learning Disabilities Team, part of Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust (CNTW), was nominated by a member of the public.

The Nominate a Star scheme enables patients and service users to give positive feedback to healthcare teams and celebrate the care they have received, recognising the contribution staff and services make.

Karen Bell, Pathway Manager for the Community Team Learning Disabilities, said: "We were very surprised when we found out but it's a great achievement. We're a close knit, dedicated team, and I'm really proud. The recognition has come at a difficult time for us, so it has been a real boost."

The team works with people with learning disabilities who have mental health problems, physical health problems or behaviours that challenge.

The Star Award aims to recognise any member of the local community who has helped to make a difference in someone's health and social care. An individual, team, department, organisation, or service can be nominated whether they are a professional, volunteer, patient, or member of the public.

Phill Capewell, Interim CEO at Healthwatch Newcastle said:

"At Healthwatch Newcastle we champion outstanding health and social care services that are meeting the needs of local people. We love to help recognise and celebrate the outstanding achievements of health and social care champions, awarding Healthwatch Star awards to people and services nominated by the public for special recognition."

Nominate a Healthwatch Star at www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk/nominate-a-star



Freemasons Vision to Help Sight Loss Charity

Kind hearted Northumberland Freemasons have donated £15,000 to help a Morpeth based charity carry on giving help and practical support to the county's visually impaired.

Vision Northumberland supports people affected by sight loss and visual impairment. Their services are volunteer driven, many of whom have sight loss themselves, and include befriending, home assistance, technology support, access to vision aids and assessments, and other information and advice.

The £15,000 donation over three years will help the charity with its day to day running costs and support other activities such as reducing isolation for older people.

Julie Boyak, CEO of the charity was delighted with the help that Northumberland Freemasons have given:

"We support around 200 people each week with phone calls and home visits through our network of 150 volunteers. This service is invaluable, and part of the donation will help to ensure that it carries on. We are very grateful for the help we've been given by the freemasons."

Head of Northumberland Freemasons, Ian Craigs was impressed with the work being carried out by Vision Northumberland.

"I've been talking to some of the people who use the services provided and its heartening to know that there is such good support available for people who are visually impaired both in the form of advice and guidance but also with new technology to make people's lives easier to manage."

Head of North East charity awarded prestigious award at Women of the Year

Juliet Sanders, the CEO and founder of food poverty Feeding Families, has been awarded Women of the Year - Community Champion at a star-studded event in London.

Women of the Year hosted their 68th annual event to recognise and celebrate over 400 women from across the UK who have achieved remarkable things this year. The event champions women from all walks of life and each guest is nominated by a member of the Women of the Year Council in recognition of her personal achievement or inspiration and



attends the gathering as a 'Woman of the Year'.

The award recognises Juliet's hard work and determination to support thousands of people experiencing food poverty within the region. Set up in 2018 as a Christmas project that matched, has now expanded into being a year-round operation.

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



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to learn more or
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THE PERCY HEDLEY FOUNDATION

The Percy Hedley Foundation was first created by parents in 1953, as a special school for 12 children with cerebral palsy. Molly and Stephen Darke campaigned for the school after their son, Stephen, was born with the condition, and so started their mission to help their child reach his full potential.

We've continued with that mission, and over the years we have extended and developed the work we do to make sure children, young people and adults with a range of disabilities get the best specialist care, education and support.

In 2023 we turn 70 years old, and we now

support over 650 members and their families every week from across the North East, across two schools, a college, an adult learning programme and four specialist residential homes.

For the last two years, our dedicated key workers, including carers, teachers, therapists, and support staff; have worked tirelessly through a global pandemic to ensure each member of the Foundation received high-quality care. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, from staff shortages to a decrease in fundraising activity, we pushed through with our members being at the heart of what we do. In 2021 our teams delivered over 1.2 million hours of special education, care and therapy.

In 2022 alone, we've been working towards some exciting projects. One of our schools became the first school in the north of England to have an Innwalk; a piece of life-changing equipment that is a powerful 3-in-1 device for sitting, standing and moving, particularly for people who would be unable to stand on their own. We also joined Northumbria Police in their first ever police cadet group for students with special educational needs and partnered with local artist James Dixon from Lines Behind to create a built for purpose, contemporary lunch café for our college students.

We don't want our progress to stop here. For our 70th birthday we're planning some of our biggest events yet. In February we're hosting our bigger and better annual Percy Hedley

Ball, where businesses and companies can get involved for an evening full of glitz and glamour with a drinks reception, followed by an amazing five course meal and fantastic entertainment throughout the evening. In September, we'll also have our largest ever #TeamPercyHedley taking part in the Great North Run to raise vital funds, and we're encouraging as many people as possible to join us.

Want more ways to get involved? We're looking for incredible North-East businesses to make us their charity of the year to mark our 70th birthday. This partnership can have a long-lasting impact on your business as well as our charity. It's an opportunity to unite your staff behind an inspiring cause and to demonstrate your company's commitment to making a difference in your community. From skydiving and ziplines to volunteering, servicing our vehicles to donating a percentage of sales, we would love to discuss the many ways we can work together and help deliver amazing experiences for the 650 families we support every week.

We'd love to hear from anyone that would like to get involved with us here at The Percy Hedley Foundation. You can contact our fundraising team on fundraising@percyhedley.org.uk to discuss how you can make a difference.

Fundraising children have a heart

Kindhearted County Durham schoolchildren have raised more than £5k to help save lives in their community.

The pupils at Ribbon Academy, Murton, initially hoped to raise £500 in aid of heart charity Red Sky Foundation, after the charity's founder visited the school to teach them the importance of a healthy heart and how a defibrillator works.

Instead, by taking part in a sponsored run, obstacle courses, triathlons, treasure hunts and danceathons, they managed to raise a grand total of £5,117.66.

And that has funded three defibrillators for their school and local community

Red Sky Foundation supports cardiac-related causes across the North East, helping babies, children and adults living with heart conditions and was founded by Sergio and Emma Petrucci after their daughter, Luna, now eight, was born with two complex heart conditions.

To thank all those who cared for her, the couple began fundraising for the Children's Heart Unit and have raised more than £700,000 to date.

"Due to the generosity of the local community, the fundraising target to support Red Sky Foundation was multiplied by 10," said teacher Ashleigh Sheridan, who organised the children's



fundraising efforts.

"Children have enjoyed learning about the importance of following a healthy diet and lifestyle to maintain a good heart and have also been taught skills to help save lives."

Sergio Petrucci, Red Sky Foundation said:

"The defibrillators will protect pupils, staff and visitors to the schools, including the Murton communities from sudden cardiac arrest.

"We're delighted with the amount raised by the school, which has far exceeded everyone's expectations to help provide even greater cardiac care for anyone who needs help."



Christmas tale for North East charity

Christmas has come early for a North East charity Wag & Company with a special donation made by acclaimed regional artist Alex Clark.

Animal loving artist Alex Clark has donated two unique designs for Christmas cards for the charity as well as financing the print and production of 5,000 of them.

Alex has built her reputation on her sympathetic and quirky depiction of dogs, cats, birds, and farm animals. Living near Shotley Bridge, she has a

thriving wholesale business based in County Durham along with a busy shop in Corbridge, Northumberland.

From these bases Alex has also established a strong online presence. The Corbridge gallery showcases her limited-edition prints, greeting cards, gift wrap, gift bags, textiles, cushions, placemats, fridge magnets, bookmarks and a wide variety of stationery items.

Alex said: "I love dogs and have supported Wag & Co a little in the past. I had a meeting earlier this year with Diane, the founder, and was taken by her passion and moved by the stories of the people the charity helps.

"Following covid I think many of us have a better understanding of what it would be like to be alone and isolated in your home. Wag volunteers and their friendship dogs do such a marvellous job going to people's homes to be a friend and lift their spirits."

Diane Morton, founder and CEO of Wag and Co, said: "We have been blown away by the generosity of Alex, who has not only designed and donated this year's fabulous Wag Christmas cards, but she's also produced them all for us."

Wag & Company was set up seven years ago to tackle loneliness and isolation among older and vulnerable dog lovers in the North East. The charity has a network of hundreds of volunteers who visit older dog lovers in their own homes as well as in care homes or medical establishments - the only visiting dog charity to visit people at home.

The cards come in packs of six and are printed on high quality paper in two designs: a trio of Friendship Dogs, and a perfect illustration of a Wag friend at Christmas, looking out at everyone else's happy, dog filled Christmas.

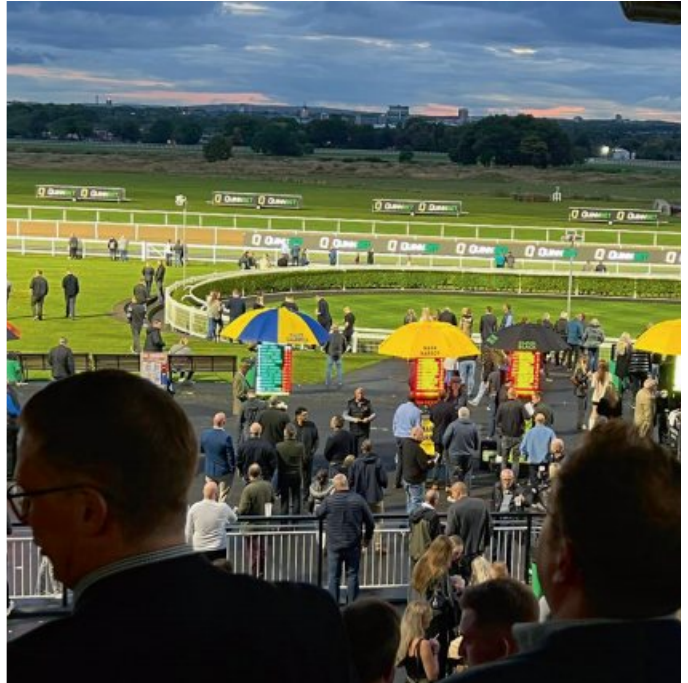
Wag is selling packs of six cards for £6 or two packs for £10. All proceeds go to the provision of Wag Friendship Dogs. To find them visit the Wag online shop: wagandcompany.co.uk/product/alex-clark-for-wag-at-christmas-two-pack



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A record racing event for The Lord's Taverners

The Lord's Taverners held its annual race day at Gosforth Park Racecourse at the end of September.

Privately hosted in the Gosforth Park suite, the 270 guests thoroughly enjoyed the event and the charity raised in excess of £14,000 which is a regional record for this event, which will all go towards giving disabled and disadvantaged kids a sporting chance in the North East region.

Jamie Graham, chairman of the Northumberland and Durham Lord's Taverners, "The event was a great success and a record income which is testament to all those who attended and donated towards the raffle and table sweepstake so generously, we look forward to welcoming you to the next event."

For information on future Lords Taverners events please contact Jamie Graham (Jamie.graham@turntown.co.uk)



CHARITY OF THE MONTH

In this edition we talk to...

JULIET SANDERS

CEO and founder of food poverty charity, Feeding Families.

Why was the charity founded?

I suppose, like most charities, it was the cry of the heart to a need. On meeting a family in desperate poverty, my husband and I reached out to help by giving them food. It seemed a natural response that anyone would have done if they had the means. Little did we think that one small act would have such big implications! This happened around Christmas time and the following year a friend said they would like to help someone as well. Before I knew it, the idea of one family helping another snowballed into our Christmas project with over 700 families helped in 2017. That figure rose to over 9000 last year and 2022? Who knows?

The underlying ethos is that we are all a community and we should help each other as if we were a family. Although we are a food charity, we are not a food bank. As we have expanded we have seen there are gaps in provision so we focus on the people that have difficulty accessing food banks. We provide our food boxes in bulk to charities, schools and organisations who distribute to those most in need.

Which area do you cover?

We cover the whole of the north east from Berwick to Saltburn - basically the four counties - Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Co Durham and Cleveland. We have bases in Blaydon and Fishburn that we distribute from so we can reach across the region.

What type of fundraising events do you have?

We were only beginning to push our fundraising strategy at the start of Covid and then, like so many others, we were derailed.

Our supporters run all sorts of events for us such as sponsored runs, head shaves, plant sales, swims, walks - anything they can think of. Because we are still a relatively new charity we are still getting this off the ground but hope there will be many more exciting things coming soon.

How did you adapt during the Coronavirus pandemic?

We were very much still a Christmas-focused charity when the pandemic hit. Very quickly we realised we needed to make a response to what was happening and this was the start of our emergency boxes. These were packed and distributed both individually and in bulk to charities. It was a great opportunity to work out a model that was different to everyone else and this is what we have carried forwards.

During this period we also piloted our "Welcome Home" boxes. One of our volunteers saw an opportunity to help patients being discharged from hospital to an empty house. Our boxes contain no and low cook food - perfect if you have been unwell. These have been so successful in the NHS that we are getting requests from other charities. Sadly demand has also risen due to the price of fuel and the worry people have about cooking.

What have been your proudest moments so far?

Although it's not an isolated single moment, I am most proud of the way and the speed the charity has grown. It's been amazing to see people "get it" and come on board. Whether that's trustees, staff or volunteers, it's an army of people, all doing what they can and making a big difference. Sometimes I stand in the middle of it all and can't believe what's happening. Last year we engaged over 3000 volunteers, impacted 44,000 people and delivered 161,000 meals. This year will be much bigger.

On a personal level, finding out I have been selected as Women of the Year Community Champion was astonishing. That anyone knew I existed was the first surprise. Winning a national award was the second. While I'm actually quite awkward at being singled out, to me, I feel I am accepting on behalf of everyone else who actually IS Feeding Families.

Who are your main trustees and patrons?

Our Chair since March 2022 is Emma Jarvis. Emma has a strong business background and she is supported by Jon Regan who supports with IT issues, Alex Wilby, a lawyer, David Jackson, who began as my business mentor and has progressed onto the team, Tony Byrne, an ex NHS director and Brian Palmer who is MD of Cello Electronics, who is our treasurer. We have some great skills around the table to lead us forward.

Carol Malia of Look North is our patron. In the very first year, Carol somehow heard what we were doing and organised a food collection at the BBC. When she turned up later on to do some filming, I took the opportunity to ask if she would be our patron and fortunately she didn't hesitate!

What are you currently working on?

We have a youth project in schools which educates on food poverty but also empowers children to come up with their own suggestions and solutions. This could be a fundraising event to raise money, a food collection or a campaign to spread kindness. The idea is that we can all do something and just because it's small shouldn't stop us. It's great to see this idea catching fire and children getting so enthusiastic. It's never too young to begin.

And of course, there's Christmas! We are already planning and bulk buying in readiness for our 14 days of packing in December. We are also busy registering people who need a Christmas hamper and will be looking for donors in November to match to one of these families and buy and deliver their Christmas dinner. On the first day we opened we had 1000 applications so it will be a busy year.

What does the future hold?

I wish I knew. Every time we make a prediction we seem to exceed it in record time. I think in the next year we will be pushed very hard to supply many more boxes week on week. At the same time we have seen donations go down and food prices go up and there are times we stand in the packing centre and wonder how we will do it, but somehow we always do. We don't get given much food these days so 90% of it is currently bought with the money we fundraise.

What I'd like to see the future hold is to vacate the building and all move on to other things because food poverty was a thing of the past. Sadly I can't see that happening any time soon.

feedingfamilies.org.uk



“

*...Little did we think
that one small act
would have such big
implications...*



Juliet Sanders



NE Youth Hole in One

NE Youth recently hosted their annual golf day to raise money for disadvantaged young people on a rather wet day at Ramside Hall.

The weather didn't put off the 19 teams who enjoyed the competition which was won by Nichol Associates. After the golf everyone sat down to a two course dinner, raffle and prize giving.

The event was kindly sponsored by Nichol Associates, Arian EMS and Vertu Sunderland.



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GOOD EMPLOYER BRANDS WILL ATTRACT TOP TALENT

The recruitment market is saturated with companies looking to fill positions and people hunting for more than just a nine to five. Securing the top talent is tough but having a good employer brand could bring the perfect candidate direct to your door.

As the economy gets more challenging, recruiting top talent into a business will become increasingly more difficult. Candidates are wary of moving roles as the cost of living continues to bite and inflation increases, particularly if they are settled with their current employer.

At the same time, the Covid pandemic has given both employees and businesses more flexibility in how they want to work.

For firms looking to fill specific roles, this uncertainty will require them to work hard to find, engage and retain the true talent they need. The talent pool needs to be larger than it has been before and requires a more proactive approach – taking the role to a candidate as opposed to just posting a job ad and sifting through CVs.

Organisations are being forced to question what they are willing to offer and whether their recruitment process is focused on the long-term growth of the business or just about filling a position. There is a vast amount of choice and competition for individuals, so companies need to think more strategically about recruitment to stand out in the crowd. Most don't have access to a recruitment specialist internally, so rely heavily on external recruiters, LinkedIn and the placement of job adverts.

This process, however, doesn't necessarily generate the best results. Talentheads works differently, operating as an extension of a business and taking full accountability for strategy and recruitment – as the brand of the business.

It is far more than just firing over CVs. The

Talentheads business model is not about volume, it focuses instead on partnering with firms with similar values and mindsets that are looking to grow through long-term recruitment strategies and processes.

There is also no traditional placement fee. As internal recruiters, Talentheads complements a business with experience and exposure to challenges and insight, from employer branding and talent mapping to attraction strategies and recruitment initiatives.

Business people looking to secure the right people with the right knowledge need to ask themselves what it is they want to stand for in the employment market and whether their approach to recruitment is more of a longer-term strategy rather than simply getting bums on seats.

Recruitment is all about looking after the current team within a business first, and then building on those strong and clear foundations. It takes time and capacity to increase the exposure of an 'employer brand', but this will pay dividends by generating interest among those people that aren't actively job hunting.

Are you ready to empower your business through your people? Get in touch with Talentheads on 0191300 8688 or via hello@talentheads.co.uk

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SUPPORT AVAILABLE FOR NORTH EAST MANUFACTURERS TO ADOPT DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY



Billingham-based BA Joinery is using digital technology to transform the way it works.

The business, which specialises in the design, manufacture and installation of bespoke, high quality architectural joinery, has taken part in Made Smarter Adoption North East, a fully-funded programme that helps manufacturers in the region increase profits, improve efficiency and grow by investing in digital technology.

Sam Reed, Head of Business Support at BA Joinery, explains what it's been like to take part.

Why did you decide to take part in Made Smarter Adoption North East?

We've been interested for some time in going digital and investing in our own dedicated software package. We just didn't know what solution would suit us best and we were receiving lots of differing advice.

Prior to joining the programme, did you use digital technology within your business to improve efficiencies and productivity?

We've previously used various off the shelf products and packages which meant we had multiple digital solutions across the business. We wanted something that was our own and could connect everyone together.

What were some of the barriers to introducing digital technology within your business?

The main barrier has always been the lack of knowledge in what digital solution we actually needed as a business.

Previously, we didn't have access to a forum where we could gain different opinions and advice from the professionals who know best.

We know how much of a big investment this is and wanted to ensure we took the time to get this right.

What digital technology have you introduced in your business as a result of the programme?

We are in the process of getting an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. It's a full end-to-end programme that will include a CRM element.

Each department of the company will be involved in the ERP and, at the end of the process, they will all work in unison. We can integrate all areas of the business - from estimates and health and safety to project management and deliveries. This new system will allow us to keep track of everything in one place.

We've made sure staff come on the journey with us too, so they can see the benefits. Introducing this kind of change can bring trepidation, but our staff have been involved in how the system will look to make sure it works for them, after all they are the ones who know their job the best.

How will this improve your business?

We think it will make us more streamlined, more efficient; and that means we can convert projects faster. It will help with quality control too and add to the existing accreditations we have in place.

Why is it important for manufacturing businesses to adopt digital technology?

We think it's important to move with the times. Digital is only going to become a bigger part of all our lives so working from pen and paper or an outdated computer system will only make you fall behind.

It's good for employers and staff too and it should be viewed as a positive experience. Digital solutions hike up capacity, meaning businesses can secure and convert more work.

Why should other manufacturing businesses in the North East take part in Made Smarter Adoption North East?

Made Smarter Adoption North East gives you an insight into what's worked for other people before you dive into something yourself. It's important to get a good understanding of the solutions out there and you need help and guidance from an expert to do that.

The North East Growth Hub and Tees Valley Business are working with Made Smarter to deliver Made Smarter Adoption North East in the North East LEP and Tees Valley Combined Authority areas.

Businesses in the North East LEP area (Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle upon Tyne, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland) can find out more about Made Smarter Adoption North East at www.northeastgrowthhub.co.uk.

Businesses in the Tees Valley Combined Authority area (Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Stockton-on-Tees, Redcar and Cleveland) can find out more about Made Smarter Adoption North East at www.teesvalleybusiness.com



TYNE TUNNELS HONOUR THE QUEEN WITH 100 TREES TO CREATE GREEN LIVING LEGACY



The operators of the Tyne Tunnels, TT2, have donated 100 trees to be planted in honour of the late HM Queen Elizabeth II.

The Tyne Tunnels, which were both officially opened by the Queen, have made a donation to plant 100 trees in urban areas and schools to benefit future generations across the United Kingdom – as part of her Green Canopy initiative.

The Queen visited the region to open the first Tyne Tunnel in 1967 and the second Tyne Tunnel in 2012. On the visit in 2012, Her Majesty planted an oak tree at the entrance to the Northbound tunnel, in South Tyneside, to commemorate the opening of the second tunnel.

The Queen's Green Canopy will establish over one million new trees in the UK. It was created to mark the Platinum Jubilee and has been extended by His Majesty The King to give people the opportunity to plant trees in memory of Her Majesty.

The first of TT2's trees is an oak tree planted outside the TT2 offices in Wallsend.

Another two trees have been planted with students at local Percy Hedley schools, Percy Hedley, Killingworth and Northern Counties School, Jesmond, in the school's educational forest areas.

Lou Horsefield, Head of Fundraising and Engagement at The Percy Hedley Foundation said: "We are delighted that Tyne Tunnel has given us the opportunity to plant a tree at both our Percy Hedley School and Northern Counties School sites in memory of Her Majesty The Queen. The Foundation was founded in 1953, the same year as the Queen's Coronation, and these trees will provide a great reminder to our pupils of her extraordinary life of service to our country."

Further trees will be planted by The Queen's Green Canopy partners between October 2022 and March next year, during the planting season.

This announcement follows the recent news that TT2 is working with Tyne Rivers Trust to habitat-restore 45,000 square metres of forest that sits directly above the Northbound tunnel.

TT2's CEO, Philip Smith, said: "The Queen has a very special place in our hearts and the team wanted to do something to honour her memory. The trees will be a lasting tribute to her extraordinary service to her country, and her people."

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

The biggest impact has been made from optimising energy consumption through employee initiatives and education, LED lighting installation and purchasing 100% green energy.



The recent introduction of open-road-tolling, a team garden with beehives, employee composting and an electric vehicle added to the TT2 fleet are all supporting the Government's 2050 net zero target by reducing the Tyne Tunnel's carbon footprint and energy consumption.

TT2 recently announced that it is celebrating its green achievements by off-setting its 140 employees' annual carbon footprints – which are a combined total of 1,043 tonnes, costing £4,533 – by donating that cash to help reduce pollution in Delhi, India.

www.tt2.co.uk



Paul Butler, chief executive at the North East Automotive Alliance

TECHNOLOGY SHOWCASE IS HUGE ATTRACTION AT EXPO

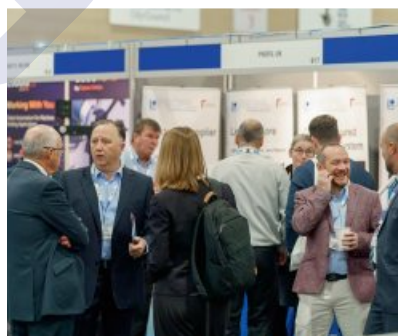
A record-breaking 700-plus delegates gathered at the Beacon of Light for the annual North East Automotive Expo.

Organised by the North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA), it featured over 120 exhibitors, 100 1-2-1 meetings and the largest technology showcase to date.

Paul Butler, CEO of NEAA, said: "The number of delegates continues to grow and this year's Expo continues that theme – but it's also about the quality that attends too. It was a very vibrant and fast-paced event, which chimes perfectly with the rate of growth and innovation that we are seeing right now within the North East automotive supply chain.

"While there was a great deal of activity across the day, we noticed, in particular, that the technology showcase, which puts a spotlight on companies bringing innovation to the sector, attracted a great deal of attention from delegates and we are looking to further expand this feature of the Expo next year and beyond.

"A huge thanks to our loyal sponsors, the exhibitors, who we know from talking to many of them, made new contacts and unearthed potential commercial opportunities and to the delegates who turned up in such numbers."





The keynote speaker was Alan Johnson, vice president manufacturing at Nissan Motor Manufacturing UK (NMMU), who touched on digitalisation, skills and localisation and Nissan's drive towards net zero with its EV36Zero £1bn Electric Vehicle Hub.

Sunderland City Council was main sponsor for a seventh year and Invest South Tyneside, Advance Northumberland, ThinkPrime, CMYK, Horizon Works, Masfix, Ekobox and Reliance High-Tech, showed their support with repeat sponsorship. New sponsor, Nokia was partner sponsor, Manosun sponsored the Technology Showcase and Smart Manufacturing Solutions and SMS Tech sponsored the 'new for 2022' Drinks and Networking Reception.

The NEAA also hosted an SME Zone which offers vital support to firms looking to expand their presence in the automotive sector. The ERDF funded programme, Supply Chain North East, provided fully funded exhibition space to over 20 eligible companies in the North East Local Enterprise Partnership area.

Sarah Wharrier, regional sales director at Expo registration sponsor, CMYK, said: "CMYK was delighted to be involved with such a pivotal event for the automotive sector in our region. It was fantastic to be able to network with some of our existing clients and generate new business relationships with fellow NEAA members."

Steven Patterson, country manager UK & Europe at technology showcase sponsor, Manosun, said: "It was everything and more than I expected to be honest. As Manosun cement our presence here in the UK, particularly in the North East, we sponsored the Expo to gain exposure in the automotive marketplace. I originally joined the NEAA to become part of this event alone but the business support I have been given from the team has been fantastic and it truly is a valuable membership cluster."

northeastautomotivealliance.com



YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

LEANNE NAIRN

Health & safety consultant at Carney Consultancy

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I grew up in East Yorkshire and also spent over 11 years working offshore in the oil and gas industry.

I actually met my husband working offshore and we now live in Whitley Bay, North Tyneside.

What is your role at Carney Consultancy?

I am a health and safety consultant, working within the construction industry. At Carney Consultancy, we are the company that people in the North East come to for Quality, Safety, Health and Environmental (QSHE) training and consultancy.

I enjoy working closely with clients to support and manage all aspects of health and safety whilst on construction sites. I ensure they have appropriate documentation and I provide advice for construction management teams, from hazard and risk advice to sequencing of works in terms of health and safety.

We also ensure our health and safety training courses are current and valid, meeting industry needs and, where appropriate, are accredited to the appropriate examining bodies.

We maintain close and regular contact with institutions like the Health & Safety Executive (HSE), British Standards and the British Safety Council.

I have also recently qualified as a fire risk assessor following a year of study. Including myself, there are three fire risk assessors within Carney Consultancy. We carry out assessments in residential properties managed by clients, in offices and more complex buildings such as factories and warehouses.

I have always had an interest in fire safety, however, the recent changes and developments in legislation, piqued my curiosity and, learning from my colleagues, I decided to further my career in this area. I have been provided with openhanded support and advice throughout the process and encouraged at every step.

Fire Safety of buildings and fire risk assessments have become more visible in recent years due to the tragic events at Grenfell Tower on the 14th June 2017. Five years on, and governing bodies are still actively rewriting fire safety legislation to determine what new safety standards can be achieved and maintained.

The Grenfell fire and Dame Judith Hackitt's review highlighted a culture of non-compliance, indicating that certain fire safety measures were

not adequate and not fully understood. The research, developments and improvements of Fire Safety Legislation is a positive outcome of such a tragedy.

What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East?

I think the North East has a huge amount to offer. People are its foundation and the region is renowned for being sociable and that very much flows throughout the team at Carney Consultancy.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

There are lots of brilliant places. I particularly like Kaltur on High Bridge Street, Newcastle, which is a lovely Spanish wine bar and restaurant. I also really like Signature Lounge in Whitley Bay and Trenchers restaurant in Spanish City, Whitley Bay. I also enjoy the variety of restaurants that we have on the North Shields Fish Quay.

Are the people really friendlier?

I would say so, yes. Not being from the region and working offshore for 11 years from the age of 19, what I really like about the North East and working at Carney Consultancy is the friendliness and family feel.

I was fortunate to experience that same family environment working offshore with a fantastic crew. I am fortunate that I have settled into the North East and to work again with a great team of people.

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

It has to be from my house in Whitley Bay looking up towards St Mary's Lighthouse.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

Yes – I'm from Yorkshire and as previously mentioned, enjoyed working offshore for 11 years. To compare working offshore and onshore is hard to do because the roles were totally different. I have touched on the importance of a strong team and I have experienced that both offshore and in my current role.

Having spent over 11 years working off shore in the oil and gas industry I have gained valuable experience in a high-risk industry, with stringent safety systems.

www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk



Leanne Nairn



L-R: Kevin Croft, site director, Verisure, Horacio Perez, UK chief operating officer, Verisure, elected mayor of the North of Tyne, Jamie Driscoll and Gabino Sanchez, managing director, Verisure.

VERISURE UK TO EMPLOY 120 BY END OF YEAR AS IT RELOCATES WITHIN QUORUM PARK

Verisure has invested £3.5 million into new office to facilitate expansive growth. The 90,000 sq. foot office space is predicted to house over 1,200 employees in three years.

In line with its explosive growth, Verisure UK is to add an additional 120 employees to its 650-strong team by the end of the year, following the relocation of its Centre of Excellence within Quorum Business Park, North Tyneside.

Following a £3.5 million investment, Verisure, Europe's largest alarm provider, has moved from the Neon Building to nearby Q12, which provides three times the space as its previous office at 90,000 sq. ft and will eventually house 1,200 employees.

The first two floors at Q12 consist of modern working spaces, while the third floor will have a dedicated canteen and break out areas.

The firm hit 100,000 customers in the UK in March 2022 and a portfolio increase of nearly 50% in the last 12 months. The milestone was reached just months after Verisure reached four million customers worldwide, in December 2021.

As a result, nearly three years after its arrival in Newcastle, the Centre of Excellence has expanded twice as fast as expected in terms of headcount, to keep up with the unprecedented sales growth.

Verisure has created 650 jobs since its opening and is actively seeking 120 new staff before the new year. Headcount is anticipated to approach 1,200 in the next three years. This compares with its initial forecast of 1,000 jobs after ten years.

The Centre of Excellence is the rapidly growing hub for customer service, technical support, field operations, training, IT, telesales, HR and finance. In its latest recruitment drive, Verisure is looking to fill a wide range of roles including customer service, sales, operations, data analysts, telesales, technical advisors and technicians.

In addition, the company seeks to appoint alarm receiving centre ambassadors. The position requires quick-thinking, first responders, to handle emergency situations, ensuring customers and clients are always protected. In contrast to 999 calls, ambassadors assess and determine an incident and act accordingly.

Managing director, Gabino Sanchez, said: "I'm delighted that our expansion plans are ahead of our original forecasts. We came to the North East at the start of 2020 and then Covid hit. But due to the tremendous workforce we have at Verisure,

we've excelled and, in just over two years, have recruited over 650 people. When our forecast was 1,000 people in ten years, I couldn't be prouder of our team.

"Quorum Business Park have been stellar in its support of us. When we first moved here, we set our sights on the building we've now moved into which, to some, seemed like a pipe dream, when we only had a skeleton team of people. The Quorum team has been very supportive in our journey and growth.

"The North East has proven to be the perfect place to have a major arm of our business. The city, the culture and the people. Our aim is to continue to grow."

Kevin Croft, site director at the Centre of Excellence, said: "I am extremely proud of the can-do and supportive culture we have developed at the Centre of Excellence and am delighted that, during these uncertain economic times, we can offer 120 high quality jobs between now and the end of the year.

"Many of the people we employ have taken the opportunity to progress their careers further with us by upskilling and showing a positive attitude. We are building a strong, cohesive team and looking to support them further with the recruitment of people with potential that we can develop and who will grow with us."

Elected Metro Mayor for the North of Tyne, Jamie Driscoll, said: "120 new jobs. That's 120 people's lives made that bit better. Nice one, Verisure. They've already clocked what more and more companies are noticing these days. That the North East is a fantastic place to be - to live, to work, to thrive."

www.verisure.co.uk

SSCL LAUNCHES DEDICATED CUSTOMER SERVICE APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAMME



Shared Services Connected Limited (SSCL) silver winner of Best Outsourced Large Contact Centre in the UK National Contact Centre Awards has launched its first Customer Service Apprenticeship programme.

Over the last twelve months SSCL has developed and deployed multiple innovative solutions, revolutionising how customers interact with services and systems with the 'Customer First' ethos at the heart of everything it does. The company is recognised for the sheer size and scale of what it delivers, the standards of service delivery and the ongoing investment in digital solutions that continually improves outcomes for its clients and ultimately UK citizens.

Working in partnership with local educational institutes to develop talent pipelines, SSCL's aim is to attract and recruit talent from within

local communities to its apprenticeship programme, supporting their ever-increasing contact centre needs.

The initial pilot programme will welcome 10 customer service apprentices into SSCL Government Contact Centres in both Newcastle and Newport. Working with training provider ALS, the apprentices will be supported every step of the way by a dedicated training advisor. They will be given help and guidance to complete the Diploma in Customer Service and ultimately gain their Customer Service Apprenticeship.

SSCL in 2022 has achieved four accolades as a Great Place To Work (GPTW) - ranked in the top 20 of super large organisations, for Wellbeing, as a Tech company and also as an organisation that supports women. The company is proud of who it is and what it does and as a value-based organisation, it has a strong commitment to social value. SSCL sees this is an opportunity to positively contribute to the social, economic, and environmental wellbeing of local communities; creating jobs, tackling economic inequality, and providing opportunities to those who are under-represented, or unemployed.

To find out more about the SSCL Customer Apprenticeship Recruitment Campaign, visit www.sscl.com or SSCL Careers.



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HOT TOPIC: MENOPAUSE IN THE WORKPLACE

Hot on the back of Menopause Awareness Month in October, the once workplace taboo is starting to hit the agenda but there is still a way to go.

Sunderland based Oculus HR provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach. The Founder and Managing Director, Louise Kennedy has recently seen business awareness and readiness to address the taboo around the menopause in the workplace increase in recent months.

Louise Kennedy, Founder and Managing Director, Oculus HR said: "We've seen a steady increase from employers requesting advice and guidance around the topic of menopause in the workplace. This is in part due to a host of bodies and newly emerged companies campaigning to tackle the menopause stigma. But there is still a way to go.

Workplace awareness around the menopause isn't consistent across businesses and we are still hearing reports that highly experienced and skilled women are leaving jobs due to the lack of support systems in place and given the current skills shortage this is set to have a damaging impact on businesses around the globe.

At times all that can be needed is slight tweaks to existing wellbeing and health and safety policies and procedures to support women go through this natural stage of life."

Everyone experiences the menopause differently. Some people notice little impact on their daily life. But, for others, the symptoms can be severe, affecting them both physically and mentally, and can include anxiety, loss of confidence, problems sleeping and 'brain fog'. These symptoms can have a negative impact on their performance and attendance at work. It's important that businesses look for ways to support employees and create an environment in which discussion on the subject is open and honest.

The menopause usually occurs sometime between 45 and 55 years of age, but it can happen earlier or later. Oculus HR are on a mission to support businesses to support their people and Louise recently hit the airwaves with the launch of her Real World HR podcast. The all-new Real World HR podcast will share real world stories behind their HR processes, to put the human back into HR. The good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between.

The subject of the menopause is one of the topics discussed recently on the podcast and Louise was joined by Menopause Educator Miss Menopause aka Sharon MacArthur to discuss the topic. Sharon is keen to stress that 'the menopause is there to be managed, not just to be endured.' The podcast brought to light some astounding

findings and although the menopause affects 100% of women it's estimated that only 3% of companies have the topic of the menopause incorporated into their people plan.

Louise added: "Sharon is doing some amazing work educating businesses around the topic of the menopause, I was thrilled she agreed to join me on the podcast for the down to earth and insightful chat.

The menopause has an impact across all industries and at every level. The main takeaway was to not overthink it and to not reinvent the wheel so to speak. It's vital to open up conversations and look at current processes through a menopause 'lens', look at what you already do around wellbeing and replicate the applicable areas."

All in all, for employees, the menopause is a health and wellbeing concern and it's important that it is handled sensitively, as any other health issue would be. For those experiencing menopause symptoms, it can be incredibly difficult and stressful. It's vital that businesses normalise discussing the impact the menopause can have on employees and ensure there are measures in place to support them. This may be around absence, identifying any reasonable adjustments in the workplace, training and general health and safety.

Above all, it's vital that businesses are dedicated to talking and listening sensitively about how the menopause is affecting their employees.

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







L-R - Sophie Hannah and Thomas Sidney from TT2 with Simone Saville from Tyne Rivers Trust at the entrance to the woodland.

WOODLAND RESTORATION PROJECT ABOVE TYNE TUNNELS

The operator of the Tyne Tunnels has teamed up with an environmental charity to transform a woodland above the river crossing - creating an accessible, sustainable community asset that will be enjoyed for generations.

TT2 is working with Tyne Rivers Trust on a habitat-restoration project in 45,000 square metres of forest that sits directly above the North-bound tunnel, in Wallsend, North Tyneside.

Once complete, the woods will be used by local community groups, schools and TT2's 150 employees as a space to develop, encourage wildlife and carry out educational activities.

The first stage of the project has just begun and involves mapping flora, plant and wildlife species and monitoring animal feeders to help shape the plans for the restoration.

The nature development, which will be a continuous project over several years, includes

planting a wildflower meadow and installing new fencing, walkways and creating clearings to host group visits and educational experiences. Schools and community groups will be invited to get involved, helping with things like making bird feeders and bug hotels.

Philip Smith, CEO of TT2, which operates the Tyne Tunnels, said: "We are really excited at the prospect of the tunnels sitting under a wonderful, flourishing, biodiverse green haven for wildlife, plants and trees that local people can visit and enjoy.

"The team here are keen to do everything they can to make the Tyne Tunnels as sustainable as possible and this project will be a key part of that."

Tyne Rivers Trust is the only environmental charity dedicated to looking after the Tyne Rivers. Its work is vital to tackle the effects of climate change and support the wildlife and landscape of the Tyne waterways.

Simone Saville, My Tyne Project Officer at Tyne Rivers Trust says: "It's fantastic to see an unused space being transformed into a more diverse habitat for nature to flourish and local groups to enjoy.

"Making any space more biodiverse benefits the whole of the Tyne catchment as it supports the wider eco system."

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

The biggest impact has been made from optimising energy consumption through employee initiatives and education, LED lighting installation and purchasing 100% green energy.

The recent introduction of open-road-tolling, a team garden with beehives, employee composting and an electric vehicle added to the TT2 fleet are all supporting the Government's 2050 net zero target by reducing TT2's carbon footprint and energy consumption.

TT2 recently announced that it is celebrating its green achievements by off-setting its 150 employees' annual carbon footprints - which are a combined total of 1,043 tonnes, costing £4,533 - by donating that cash to help reduce pollution in Delhi, India.

In addition, and elsewhere, TT2, has donated 100 trees in honour of The Queen - and the first ones have been planted using the same spade Her Majesty used to plant an oak tree at the tunnels in South Tyneside, in 2012.

The Tyne Tunnels - which were both officially opened by The Queen - have gifted 100 trees to be planted in urban areas and schools to benefit future generations - as part of the Queen's Green Canopy initiative.

The Queen officially opened the first Tyne Tunnel in 1967, and when she opened the second Tyne Tunnel in 2012, she planted an oak tree at the entrance to the Northbound tunnel, in South Tyneside.

The very same spade used by Her Majesty has helped plant the first three TT2 trees - an oak tree outside the TT2 offices in Wallsend; a blossom tree at Northern Counties School in Jesmond, and an apple tree at Percy Hedley School in Forest Hall.

The Queen's Green Canopy will establish over one million new trees in the UK. It was created to mark the Platinum Jubilee and has been extended by His Majesty The King.

www.tt2.co.uk

HOW TO BE THE BEST...

TO YOUR EMPLOYEES

- 
1. Build relationships
 2. Listen attentively
 3. Gather information
 4. Communicate clearly
 5. Manage difficult conversations
 6. Empathise
 7. Deal with problems
 8. Learn continuously
 9. Don't be afraid to apologize
 10. Fix the problem or say if you can't

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- 
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 5. Have accurate and timely customer information
 6. Do not have a "one size fits all approach"
 7. Collect customer experience data
 8. Have customer focussed incentives
 9. Use every complaint as an opportunity to improve
 10. Drive continuous improvement by strong leadership

Get in touch for more information by calling Joanne Howe on 07921 256 981.

www.howeconsultancy.co.uk

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Nevil Tynemouth

A CHANGING SEASON FOR YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS?

Have you noticed it's getting a little colder, the leaves are coming off the trees and that critical strategic discussion around "Should we put the heating on?" has come round again. The seasonal shift is a great reminder that mother nature is always in periods of change. Likewise you, your firm and clients are normally in some sort of period of change.

Think about the behaviour you changed during covid and lockdowns. Some of this is long forgotten, but some remains. For example, I am still shopping with a local butcher and collecting local veg rather than just relying on a supermarket. Enforced change made us all consider our buying behaviour. The critical thing for you as a supplier to consider is how much of that behaviour has returned to original patterns and which of the new behaviour has remained.

This change in season is a great opportunity to "check in" with your clients and test the water on their preferences and gives you the chance to see more of their world. We recommend you look at both your existing long term clients and your new clients to look for patterns in choices and behaviours. The challenge is as human beings we like to hang onto our own preferences and assumptions rather than challenge our own thinking and knowledge. You will need to approach this exercise with an open mind.

We recommend that you develop a strong commercial curiosity in everything you do.

With existing clients, a sense check on them, their strategy, goals, aspirations and challenges can be insightful. Approach this with a strong knowledge of their business but ask the simple and searching questions to really understand their priorities for the coming years. "How are your strategic goals changing?" "What are your key priorities as an organisation now?" or "What is on your radar now, that wasn't last year?"

With new clients, how about trying a simple question: "Why did you choose us?" This plants a seed with them and helps them reflect back to you what is most important to them as a client. Listen carefully and look for patterns in how a group of clients answers this question. These little clusters of information help you identify new ways you can open conversations with other new potential clients.

Like any seasonal change, nature gives us some simple directions and indicators: Trees drop their leaves, reminding us it's good to let go,

some plants and animals start to hibernate, reminding you that not everyone is active all of the time and sunsets or sunrises become even more vivid to remind you of the power and awe of nature.

Make sure you aren't a supplier that your clients want to let go of. Show them you are genuinely interested in them and their business. Show them you are focused on their changing needs and working with them hand in glove.

Understand periods of "hibernation" with your clients. They might not need your help or support all of the time. Make an effort to really understand their individual buying patterns, asking yourself "What does this client need in this moment?" Make sure you are ready for when they do wake up again, as they normally wake up hungry and in need of support.

Lastly, what can you do to remind your clients of how great you are. What can you do that will make their jaw drop. This approach ties in nicely to the Walt Disney quote - "Whatever you do, do it well. Do it so well that when people see you do it, they will want to come back and see you do it again, and they will want to bring others and show them how well you do what you do." Taking a seasonal approach to really making your clients feel special, can really help them come back and bring others.

If you adopt these approaches each and every season you will be in the right place at the right time to really help serve and support your clients, whatever the weather outside.

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

MEET THE ENGAGEMENT TEAM AT BUSINESS DURHAM

As the business support service of Durham County Council, Business Durham has a proven track record of helping companies achieve their goals and navigate the challenges they face.

Part of Business Durham's success lies with its experienced relationship managers. As a first point of contact for companies, they can offer solutions in a variety of ways, from, accessing funding to finding new premises or supporting recruitment activities.

By maintaining relationships with local businesses Business Durham support companies by offering them key contacts and opening up networking opportunities. This can include access to Durham County Council services, accessing skills through local colleges and universities, making the most of the latest innovations through key industry partners, to support in reaching overseas markets.

Connecting businesses to these opportunities is made possible because of the networks and contacts Business Durham has in place, and the relationships maintained by the Business Engagement team.

Caroline Taukulis, Director of Business Engagement and Account Management

explains: "Much of our work relies on strong business relationships, being able to connect businesses with the right contacts, networks or services at the right time.

"For me, our greatest success has been the work we did with colleagues in Durham County Council to award £5.2million to local companies through the Durham Business Recovery Grant during 2021 and 2022. So many businesses have told us how valuable the scheme was to help them make changes to prepare for a post-pandemic trading environment.

"We work with businesses to face the challenges they will experience and look to the opportunities that will present. For example, the significant adoption of digital technology, online trading and digital connectivity of people and processes will continue to grow. What's more, the conflict in Ukraine and increased energy prices and supply chain difficulties will also see businesses adopt low-carbon measures and greater on-shoring to secure supply chains."

To find out more about how Business Durham is working with businesses visit www.businessdurham.co.uk



Caroline Taukulis

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THE PROBLEM WITH THE NEW

The climate crisis has forced us to look at reaching net zero in short order. New technologies are emerging that can address some of this, however, without radical behavioural change by everyone, the future of our ecosystem is under severe threat. Dr David Cliff explores some of the challenges ahead.

A few years ago, climate scientists were subject to sceptics who were able to refute what has now turned out to be quite conservative predictions about climate change. Even in the wake of Cop 26, we are unlikely to see governments who are prepared to countenance the investments and organisational change needed to address an era described in history as the "Anthropocene", where homo-sapiens materially affect their ecosystem and species we share it with by virtue of their expansion, territorial incursion and polluting technologies.

Because human lives are short, markets volatile and most Western cultures celebrate libertarianism and egocentrism, the inexorable effects on the planet that can accumulate over hundreds of years not seen by previous generations, until this one. Even now, we are subject to deniers and those who view short term gain, profit, power and the creation of their place in history as more important than this delicate habitat upon which we are all dependent.

To try to recreate the days of yore fostered by Peter the Great, for example, Vladimir Putin is suspected to have sabotaged gas pipelines (allegedly), a geopolitical ploy to place pressure upon energy markets as "special operations", appear to be failing! The bigger picture is the amount of methane liberated into the atmosphere and its greenhouse effect being somewhat greater than produced by Germany, is lost on this short-term goal.

Closer to home, the rush by developers to cut turf on their property developments before the July cut-off (where they had to go for heat pumps in preference to gas central heating) was little short of an unethical scramble.

Then there are the short term aims of government, who interminably mess with tariffs, grants, creating short term rapid growth in parts of the renewable sector, many of which are 'here today and gone tomorrow'. This often leaves consumers striving to be responsible stewards of the planet exposed to risk, limited protection and low supplier accountability.

Then there are the problems of technological thought paradigms. Government policy now supports heat pumps, but new technologies have come around that eclipse these. In true governmental style, once the box is ticked, ministerial attention ends and looks at the next electoral risk. We also have the foundations of elites who cannot countenance wind power on England's green and pleasant land whilst offshore is fair game. We wouldn't want the turbines to be caught by shotgun pellets during the grouse season!

People's minds deal with an issue and then move on. We've seen this with Covid despite current statistics saying that we still have a problem for many. This often means an early adopted first solutions become the norm and seen for many years as 'the new'. This leaves little space for 'the newer' that often spends years in obscurity before ultimately becoming seen as the better solution.

A classic example was adding lead to petrol to stop the phenomenon of "pinking", damaging engine components. Within months of this being adopted in the early part of the 20th century, safer solutions were produced but were

not adopted with the consequence that people have been breathing atomised lead fumes with toxic consequences over many decades. "Sink" investments often have this effect on innovation.

This came to mind when I was approached by NexGen heating. As a product, it appears to be a "no-brainer". Paper thin electrical heating film based on graphene and powered from direct current produce infrared heating. It heats people and things, not the air around them, creating environment that warm within 10 minutes or less (as opposed to 1° per hour with a heat pump). It involves no water, no maintenance, no radiators and can be built into the fabric of buildings on a new build or retrofit basis. Emitting thermal radiation close to sunlight itself has health benefits, simultaneously kills mould spores whilst leaving people with a feeling of well-being. My first exposure to their product sold it to me, as it seems to with many people and yet the company has experienced resistance from lacklustre civil servants to amend regulations to encompass the product as well as cautious local authorities and developers who are just getting their head around 'new' but complex heat pump technology.

Talking with Michael Beveridge, the North-East and Scotland's technical adviser for NexGen is an education in terms of the possibilities ahead. "People find it hard to believe there is a better alternative to heat pump technology. Sometimes it's hard to describe it without people actually experiencing it's radiant warmth. A key challenge was sitting on a game changer that delivers a sunshine feel subtle heat people find very calming. NexGen is a graphene nano-technology which produces low resistance, low carbon heating with many benefits which include it's low operating costs. The actual technology is a trade secret formula that is as well protected as the Coca-Cola mix. Its efficiency is peerless, it can be incorporated and hidden away in walls, ceilings and floors as a primary or secondary heating source which can be powered by solar pv, wind or battery storage. Its applications have few limitations including those of geographical location or property type".

Without doubt, to address the planetary challenges ahead, people need to start to stop thinking 'new' and start thinking 'newer' still. Investors, politicians, bureaucrats alike are going to have to get with some of the progress of the negotiations that are around, hiding in plain sight. We have to see innovation where it occurs and fast track it. Equally, we have to have energy policies that are intelligently integrated, not just 'one size fits all'. It's preposterous for example to promote micro-nuclear reactors when there is no coherent policy on domestic house insulation, it's a bit like leaded petrol really...

gedanken.co.uk



L-R: David Cliff with Michael Beveridge

WORLD CLASS CITY – WORLD CLASS EVENTS

Congratulations to Liverpool for winning the battle to host next year's Eurovision Song Contest, a hard fought contest with some worthy finalists, with Newcastle among the shortlist. While we didn't win this time, we did at least submit a strong case and were a serious contender.

The outcome will definitely not deter us from trying again, in fact it has made us even more ambitious and determined to pursue and host other world-class events, with the Rugby League World Cup extravaganza being a prime example.

When the Rugby League World Cup rolled into town in October, tens of thousands of international rugby supporters followed. Many hotels across the city reached 100% occupancy for the weekend and shops and restaurants served the needs of this bumper international band of supporters and the people who came to enjoy the atmosphere and fun the games created.

The whole city was swept up in the carnival-style atmosphere, with the activity and business benefits delivered extending way beyond the confines of St James' Park. There was as much fun and activity to be had off the pitch and out of the stadium as there was on it, with a cultural programme taking place on the Helix and Strawberry Place, as well as the huge Fan Village constructed on the iconic Quayside. The rugby provided a wonderful excuse for a major city-wide party and the celebrations delivered a huge economic boost for Newcastle and the wider region.

In recent years, Newcastle has become the adopted and much-loved home of rugby. This year alone we have also hosted Super League's Magic Weekend for the sixth time in eight years, before the long-awaited Rugby League World Cup. All events hosted to date have broken records for attendance and have delivered huge and measurable boosts to business and the local economy, as well as putting Newcastle on the sporting map.

What has helped cement Newcastle's reputation as a world class venue and a spectacular city for events of all sizes is that it is one of the few cities in the UK whose football stadium is still in the heart of the city. St James' Park stands resplendent in Newcastle city centre with all the city has to offer literally on its doorstep. As residents of Newcastle we can sometimes take this for granted but it is a major plus point in Newcastle's favour when organisers are choosing venues to host large scale events. A world-class stadium with capacity for over 54,000 people with bars, restaurants, hotels and shops all within a five minute walk makes it a prime contender for a huge number and different types of event. And, when St James' Park lands these events, the whole city steps up to put on a show and welcomes the event and its visitors with open arms.

Although we have had resounding success to date, we can't and won't rest on our laurels. Events, especially large scale international ones, are years in the making and hard

fought for. We are already looking ahead to the future and other international events on the horizon. Newcastle is throwing its cap into the ring to be among the hosts of the Euro Football Championships in 2028. The host nation has yet to be decided but if England is successful, Newcastle is in the running to be the stadium in the North, with Sunderland the other contender. St James' Park and Newcastle fit the criteria perfectly; it is positioned between Manchester and the Scottish borders, has a world-class stadium, is expert in hosting major events; has exceptional national and international transport links, and an award-winning cultural and retail offer. We will continue to lend our support to this campaign.

NE1 works hand in glove with Newcastle city council to promote the city's offer and to support bids for events and other cultural activities, a job that is made easier the more events we host and the experience we accumulate.

Another crucial element in Newcastle's winning formula for event-hosting is the city's own programme of events. Having layers of activity happening across Newcastle throughout the year provides a fertile ground for major events, and contributes to a vibrant city.

Milestone events like the Great North Run, with all the pomp and ceremony befitting the world's most popular half marathon, are a major highlight in the city's what's on calendar. NE1's own Summer in the City events programme provides activities throughout the summer so people know there is always something happening in the city and we intend to build on this year on year. The Quayside, the jewel in Newcastle's crown, offers the ideal location for many of these events and activities and we have worked hard to make more of this important and valuable asset, a focus that will continue in the future. The millionth runner celebrations, part of the Great North Run event, was recently staged on the banks of the Tyne and the Rugby World Cup Fan Village was positioned there. At Christmas, the iconic riverside also provides a stunning backdrop for Seb-Lee Delisle's Laser Light City at New Year.

With such a compelling offer, we will continue to promote Newcastle as the ideal city for hosting international events, confident that we have what it takes to win.

www.newcastle1ltd.com

A professional portrait of a man with short, light brown hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a yellow and blue striped tie. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. A large, faint watermark reading "Wondershare PDFelement" is visible diagonally across the center of the image.

“

*...we have had
resounding success
to date, we can't
and won't rest on
our laurels...*

Stephen Patterson



BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE: ARE YOU DOING ENOUGH TO STOP IT?

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

Bullying and harassment is unfortunately common within the workplace, as it is within schools and wider society. It doesn't have an age limit and it doesn't just happen to those most vulnerable. It can happen to anyone. Recent case law has made it essential for employers to review their commitment to anti-bullying practices regularly.

Employers need to know how to address bullying and harassment if it does happen, but they also need to take all "reasonable steps" to prevent harassment if they are to be able to avoid or defend harassment claims at an employment tribunal.

Bullying and Harassment Training

The first thing that might spring to mind is to deliver training so that employees know that it's not acceptable to bully or harass anyone, and the implications if they do.

Delivering training to all employees on the subject is certainly a positive step, provided the training is in depth, regular and not just a tick-box exercise. A recent Employment Tribunal Appeal in the case of Allay (UK) Ltd v Gehlen found that the employer had not taken reasonable steps to prevent harassment as their training was brief and "stale" as training was delivered two years earlier. Employers should provide refresher training on a regular basis.

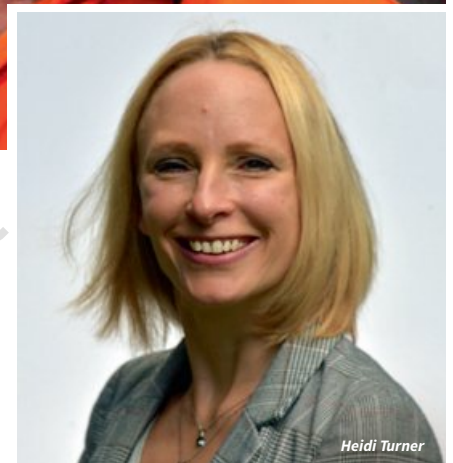
Tip - ensure that you know in detail the content of the bullying and harassment training course so that you can be assured its suitably in-depth, and to ensure that the training provider is qualified to deliver it. Check out their background to ensure they have experience of addressing bullying and harassment in the workplace and creating a positive work culture.

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Many employers will direct employees who are citing bullying or harassment to their grievance policy, which is a perfectly legitimate way to investigate and address concerns formally. However, I recommend to my clients that they have a separate bullying and harassment policy and procedure which is used to make any formal complaint. The benefit of having a separate policy is that it encourages employees to try to seek an alternative solution such as approaching the bully directly to talk about their concerns or via their manager, or mediation.

Once a complaint reaches a formal stage or grievance, often working relationships will be irreparably broken.

The policy also strengthens the company's commitment to stamping out bullying and harassment, and it's zero tolerance stance, which can be helpful as long as the company "practices what it preaches".



Tip - to encourage employees and managers to take action against bullying and harassment, employers can promote "encouraging/practicing good working relationships" or something along those lines as a standard/competency against which recruitment/performance is measured.

Watch out for Office Banter

Workplace conflict happens. So does what is unhelpfully labelled "office banter". Now I'm not saying that workplaces shouldn't be jovial, but this can so often lead to feelings of being bullied or harassed, particularly if it's a regular thing. Managers should be alert to this and step in as soon as they recognise that something said or some type of behaviour could be perceived as being inappropriate, and have a quiet word. This is often all that is needed to quash the sort of behaviour that can escalate into a claim of bullying and harassment.

Create a feedback culture

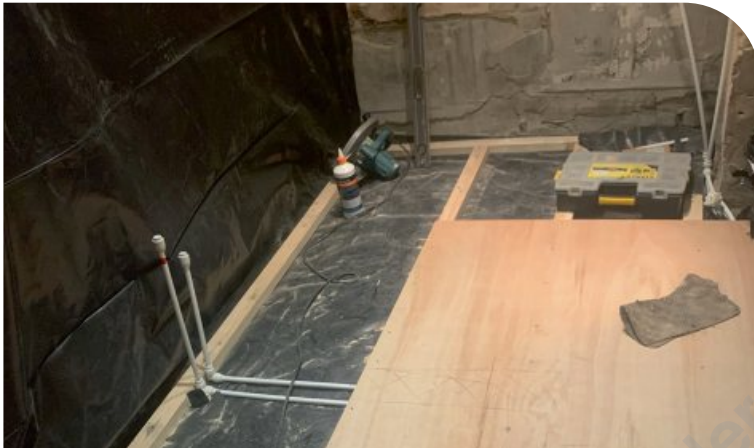
Some of my clients even have a "yellow card" system meaning that in meetings, they will issue a yellow card to someone who has said or done something unintentionally inappropriate. Sounds harsh, but creating a feedback culture where constructive feedback is welcomed and accepted can work really well.

We deliver in-depth training courses on the subject of bullying and harassment.

To find out more, please contact Heidi at heidi@cheviothr.co.uk



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THE WORKPLACE IS CHANGING, AGAIN.

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, explores the latest twist in the struggle for control between employers and their staff.

COVID not only changed the way we work, it altered the balance of power in the workplace.

In sync with the adoption of new technology, reduced travel and shift in working models, one of the more surprising differences as we came out of the epidemic was a reversal of control in the workplace and, in particular, the recruitment market.

Following a low period for new vacancies, millions of people around the globe suddenly chose to reassess their priorities and, in many cases left their current role in search of a better work-life balance. Simultaneously, businesses began expanding quickly and, in an instant, power transferred from employers to employees.

With savvy leaders responding quickly to protect key recruits, they inadvertently opened up an opportunity for people to strengthen their position at work by negotiating salary increases and more flexibility for their role.

Without people to fill the rising vacancies, it meant that skilled workers could enjoy a position of power as they knew they could look elsewhere and quickly find someone willing to offer what they want.

The impact of the downturn

Fast forward to today and as inflation soars and the cost-of-living rises, in real terms, many people are facing the equivalent of a pay cut.

Regrettably, the economic downturn is also pushing some organisations toward redundancies as they restructure in the aftermath of rapid expansion. This has shifted the equilibrium of power back toward businesses to an extent.



Bryony Gibson

As employers tighten their belts, several global companies are already flexing their new found confidence by requesting to bring employees back into the office environment daily, which is a brave and significant cultural shift.

All things are not equal

If history is anything to go by, the impact of power moving back to employers will not be the same for everyone.

In the face of a global recession, typically it is lower skilled roles or people starting out in their career that are the hardest hit. As good jobs become trickier to find, experience takes over and becomes ever more important.

In contrast, where there remains an acute shortage of skills, competition for the best people will continue with top talent holding all the cards. That means in professional industries like public practice, employees are likely to maintain a wide choice of roles and enjoy the opportunity to seek higher salaries and improved benefits.

What does it mean to you?

When the balance of power lies with employers, in general, the consequences will be unequal. Some workers will keep the flexibility and benefits they gained during COVID, while others will have to accept whatever their employer offers.

Whether this culminates in a return to pre-pandemic working conditions, I am not sure, as some of the changes made during that time will be difficult to reverse and motivationally detrimental.

If you are an employee currently at the grace of your employer, however, now might be a good time to consider returning to the office voluntarily. Creating closer bonds and spending more time face-to-face with your colleagues could be an important step toward feeling continually secure in your job and progressing during challenging times.

As an employer, if budgets are tight, it is greater flexibility that will soon become your key battleground for talent. Companies that remain conscious of employees' needs will be the most successful at retaining and attracting talent so, even if you have the desire to reduce workplace flexibility I suggest you are very careful when you approach it. The wider implications of being too aggressive are significant.

In the end, the best piece of advice I can offer is to try and find time to think about how you feel. What - apart from money - would attract you to join a company? Why would you stay with one? By putting yourself in someone else's shoes you will make smarter decisions, and that is the best way to succeed.

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



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AUDIT & ACCOUNTS SENIOR

Newcastle Up to £40,000pa DOE plus benefits. Hybrid working.

A successful and progressive career in audit with a great work life balance is on offer with this local accountancy firm. Working 9-5 with limited on-site travel we are looking for a qualified or part qualified (with study support) Audit & Accounts Senior (ACCA/ACA) who can work independently, both in the planning and delivery stages of audit through to Partner sign off.

Working with a wide range of large privately owned companies, charities and clubs, you will also be required to prepare full statutory accounts under FRS102 with the assistance from more junior staff as you manage your portfolio.

A great move for anyone looking to continue in audit with less hours, yet readily available progression to management and a chance to gain broader general practice accounting knowledge. **Quote Ref: 2090**

ACCOUNTS MANAGER - AGRICULTURE

Newcastle/Northumberland, c£45,000pa plus benefits. 4 or 5 days. Hybrid working.

Family values and a consultative approach to clients is very much the style of this fast-growing practice as they look to appoint an Accounts Manager to support senior management with leadership and delivery of their agriculture services. We are looking for a qualified (ACA/ACCA/QBE) Accountant capable of leading a team who is enthusiastic about developing their knowledge in the agriculture sector.

With your own portfolio, you will strive to establish relationships, understand the needs of your clients business, provide advice and guidance. Year end statutory accounting review, oversight of bookkeeping and staff coaching all form part of your responsibilities.

With hybrid working and flexible hours this is a great opportunity to join a close-knit expanding team. **Quote Ref: 2095**

SENIOR TAX EXECUTIVE

South Tyneside, £38 - 45,000pa plus benefits.

An opportunity for a Senior Tax Executive to join a local South Tyneside accountancy firm. Working with local and national clients you will enjoy responsibility for the timely completion of all tax compliance returns for the practice and the provision of tax advice to small businesses.

Experienced sufficiently to manage a small tax team with the delivery of in excess of 500 tax returns we are looking for a hands-on tax professional who can review returns timely and provide guidance to the team. Preferably CTA and or ATT qualified you will have a good understanding of capital allowances, capital gains tax and personal tax, able to advise clients unassisted with basic client queries.

The position is offered full-time with flexible hours, from the office. 4 days is also considered. Study support is provided for those wishing to pursue their tax exams. **Quote Ref: 2084**

ACCOUNTANT - FT or PT

County Durham, £28 - 35,000pa, plus benefits

A qualified (ACA/ACCA) or qualified by experience Accountant is sought by this local practice to support the Partner group with their client portfolio.

Bringing previous practice experience you will be preparing statutory accounts for limited companies, partnerships and sole traders ready for Partner review. With regular client and Partner liaison, good communication skills are essential as is the ability to be highly organised to ensure for timely delivery of work.

There is an opportunity to gain onsite audit exposure for those interested and we would look for the successful candidate to have previous experience using one or more of the following system: Xero, Sage, CCH, Iris.

A relaxed working environment with very little daily pressure and no additional hours are just some of the benefits working at this firm. **Quote Ref: 2089**

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

www.bryonygibson.com



Dan Smith

THREE STEPS TO OPTIMISE YOUR ENERGY AND CLIMATE STRATEGY

COP27 is nearly upon us, and businesses have an important role to play in the fight against climate change. The primary weapon a business has to combat their climate impact is energy efficiency. There is a clear interdependence between the carbon emissions and the energy efficiency of any business.

We see this clearly as we guide hundreds of companies through energy reduction plans. Energy efficiency is the key to sustainability, both for a business' long-term economic viability and the longevity of the planet.

As we prepare for COP27 here are three ways businesses can prepare and optimise how they undertake and ultimately achieve their climate and energy efficiency goals.

1. Invest in and leverage energy and carbon data technology

Since our inception, we have believed that technological innovation will be an integral part of transitioning organisations to greener and more sustainable operations.

Energy data is the hidden key to unlocking an untapped world of possibilities for reduced energy waste, greater operational efficiency, and improved sustainability for businesses.

We encounter several business leaders who are passionate about net zero, but face uncertainty on how to achieve it because carbon and energy data is insufficient or completely absent from their purview.

Energy and carbon data systems make this data readily accessible. With them, businesses can establish their baseline carbon emissions and energy consumption levels. This data provides a comprehensive picture of the carbon emitted and energy consumed by the business through its daily operations. This, too, will prepare businesses to embrace any new legislation and policies born out of COP27 in November 2022.

2. Measure and report climate impact

Reporting will also play a crucial role. Investors, stakeholders, and consumers increasingly demand to know how a business' activity and operation impacts the environment. Investors especially are keen to know this data as part of the adoption of Environmental Social and Governance (ESG) metrics in their assessments of investable businesses.

Businesses are faced with various reporting obligations for their energy use and carbon emissions. On top of ESG reporting standards and metrics, organisations are required to follow several schemes, including the Energy Savings Opportunity Scheme (ESOS), the Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting (SECR) scheme and the framework for the Task Force on Climate-Related Financial Disclosures (TCFD). Despite the efforts to bring clarity to each of these, the task to satisfy these schemes is onerous for many businesses.

Reliable climate impact reporting has to look at the financial integrity of the company, its impact on the environment and vice-versa. Without this, financial institutions cannot assess the sustainability of a company properly.

The expanding need of climate-related reporting

requirements – pertaining to a business' carbon emissions and financial risks – has opened a market for sustainability consultants to assist businesses on these tasks. Sustainability consultants and energy managers act as your guide through the latest environmental legislation and best practice within our industry. These individuals are highly trained in ESG reporting frameworks so you can produce high-quality reports that meet global standards for transparency while also being fully compliant with all relevant national authorities.

Effective implementation and monitoring of your carbon emissions reduction strategy is crucial for delivering your organisation's sustainability goals.

3. Mobilise capital to finance energy and climate strategies

The green transition requires significant financing. Governments are called upon to front much of the bill. Unfortunately, as with most things done at the governmental level, promised capital and investments take longer or fail to materialise. Therefore, the private sector and businesses should take all possible opportunities to mobilise capital to finance energy and climate strategies. Businesses are rewarded by these efforts through increased consumer trust, investor interest, and operational efficiency. Most importantly, they will be prepared to adapt to policy recommendations stemming from COP27.

Well-guided capital allocation and investments play fundamental roles in enabling businesses to follow through on their net zero and energy efficiency improvements targets. Additionally, green financing schemes exist to support businesses who invest in smart and clean energy technologies.

Learn more about energy and carbon management consultancy and technology at clearvue.business.



L-R: Craig Dallison, CGO and Jim Garrett, CTO at Everflow Energy.

EVERFLOW MAKES EXEC APPOINTMENTS TO SPEARHEAD GROWTH INTO NEW MARKETS

By Josh Gill, CEO & Founder of Everflow

Following Everflow's rapid growth in the B2B water market – which has seen us grow our customer base by nearly 50 per cent over the past 12 months to over 70,000 customers – we have now launched a new waste management division.

We will now be applying the same technology and sustainability-driven approach that has made Everflow the UK's fastest-growing water supplier and the first to go carbon neutral in the commercial waste management market. This marks Everflow's first step in its wider journey to becoming a multi-utility service provider.

From our base in Stockton-on-Tees, we will now be providing businesses with environmentally friendly waste management and disposal services. We are committed to providing transparent pricing, real-time collection notifications and a digital-first customer experience. Overall, this will make

waste management simpler, cheaper, and more sustainable for businesses across Britain.

To spearhead this growth, Craig Dallison and Jim Garrett have been appointed to the executive team as Chief Growth Officer (CGO) and Chief Operating Officer (COO) respectively.

Craig brings prior experience in the B2B utilities sector having held a senior role at The Energy Check, a global energy consultancy. He is also no stranger to the North East – Craig has worked across the region in roles spanning various industries. Craig will help the business scale its proposition, leading on the development and execution of its commercial

vision, including product growth, and its marketing and sales strategy.

Given Everflow's position as a leading commercial utility supplier, Craig shares our belief in supporting SME's by delivering more cost-effective and efficient solutions to managing utility bills.

Jim joins from the energy sector, where he has built a reputation for building operations from the ground up for big name challenger brands, such as Utilita, Dual Energy and Orbit Energy. Jim will bring further experience in the utilities market having worked for several energy businesses including British Gas, SSE, Spark Energy, Maverick Energy and Valda Energy.

While the roadmap towards expansion is never smooth, Jim is committed to this new multi-utility chapter for the business as it seeks to optimise services for customers and make utilities more friendly to the planet.

Everflow remains committed to delivering on our vision to make all utilities simpler and more sustainable. This launch represents a crucial first step in our ambition to pursue a multi-utility approach to the B2B market; an approach we believe will help SMEs significantly cut down on the administrative demands of managing utilities while also securing cheaper bills.

www.everflowwater.com

CONSULTING ENGINEERS CELEBRATE 60 YEARS AND EYE AMBITIOUS EXPANSION PLANS



TGA Directors (L-R) Stephen Olley, Jason Jobs, Scott Graham and Graeme Carr

Over 75 per cent of 2022/23 target workload confirmed in only three months.

TGA Consulting Engineers (TGA), an expert provider of consulting engineering services, is celebrating its 60th anniversary this month with over 75 per cent of its targeted workload for the current financial year already confirmed in only three months.

The firm, which typically works on projects valued at between £6m and £60m, provides design and consultancy services across building performance, building services engineering, specialist lighting design and low carbon design.

Business has flourished over the last twelve months, with TGA recently making eight appointments to provide additional resource across its Leeds, Durham and Newcastle offices to cope with the demand for its services across a wide variety of new and existing buildings.

With a focus on decarbonisation, TGA is celebrating some key project wins, working with Newcastle City Council on a £16m Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS) - a government-backed scheme which provides grants for public sector bodies to fund decarbonisation and energy efficiency measures - the £8.3m Morrison Busty Low Carbon Facility for Durham County Council and the Durham Custody Suite for Durham Constabulary.

Speaking about TGA's success and longevity,

Scott Graham, director at TGA, said: "We are all delighted with the way the company is performing. The world has moved on quite some way since we were established, but we have always been committed to keeping abreast of advances in modern building technology - and there have been many in our sector - as well as growing organically.

"We also have a good conversion rate of winning work at around 35 per cent, which helps, along with a great deal of repeat business from design team partners.

"We are proud to regard ourselves as champions of workforce diversity and currently employ engineering professionals from Singapore, Malaysia, India and Burundi and are viewed as a good training ground for school and college leavers. In fact, our recent appointment of four graduate engineers will provide a platform for the future growth of the business."

As the world came out of lockdown, TGA took advantage of £250,000 funding from the North East Growth Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, to restructure the business and implement its diversification strategy, which includes plans to double turnover in the next five years as well as open further offices in the West, North West and South West.

With the development and growth of TGA's Building Performance team, TGA director, Jason Jobs, believes this has led to the firm being able to work for some of the region's most successful architects.

He said: "The use of energy in new and existing

buildings is of the utmost importance as part of the climate emergency and with more and more clients adopting a net zero carbon approach, our work is increasingly informing the wider architectural design of buildings to allow them to be constructed with the lowest possible carbon footprint. As a result, we are valued by both our architecture clients as well as contractors.

"The funding we received enabled us to not only improve TGA's own technology infrastructure but also to expand and strengthen our team to take advantage of the growing importance of environmental performance within building design."

TGA has a solid reputation within the historic buildings sector with recent involvement for example in the highly successful redevelopment and refurbishment of Neville Hall in central Newcastle, but in the future, will be additionally focused on strengthening its position in healthcare, education and leisure.

Other current projects include parts of the redevelopment of Pilgrim Street in Newcastle, Durham University's Boldon House refurbishment, the renovation and improvement of buildings at Raby Castle, new projects at Sunderland Royal Hospital and a range of leisure centres at Chester le Street, Bishop Auckland and Marple in Stockport.

Headquartered in Durham, TGA currently employs 45 staff across offices in Newcastle, Leeds, Stevenage and London.

www.tgace.co.uk



60TH CELEBRATIONS

It was champagne all round when consulting engineers, TGA, celebrated their 60th anniversary.

Holding a buffet reception in the Wood Memorial Hall of the Grade II* listed Neville Hall in Newcastle after playing a key role in its refurbishment, the event was attended by over seventy clients, colleagues and professional advisers.



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

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 previous career as a professional footballer.

Were you a gifted footballer at school?

No, not really. It was a case when we when we were younger that we'd play in the back garden for fun. There was a lot of people at school that were certainly better than me and I'd call myself a late developer.

How did you eventually get into the professional arena?

I'd say with a bit of luck. I was playing amateur football at a high level, and it just so happened that I got a call up for an amateur Scotland cap and someone came and watched me play. I then got a couple of trial games with a professional club and although they didn't go well, I soon signed for Brechin City. It was surreal for a 21-year-old amateur to be playing against teams like Hearts. I was part time and still had to do my day job, so it was quite tough.

What was it like going full time with Dunfermline Athletic?

Yes, I'd played against them a few times and they are a massive club with a rich long history. I was signed for around £80,000 and it was a game changer for me. I trained more and my fitness improved immensely.

Did you live the footballer's lifestyle?

Our wages then were nowhere near what they are now. I viewed it as getting paid well for doing something I loved.

If I bring you up to date as someone who helps people with their finances, what message would you give to a professional footballer now about their investments?

Always invest in yourself as you don't realise how quickly your career can end. I'd suggest



Marc Millar

they start pension planning for their future as a lot of footballers retire in their mid-thirties. There aren't a huge lot of opportunities to manage or coach so your finances have to be planned in advance.

I guess that having a professional footballer on your books would be one of your ideal clients because as well as advising them on what to do with their money to protect them you could also talk about football issues?

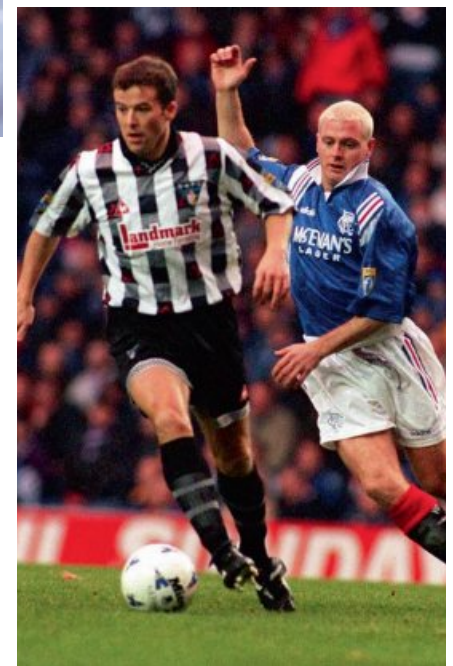
Yes, I know what it's like to be a footballer, the highs, the lows, how it feels to be injured, not being selected to play, or scrambling around for a contract. I've been there and come through it.

What is the highlight of your career?

There's a couple of things, I think playing in the Premier League in Scotland and against such world class players was a real achievement and I scored a penalty that won us promotion from the First Division to the Premier League and that was quite special after a tough year.

You mentioned some of the world class players that you played against. I believe Paul Gascoigne was one of them?

I played against Paul Gascoigne a few times, not that I ever got the better of him. He was a superb player. There was a sheer difference in salaries at that level, but I never felt inferior, pressurised, or



anxious before I went out. It was an absolute joy to play against those players home and away.

Now, a little birdy tells me that you feature on a Panini football collector card!

Yes, it was all part of the whole marketing of football. It was good to sign autographs and talk to fans.

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

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North East
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TYNEXE
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POWERHOUSE



Lee Taylor and Dean Kelly

OLD CASH DEPOSITORY GETS NEW LEASE OF LIFE

The old NatWest Cash Depository in Washington has been taken over recently and opened its doors to the general public last month.

Lee Taylor and Dean Kelly, owners of D&L Trading have taken over the premises and after spending two months renovating the building and turning it into The Bargain Clearance Centre, Windlass Lane, Washington, NE37 1BD.

The 11,000 sq ft secure building is stacked to the rafters with clearance bargains for patrons to take advantage of in the build up to Christmas and beyond with pallets of new stock arriving daily.

The stock, which are all from well-known brands will be a Godsend to families, as the cost-of-living crisis takes hold. Everything from kitchen appliances, furniture, pet supplies, jewellery, electronics and much, much more is on offer for bargain hunters!

D&L Trading were already operating from smaller premises in Washington, however the opportunity to cater for more pallets and provide more stock to their loyal customer base proved a

tempting one. The new premises also creates a further eight jobs as warehouse and retail assistants and the possibility of more positions later in the year.

Lee told us: "It's important for us to ensure that everyone gets the opportunity to grab themselves some high-class goodies at bargain prices, especially with Christmas just around the corner. We're delighted with the new premises and have had a phenomenal amount of interest – people are flocking to the new site to grab themselves a bargain or two."

The company, which prides itself in supplying quality products and bargain prices opens 9-5, Monday to Friday and 10-4 Saturday.

Lee concluded: "We gave away 100 Golden Tickets out on the opening weekend, with hundreds of pounds money off future purchases, so we hope to see many of our loyal customers and hopefully some new ones over the coming months. "We literally welcomed thousands of visitors over the first weekend, and it honestly couldn't have gone better."

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NEW AIRVIEW PARK PLANNING APPLICATION BROUGHT FORWARD DUE TO DEMAND

High demand for premium office space at AirView Park has led to a new planning application being submitted ahead of schedule for a further 20,000 sq ft of commercial units.

Construction on Phase Two; buildings 2a (International Space Station) and 2b is currently ongoing and due for completion by the end of the year. This will provide approximately 20,000 sq ft of modern office accommodation and a 'centre of excellence' SME facility, welcoming new occupiers including start-ups and fast-growing businesses operating across different sectors.

However, three new buildings (2c, d and e) are now being proposed to meet rising demand for offices at the site located in Woolsington, close to Newcastle International Airport.

This will provide a further 11, high quality, self-contained workspace units for single or multiple occupancy, dedicated parking areas, an independent café, and open landscaped and social areas. The plans will complete Phase Two of the AirView Park development.

The proposal will also support the increasing demand for premium commercial space in Newcastle upon Tyne, offering an alternative yet easily accessible and sustainable, out-of-town location for organisations considering the North East for a regional or northern office, or a bespoke HQ facility.

This is especially relevant for emerging or high-

growth industries such as digital and life sciences, or those companies already located locally but outgrowing their current location and requiring a second base nearby.

A planning application has now been submitted to Newcastle City Council by Tynexe Commercial Ltd with developers, Dysart Developments Ltd, continuing to lead on the scheme on behalf of Newcastle International Airport and Newcastle City Council.

Mike Clark, Development Director of Dysart Developments and Director of Tynexe Commercial Ltd, commented, "We are very much working hand in hand with what the market is demanding and proposing an additional Phase Two scheme to enable businesses from different industries to launch, grow and take full advantage of the national and global trade and export links that are on our doorstep.

"The new Phase Two buildings, c, d and e, once approved, will provide a further 20,000 sq ft of prime office accommodation into the local business landscape, helping to boost the region's economic recovery, supporting new jobs creation and growth opportunities, and helping to attract inward investment from larger organisations looking for a strategic site with global connectivity.



"The interest we're seeing in AirView Park is extremely encouraging. We already have Bellway plc and its national headquarters here following Phase One, so we're looking to attract more anchor tenants moving forward and develop the overall site to its full potential. It's very much full steam ahead."

Building 2b is due to welcome its first tenants by the new year, whilst building 2a (International Space Station) is a new 'centre of excellence' hub being developed by North East entrepreneur, Ammar Mirza MBE. It will offer digitally enhanced facilities to encourage in-bound trade and help local companies gain greater access to world export markets including India, Turkey, the Middle East, Pakistan and the Netherlands amongst others.

A decision on the latest planning application for buildings 2c-e is expected by the end of the year.

The project has also received £994,000 from the Government's Get Building Fund via the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.

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

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- Apartment group
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- Angel of Corbridge
- Longhorns ...to name a few!



Les Reay (Owner, Catering Units) hands over their bespoke vehicle to Zak of Tango Durham, which has recently opened.



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L-R: Katharine Elton, Mark Rigg, Freddy Bourdais.

20 YEARS OF MOULDING

Innovative. Collaborative. Forward Thinking. Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) are a regionally rooted business with the capability and capacity to operate on a global scale.

Set-up in 2002 by Freddy Bourdais and Mark Rigg, the Bishop Auckland based company are celebrating their 20th anniversary this year. They have grown year on year ever since and have built up a prominent reputation across the manufacturing sector globally with customers and industry peers.

They have bolstered impressive post-pandemic growth, doubling turnover in the last two years despite a pandemic, alongside staff expansion, bringing the workforce to 22, new site acquisition, increasing their square foot to 45,000 and investment in key logistics.

The main output at PMN is the production of vacuum formed plastic parts, which involves the supply of high quality and often very intricate moulded parts to an array of industries from automotive to precision engineering. The process of vacuum formed plastics requires extensive experience and

expertise to achieve high quality results. The company supplies clients nationwide and internationally with recent client contracts established to Australia and New Zealand.

Their vacuum formed plastic product range is immense, their largest moulding capacity is 3 ½ x 1 ½ metre and a five axis trimming capacity of 4 x 2 metre. Over the years PMN's wealth of knowledge and prominent reputation has seen the company work with London Underground, McLaren, Bentley, Rolls Royce, Jaguar, JCB and BAE Systems.

Freddy Bourdais, Co-Founder and Sales Director, Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd said: "We are committed to bringing investment, growth and creating sustainable jobs to support the local economy and we are delighted with the direction of the company in the last 20 years.

Collaboration and innovation has been key to our growth. We heavily invest in building relationships with our customer base and have built up many strong connections over the years. We very much look forward to embracing the next stage of growth at PMN."

Diversification is also key at PMN, and they are the only stockist of new plastic containers and plastic pallet boxes in the North East, plus the largest dealer of reconditioned plastic pallets in the UK. PMN also partner with French firm, JOUPLAST® and hold the exclusive contract to distribute their innovative range of landscaping products across the UK and Ireland. These are stocked by Homebase, Wickes, and Amazon, with turnover in this part of the company alone hitting over £1m last year.

To find out more visit: www.pmn-ltd.co.uk



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BENTLEY



New Business Hub for Bedlington

A Bedlington software developer has swapped code for co-working and opened a new venture to help home workers connect with their local business community.

Andy Millne has taken co-working literally by opening CO22 with his wife Helen. The couple have recently returned to the region from Slovakia where Helen was a teacher and Andy worked on community software projects from home. The isolation of home working prompted Andy to look at ways to help others in the same situation.

CO22 on Bedlington's Front Street is a shared office facility designed for people that work at home or those setting up a business. The open plan workspace contains private offices, a kitchen area, and a meeting room. As well as providing a base which reduces worker isolation, it offers added benefits such as networking opportunities, high speed internet, late night working and the chance to interact with established business.

CO22 operates on a membership basis with packages ranging from day passes to professional business support depending on individual needs. For those that require administration support a virtual office provides reception services and mail handling but perhaps the real advantage of CO22 is the connectivity it offers with other businesses.

"CO22 gives the opportunity for our customers to meet people that can really drive their business forward and when you get lots of different people together in one room sharing ideas, great things can and do happen. When you're new in business it's nice to talk to other people and share experiences," said Andy.



New partnership to strengthen digital opportunities for local businesses

Teesside University's Industrial Digitalisation Technology Centre (IDTC) has formed a new partnership with a software and consultancy company which will boost digital transformation opportunities for Tees Valley businesses.

The IDTC helps local businesses to make digital technology work for them by highlighting where SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) which have signed up for the funded programme are on their digital journeys and where they want to go.

It develops a bespoke technology roadmap for the businesses it works with and assists SMEs with consultancy and support around innovation projects, as well as helping them to find and implement new, useful digital technologies.

Through its new partnership with North East-based software and consultancy business ZEST I/O, the IDTC is providing new digitalisation opportunities to the businesses it works with to help them succeed.

ZEST I/O offers modular, agile and tailored software for SMEs. Its core solution, ZEST Cloudsuite, incorporates modules such as contacts, sales, purchasing, inventory, manufacturing, accounting, projects, maintenance and more. Customers can pick and choose modules according to their business requirements and utilise add-on modules as they grow.

North East entrepreneur named in national top list

Dan Kitchen, CEO of award-winning managed IT service provider, razorblue has been named as a One To Watch in The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders programme for 2022.

The programme, which is supported by The Times and now in its fifth year, celebrates those entrepreneurs that are growing the UK's most successful and fast-growing medium-sized firms.

Dan Kitchen said: "It was a real honour to be chosen as One to Watch, especially given the number of incredible businesses we have here in the UK. The success of razorblue is down to the efforts of not just me, but my team too so I need to thank them for their part in achieving this accolade."

The company's 2020-21 financial year saw 32 per cent growth, while in 2021-22 it exceeded this with a total of 48 per cent growth, remaining on track to hit £20million turnover in 2023. It employs over 160 people across seven offices, with plans to increase headcount too.

A record number of nominations were received this year, proving that ambition is alive and well despite the challenges faced by increasing economic uncertainty.



The Ones to Watch are the business leaders destined for great things. Those who are making waves in their sectors, having a positive impact on their customers and employees, and who are the driving force behind tomorrow's most successful medium-sized firms.



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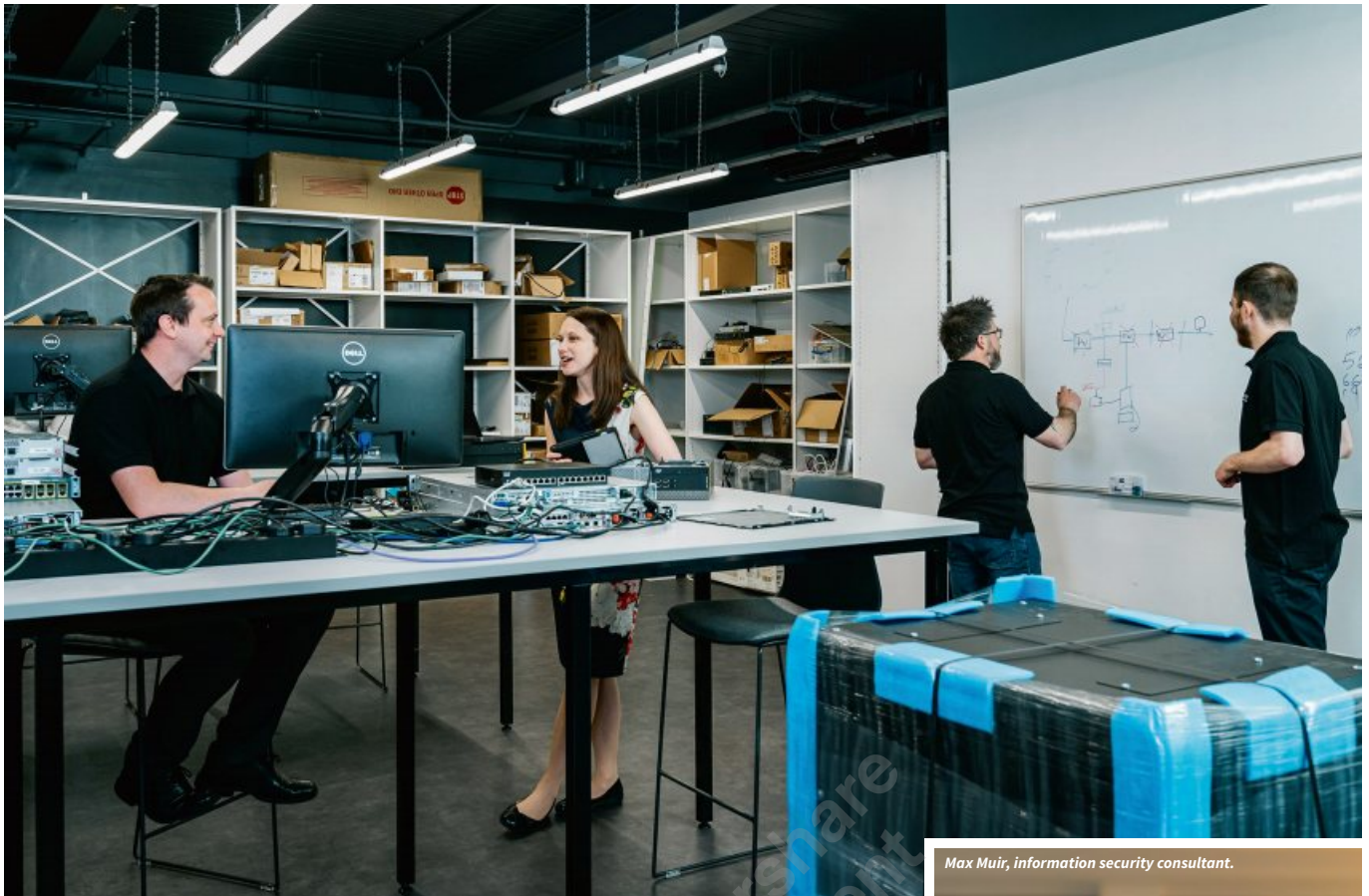
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Max Muir, information security consultant.



SUPPLY CHAIN CYBER SECURITY FOR CRITICAL NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

High-profile attacks on critical national infrastructure (CNI) have underscored the serious threat of sophisticated cyberattacks which can have a far-reaching, real-world impact on people's lives, disrupting critical services such as healthcare, emergency services and fuel supply.

In August alone two CNI operators in the UK were hit by cyberattacks, causing disruption to the NHS 111 service and compromising critical systems that control water chemical levels.

Over the past few years, supply chain cyber security has become a major risk for UK businesses with attacks increasing by 51% over the second half of 2021. However, only 13% of UK organisations are currently assessing the risk posed by their immediate suppliers.

For CNI, supply chain attacks are often utilised by sophisticated threat actors who can bypass an organisation's cyber security controls by targeting the weakest link. This could be through:

- Compromising a supplier's email or website and then exploiting the trusted relationship by launching a targeted phishing campaign.
- Inserting malware or vulnerabilities into a supplier's software or firmware update,

infecting their downstream users.

- Inserting malicious code into open-source software which propagates downstream to its users.

After all, a business is only as secure as its least secure supplier.

The risk of a severe supply chain attack on CNI is further compounded by a relatively small pool of suppliers for specialist functions. A supplier servicing multiple CNI operators can quickly become a critical dependency for the entire sector, and therefore an attractive target for state-sponsored attackers.

It is not enough for an organisation to just assess their supply chain's cyber security. They should also establish the level of risk each supplier poses and adjust security controls accordingly, employing a risk-based supplier assurance process. This information can also help inform business continuity and incident response plans in the event of a supply chain attack.

Whether you are a CNI operator or supplier to CNI, you will need to be aware of your obligations, as well as have the capacity to identify and address the cyber threats facing your organisation and supply chain.

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IT PROVIDER HAVE THEIR SIGHTS SET ON GROWTH AS THEY LAUNCH NEW WEBSITE



South Tyneside based IT specialists Integrity Technology Services have their sights firmly set on future growth following recent investment in a new website as part of their long term marketing strategy.

The company, which was launched in 2010 by owner, Jon Place, pride themselves on providing flexible, professional and friendly IT support services to businesses across the North East and have grown to a team of six employees.

Focused on a no-jargon and straight talking approach, recent large contract wins have enabled the business to concentrate on their long term marketing strategy which includes the new website project which they worked on with Sunderland based design agency, Dodio. Working with influential business names in the north east such as Hard Rock Café Newcastle,

Sweeney Miller Law, Colmans Seafood and Ramage Transport they have certainly built up an impressive reputation for the quality of service, professionalism and expert knowledge they provide.

The new user-friendly and easy to navigate website brings together the full range of services offered by Integrity such as IT support, PC repairs and cloud solutions along with meet the team sections and links to their online support services.

Director, Jon Place, was delighted with the new website design and is looking forward to pressing ahead with their future growth plans, commenting "The website is an integral part of our ongoing expansion plans therefore it was essential we got this in place with a view to continually enhancing the content and offering. Over the coming weeks and months, we will be sharing blogs, news and video content which we hope our customers and potential clients will find beneficial."

"Having worked in the IT industry for many years and observing many pitfalls, when I launched the business back in 2010, it was with a view to providing the very best service with an uncomplicated business model. We

don't tie our customers into short or long term contracts and offer our services on a rolling monthly basis. We've found that our customers really like and appreciate this approach, as long as we're delivering a first-class service, they will continue to use our services and that's exactly what has happened."

"We work with some of the biggest businesses in the north east and are proud to support our clients as and when they need us."

"The new website reflects our ethics and brand and talks in plain terms with no-jargon, we love nothing more than meeting up with our clients and having a cuppa with them while also providing straight talking advice, something I think that North East businesses really appreciate."

"We're looking forward to continuing with our marketing activities and are excited for the opportunities that lie ahead."

For more information on the services which Integrity Technology Services can offer and to view their new website please visit: www.integritytechnology.co.uk



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TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

In the latest of these popular series of features we talk to...

GEMMA LEVERS

Director, Edricorp.com



Did you always envisage a career in Technology?

Definitely not! From a young age I knew I didn't want to work in anything mundane and after completing my A levels wanted to work at the National Hurricane Centre in America. I was from a small pit village near Doncaster and my parents encouraged me to go out into the wider world.

I became the youngest ever supervisor for MOTO service stations whilst still in education and had a service advisors' job at Dixon Motors Citroen franchise in Scunthorpe.

In 2001 I met my partner Grant and moved to Gateshead in 2003 and took a job Springfield Motors. Recession hit a dying trade and I decided to take a career break. This lasted a week! I took an administrative role at a local Telecoms company where I moved through the ranks to become a fully-fledged telecoms engineer.

I think from early on I had a brain suited to technology when I look back!

What attracted you to your current role?

I have known my business partner Richard Frederickson for 13 years and we were good friends. He had an telecoms installation and cabling background and left a leading Hotel chain to become self-employed.

During the 2020 pandemic I was filling my time doing charity work while on furlough. Richard approached me to form Edricorp and offered me shares. We launched in 2020 and have never looked back.

We are essentially Business Communications and Infrastructure Technology specialists with a mission to deliver reliable infrastructure, connectivity and security systems that add real value to your business.

Despite a hugely challenging period we have gone onto establish Beaver Broadband which is the UK's hardest working broadband provider and are also soon to launch Black Ink which will offer premium CBD products amongst other products currently in R&D. Also, our newly launched amazing store.

Tell us about your team?

We have a very close-knit staff headed up by Gemma Lumsden our newly appointed Financial Director. Aga Polak-Brachman handles online sales and office administration with Nathan, Jake, Ryan and Finn our engineers.

What tips would you give to anyone looking to work in the industry?

Everything is accessible via the internet so it is easy to develop a skillset. Be inquisitive and take steps and break out of the box. It can be a great career although it would be good to see more women enter this sector.

What are you currently working on?

We deal with the full infrastructure for a variety of both small and large organisations throughout the UK, including a large majority of the pubs and clubs in Newcastle and the surrounding area and we also deal with many hotel chains throughout the UK.

Our work initially has taken us from Aberdeen to Brighton but has now taken us on international business including Orlando, Rome, Barcelona being network support specialist for large scale conferences and exhibitions.

We have also developed an amazing relationship with the Quaife Mini Challenge Exceler8 driver Ronan Pearson part of the BTCC calendar who we proudly sponsor.

What has been your fondest career memory?

Believing in myself and forming Edricorp with Richard. We get an immense amount of satisfaction from looking after the mental health of our staff and instilling self-belief in the team.

What does the future hold?

Very simply to keep building the business and passing the rewards to our staff.

What piece of technology would you be lost without?

My iPhone which I can control the entire business through. Lost without it!

What is the best business advice you have been given?

You don't know until you try!

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

My late dad was my hero who gave me my core values and taught me to be humble, thankful and kind. My mum equally, she would never let me quit at anything in life and I will always be forever grateful to them.

Also, my business partner Richard who is a great influence and has helped me achieve what I have today. I could not ask for a better business partner.

How do you like to relax?

Generally, I am very busy but golf has become a passion. I also try to get to every British Touring Motor Race to support Ronan.

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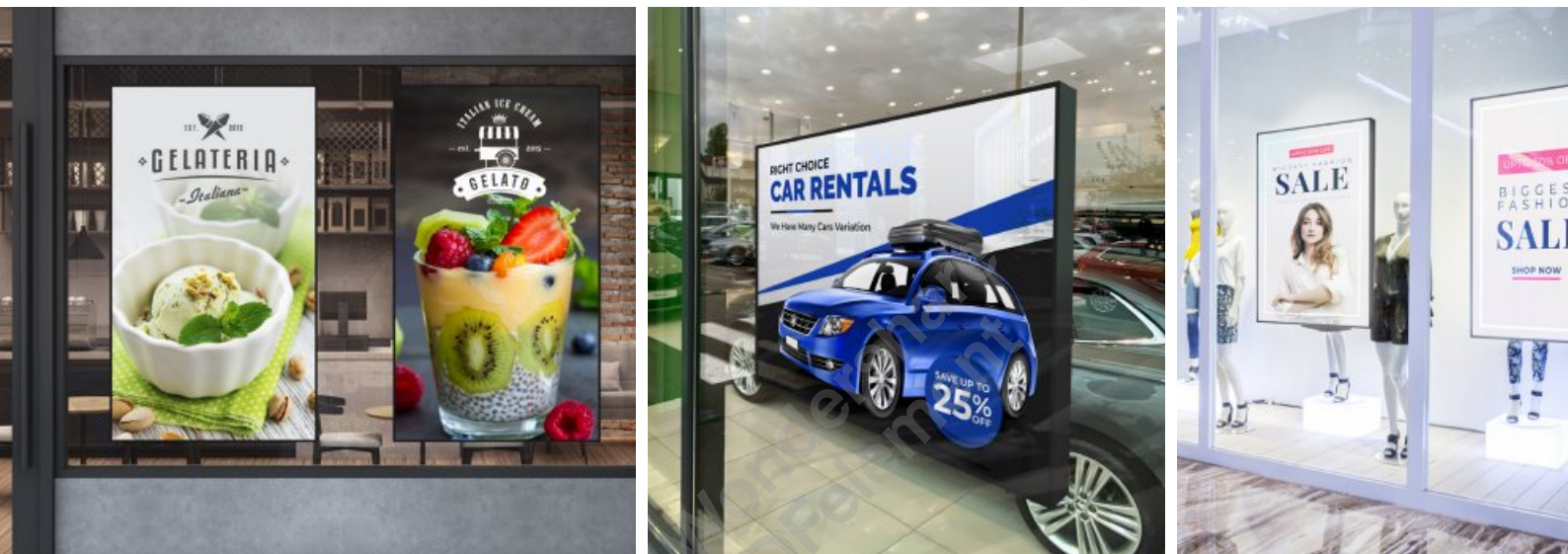
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HORIZON CAPITAL BACKED AGILICO CLOSES TENTH ACQUISITION

Leading workplace technology provider Agilico is pleased to announce the acquisition of Capital Document Solutions Limited, its biggest acquisition to-date by revenue, headcount, and machines in the field (MIF).

This latest acquisition significantly expands the group's capabilities across the UK; increases MiF to over 40,000; and expands the customer base to 13,000 largely SME customers. Agilico's Agile Print division is now the largest independent MPS business in the UK, a feat achieved over four years under CEO, Simon Davey.

Agilico CEO, Simon Davey, said; "Tom Flockhart and I spent two years working together on this deal to make sure every aspect of it was carefully considered. Though he very sadly lost his battle against cancer before we managed to complete, I know he would be immensely proud of his Board of Directors and family for honouring his wishes to become part of the Agilico group".

Board Director, Pam Flockhart, said; "I am delighted that we were able to deliver on the project that dad started with Simon back in 2020, and I know he would have been very proud to see Capital take their place as part of a nationwide Agilico group. We look forward to working with the team at Agilico, to further strengthen and grow the business, continue to provide the highest quality service and offer new products and technologies to our customers".



L-R: Andrew Aikman, Managing Director, Capital Document Solutions, Pam Flockhart, Director, Capital Document Solutions, Simon Davey, CEO, Agilico.

Luke Kingston, Partner at Horizon, said; "We are delighted to have supported Simon and Agilico on their tenth acquisition and welcome the fantastic team at Capital into the Group. Capital and Agilico share a similar ethos of customer

centricity, and this combination will also enable the Capital customers to benefit from the broader workplace technology offering from the Agilico Group."

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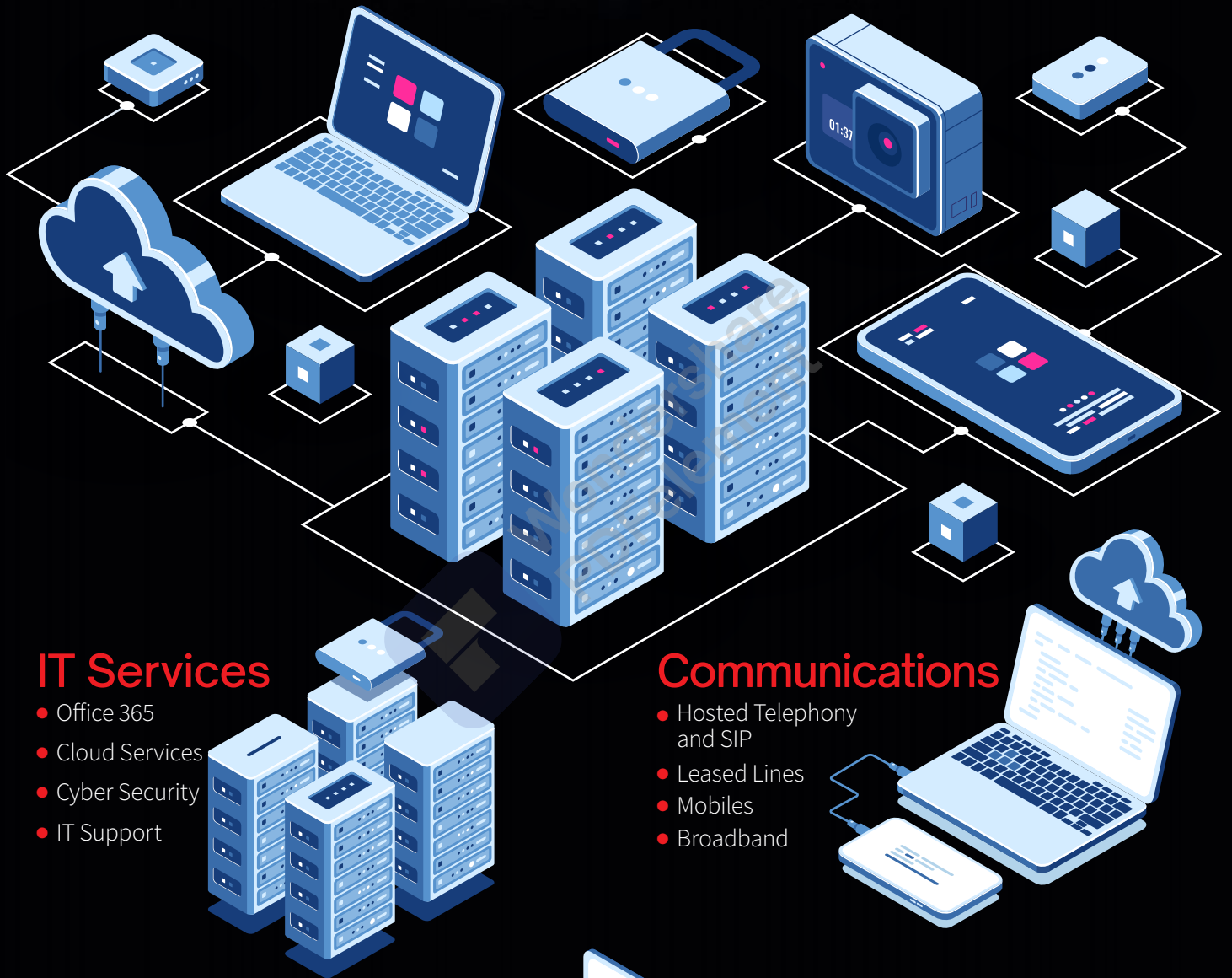


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New Commercial Director for Barratt

Leading 5-star housebuilder, Barratt Developments North East, has welcomed its first ever female director to its board of directors.

Karen Wheatley joins the board as the region's new Commercial Director, which comprises seven board members in total. Karen's role will cover the growth and development of the business, while helping to identify new commercial opportunities.

Karen has a degree in Quantity Surveying and began her career in construction in 1987 as a Cost and Bonus Surveyor within the local government, which spanned different aspects of construction. After 16 years, Karen joined a private construction company, Frank Haslam Milan, where she worked for 19 years and worked her way up to Head of Commercial for new build construction. Covering different build solutions, including new build sales and social housing, commercial builds, student accommodation, and modern methods of construction (MMC), Karen brings with her over 35 years of experience alongside a vast amount of knowledge across construction and housebuilding.

Stunning snapshot of Sunderland's future

A striking new CGI of a transformed Riverside Sunderland has been unveiled.

Already rapidly-changing, the stunning computerised visual of the heart of Sunderland city centre has been released by the city council, bringing to life dramatic changes already underway and depicting more to come.

The highly detailed digital projection, which has been created by North East architects FaulknerBrowns, captures a raft of new buildings, most of which are already under construction, as well as a number of future phase developments. It is a glimpse into the future of an exciting new urban quarter for the city, which is benefiting from more than £500m of live development projects that are underway right now.

The developments will deliver exciting new leisure opportunities for residents and visitors, with new places to spend time, meet, eat and socialise, as well as outdoor places to enjoy. There will also be a number of new office spaces, which will see hundreds of new jobs opportunities for residents.



Councillor Graeme Miller, leader of Sunderland City Council, said: "It's clear to see the rate of transformation at Riverside Sunderland, and that is all part of a wider vision for the city centre which has been brought to life in these amazing CGIs, showcasing how spectacular it will look within the next ten years.

"We are confident and ambitious as a city and that's why this picture isn't just a 'masterplan', it's a delivery plan. A picture of what we intend to deliver for Sunderland - a picture of what this city deserves. It's not just about how it looks, but about the way in which this vision will change the lives of people in Sunderland, giving new job opportunities as well as many exciting new places for them to enjoy."



Cycle Hub on the move to new home

Newcastle's Cycle Hub is set to make a move to a new home, as part of regeneration plans for Malmo Quay.

The social enterprise is looking forward to relocating from its current location right on the edge of the Quayside, to a new purpose-built space at Malmo Quay in plans submitted by PfP igloo, a sustainable developer looking to regenerate the site.

The Cycle Hub, which has been operating from its current site for 10 years, would be relocated as part of newly unveiled plans for Malmo Quay, that, if granted planning approval, would see the under-utilised space transformed into a new riverside community.

The plans include a new home for The Cycle Hub at the tip of the Malmo Quay peninsula, in a location founders of the Hub agree offers fantastic views and sunny outdoor space.

Jill Maddison, one of three co-founders of The Cycle Hub, an organisation that is passionate about sustainability and the role active travel can play in saving the planet, said: "The plans provide a new home for our cafe that we're really happy with on the bank of the River Tyne, with the iconic views we have enjoyed for the last ten years. We are also working with Pfp igloo on proposals for the former Steenberg's Tunnel over the road from the Malmo site, to become a new home for our workshop, bike hire and bike-friendly facilities which are core to our ethos and underpin our relationship with our service users and partners.

"We are delighted that Pfp igloo has made The Cycle Hub an integral part of its new plans, and we're working closely with them to ensure this remains a real asset for the area and continues to be a place people of all backgrounds, ages and interests can come and enjoy.



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PROPERTY OF THE MONTH



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Tenure: Freehold Council Tax Band: H EPC Rating: C

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Residential Sales



Sales Progression

Sanderson Young also place a great importance on sales progression, so that once a sale is agreed by our expert negotiators each individual case is looked after right through to completion. This proves invaluable, particularly in times of market change such as this.

Our designated sales progression team focuses their efforts entirely on liaising with lenders, solicitors, surveyors and the entire sales chain, ensuring everything is running smoothly and therefore we experience very few fall throughs.

We also understand the impact of attractive advertising. So much so that we have our own, well established Media department who look after every aspect of the exposure of your home, from in-house brochure design, to presence on global property portals, to editorial features, right through to walk through reels and features on our social media channels.

We focus on providing exceptional customer service throughout all areas of our company, from the first instruction right through to completion day.

If you are considering a move, we would be delighted to assist you.

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Media & Design



youngsRPS AND ANVIL HOMES JOIN FORCES ONCE MORE WITH LUXURY DEVELOPMENT IN CUMBRIA

Expanding their offerings into the west of the region.

youngsRPS is delighted to once again be joining forces with Anvil Homes to promote their development of nine individually designed detached houses on the outskirts of the highly desirable village of Hayton in Cumbria.

All the homes at Fairfields will be built in the signature Anvil Homes style, a four-square design incorporating traditional stone and slate with sliding sash windows and a superb standard of specification throughout.

Each property will benefit from Mowlem & Co hand-built kitchens and luxury Villeroy & Boch bathrooms. Efficient air source heat pumps for heating and hot water along with high levels of wall, floor and roof insulation ensure an Energy efficiency rating of B.

Anvil Homes is a family run business that has built a fine reputation for providing distinctive homes for discerning purchasers. With the emphasis on highest quality, Anvil Homes has developed the skills to produce the next generation of family homes. Each home is individually crafted and impeccably finished. The Consett based company first collaborated with youngsRPS back in 2017.

Alistair Carr, Managing Director of Anvil Homes Ltd, has aided in the development of the North East housing offering for the past 30 years and states: "We are very selective about the sites we choose to develop and Fairfields in Hayton immediately appealed to us as it sits in a unique parkland setting on the edge of a highly sought after village. We look forward to working with the expert residential team at youngsRPS to market the new homes, the first of which will be ready in early 2023.

Kim Harrison, Head of Residential for youngsRPS comments: "We have over 20 years' experience working with developers across a variety of new build properties, from single plots to large scale sites and we understand that new home buyers have different expectations and are experienced in managing their requirements."

Kim continues, "After the successful promotion of Anvil's Briar Fields development in Great Whittington in Northumberland the collaboration between Anvil and youngsRPS for Fairfields is an obvious one. We are delighted to be showcasing this collection of high-end properties to a new audience and dipping our toes into the Cumbria housing market."



SITE
MAP

1: LANGDALE HOUSE
2: TINDALE GRANGE
3: RYDAL LODGE
4: LONGLANDS
5: CONISTON GRANGE

6: CODDALE LODGE
7: EASDALE HOUSE
8: LONGMOSS GRANGE
9: WHORTON LODGE

The thriving market town of Brampton offers excellent local amenities with a good range of shops, post office, chemist, doctor's surgery and dentist.



Kim Harrison

www.youngsrps.com

SY GOT SOCIAL

The world is online and social - with 57.6 million in the UK alone, social media has changed the way we live our lives. From the way we get our news to the way we interact with our loved ones, social media is everywhere. It's unavoidable, it's powerful, and it's here to stay.

With such incredible penetration in the business world, its significance to society cannot be ignored — especially in the marketing industry. The reach and influence of social media is a treasure in the property business, where the need to engage with the market is of top priority, and it has taken over as one of the leading channels for advertising.

Here at Sanderson Young we have invested a lot of time and consideration into our social platforms, as we are acutely aware of the benefit and marketing scope this incredible resource has to offer. However more importantly, to me a successful social media account needs to be fully engaged with who we are as a business and how we want our potential customers to perceive us, it needs to be authentic and personable, and the professional and forward thinking side of our business shown at all times.

Our analytics over the past four months have really brought into context where we stand with our audience, achieving an organic 40% rise in followers and our engagement is up by 20%. Ultimately the statistics are encouraging but our main focus, one which has always stood, is to promote our beautiful properties and engage with local businesses and people.

As a business, social media gives us the ability to directly connect and interact with potential customers and we are building on our already strong brand by reminding people, often on a daily basis, why we are the estate agency to use. So why follow us? Our socials are, of course, packed



Cassie Walton
Social Media Manager at Sanderson Young

with beautiful homes for sale, but we also have regular property news updates, features on our Collection Magazine, new homes development updates, our SY recommends where we recommend local businesses and our incredibly popular walk around reels. But let's be quite frank, the reason most of us spend hours scrolling through the socials, we just love to look around incredible homes!

E: cassie.walton@sandersonyoung.co.uk
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The continued
adventures of...

Ziggy!



Hi Everyone

Isn't it cold? Glad I have my work fleece now winter is on the way. We have a new apprentice at work called Harriet, she is really nice and gives me lots of cuddles. Still very busy and my sister Cally is allowed to come with us, so I have some doggie company. See you soon, Ziggy.

Q. Every year gusts of wind dislodge one or two of my roof slates. The roof is in its original 1920s condition with no underfelt. There are adverts in the papers for a 'foam spray solution' for old roofs. These are guaranteed for twenty or so years. Is this the easiest way forward, or should we look to get the whole roof redone?

A. The fact that slates are slipping every year probably indicates that the nails which hold them to the timber battens are rusted through. Roofers refer to this as nail fatigue or nail sickness, and it is definitely time to have the roof stripped off and re-covered. Having foam sprayed on to the undersides of the slates may sound like a wonderful high-tech solution but it is actually a bad

idea. It is at odds with the recommendations of the Building Regulations, which require a clear 50mm ventilated gap between insulation and roof covering.

The foam sets hard and removes the two vital attributes that allow a traditional roof to last and perform so well for so long – the ability to breathe and the ability to move. The foam completely encloses the timber battens and the top surfaces of the rafters, which might cause them to rot. It also sticks tight to the slates and makes it almost impossible for them to ever be re-used. You will also probably find that the cost of the spray-on foam solution will be three or four times that of having the roof re-covered in the traditional way.

Try to find a roofer who will remove the existing slates carefully, and re-use as many as possible. Also make sure that the roofer uses a breathable sarking felt, and allows it to sag between the rafters. The ridge tiles and any hip tiles should be rebbed using lime-and-sand mortar to match the original; do not allow the roofer to use sand-and-cement.



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



A BENTLEY CONTINENTAL FOR EVERYONE



Damiano Rea

Climate change is one of the burning issues of our time, as my daughter reminds me every day. Here at Heaton Property, we are doing our best. All our cars are electric, and we supported halving the pavement outside our office to accommodate velocipedes. There have been some OMG moments as a flying cyclist and an old lady have narrowly avoided injury, but it is progress.

Which leaves us with petrol and diesel vehicles. Our government promises all new cars will be electric by 2030. This is not good enough according to my daughter. But fear not. I have the solution!

All manufactures of petrol and diesel cars should be price capped at ten thousand pounds. Bentley Continental? Ten grand. Fiat Punto? The same. Car manufacturers would stop producing fume emitting dinosaurs and switch to electric. Sorted.

What? Ridiculous you say? But this is precisely what government has done with the Tenant Fees Act and specifically a 'change of sharer' or what is legally called an 'Assignment of Tenancy'. I could explain the detail, but you may have drying paint to watch.

In a nutshell, government has decided £50 should cover all costs for 'change of sharers'. I

am never sure, with legislation in the lettings sector, if government has thought it through before consulting professionals and coming to a rational decision. Or if they are just going for likes and retweets on social media. I have my suspicions.

Now it is time for double maths unless you have a note from your Mum! £50 less VAT is £41.67. Our costs are – referencing £20. If a guarantor is needed, they need to be referenced and Land Registry checked. £23. Preparing and cross-checking tenancy paperwork, £60. Digital signature on documents £3. Update deposit with Tenancy Deposit Scheme £25. Inventory clerk to update inventory – site visit £90. Accounts to deal with outgoing tenant deposit and bank transfers £20.50.

I bet you wish you had gone for geography and history. Sometimes I do! But maths is

unequivocal. Government says a 'change of sharers' agreement can be charged at £50, yet it costs £221. And you thought a Bentley Continental for ten grand was ridiculous? As a result of this legislation, £179.33 is outstanding. Who shall pay? Take a wild guess.

Landlords, already burdened by often well-meaning legislation may look at a buoyant housing market and decide to cash their chips. Invest in a Chinese molybdenum mine and sleep well again at night. Lettings agencies run lean. We must do to remain competitive and deliver the best service for landlords and tenants.

So, who shall pay? Could it be the tenant? My brother Zeno runs Punto Italian Kitchen next door to our Heaton Road office. In addition to the finest pizza and pasta this side of Naples, they serve chips.

Imagine if Government announced, "All chips will be £1". That would cover everything from Heston Blumenthal's hand cut triple fried goose fat chips through to the revolting things they knock out at fast food joints. What could possibly go wrong with an idea like that?

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DESIGNING (AND BUILDING) IN AN EVERCHANGING WORLD

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

With all the major events going on in the world it's easy to be negative, but as my wise old Dad always says: 'What is normal? There's always a problem to solve.'

I think architects should reflect on this in their approach to designing buildings in 2023.

In last year's November issue of Northern Insight, I tried to look ahead on some of the challenges facing 2022 and, in many respects, the same challenges are repeated.

So, this time I am going to focus on how 2022 has shaped the construction industry and how to succeed in producing successful building projects.

At Howarth Litchfield we have seen how busy construction companies have been, so finding a builder across every level has been a challenge. But you can still find a contractor if you are willing to discuss with them their availability and suitability.

Many clients need to show evidence of competition in tendering, but in a busy market the contractor may not want to tender against lots of competitors. You would be far better selecting a contractor and negotiating a price and project specification. This two-stage tendering is increasingly popular.

I understand the nervousness and hesitancy of clients who want to see that good value is obtained. I believe that the value can be seen in the intelligence that the contractor brings to the project. Employing a QS to monitor the costs should give the reassurance that all the checks are undertaken.



Much has been made of the lack of materials this year and this has certainly been a factor over the last couple of years. But I think it's now been exaggerated. If your project is fast moving, then as architects, we have to be flexible on material selection at the outset of the design and during the construction process.

A good architect should be aware of which materials are on long lead in, so when we are designing, I am constantly checking that I am not adding a problem into the build programme. Cost of build projects has undoubtedly risen in 2022. The energy issues have compounded the industry's problems, as most materials use energy for manufacture and then need energy to deliver, prior to the construction sequence.

Contractors have had it tough in trying to formulate costs (and tenders) for buildings with ever changing costs. Many tenders have come in valid for only that week. The general inflation has added to this complexity in a vicious cycle of increases.

So, my tip for clients is to be realistic on costings from the outset. The need to design buildings efficiently has never been more important. Architects have a duty to produce elegant

buildings, but right now, I think we should focus on how to be elegant, simple, affordable and environmental.

Many of our commercial, industrial, and educational clients rely on us to think creatively and get the most value from their budgets.

There is a real interest in energy saving for the building when in use. So, despite building costs, clients now recognise the importance of investing in long term energy solutions. I always advocate common sense with a fabric first approach of reducing energy needs through well insulated buildings before spending money on expensive M+E systems.

So, for 2023, the challenges remain: providing value for money as well as sound design solutions for clients - plus the ability to deliver a building to site, and on time.

So some things don't change at all. Maybe Dad was right!

Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email n.turner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com



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*"We laugh together, we comfort one another.
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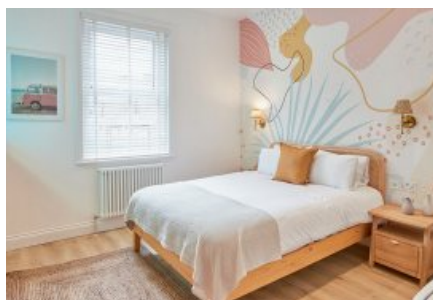


STYLED INTERIOR DESIGN: FROM CALIFORNIA TO SCARBOROUGH

Southern California was the surprising inspiration behind one of Scarborough's newest hotels. Bethany Walker, of interior design agency Styled, talks us through how they revamped The Beach House to give it a new lease of life.

The British beach holiday is a perennial favourite. Us hardy Brits love nothing more than wrapping up warm, taking a flask and settling behind our windbreak on the coast of the North Sea.

But for our latest venture, The Beach House, in Scarborough, we wanted to do something a



little different; we wanted to create a unique, fun and quirky hotel heavily inspired by Cali Surf Club style to attract a new audience to one of the UK's best-loved resorts.

The client was also keen to make sure the venue had a fresh new look, without alienating any potential guests with anything too 'out there'.

They were looking to launch a unique, fun and quirky hotel that would help them stand out in Scarborough, while still appealing to a wide range of potential guests. By opting for a soft pastel colour palette with unique design features we brought this vision to life.



Californian style

Our inspiration for the project came from the Cali Surf Club brief and we spent plenty of time looking at key features of this design style to inform our own plans for the hotel. We opted for a pastel colour palette with lots of natural materials, including rattan and jute, with pops of neon and greenery throughout to add a modern feel to the beach club vibe.

Comfort was also a key concern for guests, along with practicality. With the venue being a hotel, it is used in a different way to a self-catering property and each and every element had to be well-thought-out.

The hotel itself comprises of 59 rooms, offering a variety of king-sized bedrooms and two-bedrooms suites, making it a flexible choice for families, couples and groups.

Its location, just 550 meters from the seafront, is also a major plus, and while the North Sea coastline is a far cry from the sun-kissed beaches of California, the beach-front vibe remains just as fitting.

The results

The turnaround for this project was incredibly tight, which left us with little time to source furniture pieces that would work within the timeframe. Finding trusted suppliers who could not only help us achieve our desired look but also fit the timeframe was a challenge, but we managed to achieve it.

The client is incredibly pleased with the result, and guests are too – bookings have been consistent since it opened earlier this Summer.

With a little imagination and a lot of style, we've achieved something really special - a fun, modern and unique place to stay in a traditional, popular holiday destination.

Styled Interior Design is a Saltburn-based agency specialising in residential, commercial, hospitality and accommodation projects. To find out more, visit www.styledinteriordesign.co.uk



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PROPERTY SPECIALIST BOLSTERS BOARD AS IT EYES FURTHER GROWTH

Bradley Hall has appointed a new board member while strategically aligning its current board member roles in order to bolster the company for further growth.

Cassie Moyse joins Bradley Hall's board of directors as group marketing director. Three of the firm's shareholders take on roles which will see them concentrate on strategic growth of their own areas of the business. Richard Rafique will become managing director – commercial, Matt Hoy becomes managing director – residential, David Cran becomes managing director – Yorkshire, while Catherine Affleck and Paul Czerepok will remain as group operations and group finance director respectively.

The newly defined roles will allow group managing director Neil Hart and group director Peter Bartley to support key clients and to develop the overarching business strategy for Bradley Hall, in each of its services.

The rapid growth of the firm and its future plans aim to position the company as a full-service property firm which becomes the first choice all services for both members of the public, organisations of all sizes and local authorities.

The move follows a year of significant growth for the firm, with the opening of a new office in Leeds city centre and creation of over 20 jobs across the business. The company

was also once again named the most active commercial property agency in County Durham, Northumberland, and Tyne and Wear for the second quarter of 2022, having seen the value of its sales, lettings and acquisitions exceed £160,000,000 in the year to May 2022.

Richard Rafique, who has been a director and part owner of Bradley Hall alongside Neil and Peter for seven years, said: "We are absolutely delighted to announce our ambitious plans for the future and proud to be continuing to work together as a board to reach our goals. With our redefined roles in line with the new demands which come with a growing business, along with the appointment of Cassie as our group marketing director, we have a clear strategy and responsibilities to facilitate the growth of the firm."

Cassie Moyse is a new appointment to the board, joining as Group Marketing Director. The appointment will see the experienced PR and marketing professional deliver more 'strategic and results driven campaigns' while continuing to lead all of its core marketing efforts, including; PR, digital, business development, events and growth opportunities. She will also continue to run business and lifestyle magazine,

Portfolio North, as a separate entity.

Cassie said: "Our new brand and structure provide excellent foundations to build a £10m business on. As the firm grows, client habits change and the industry evolves, communications strategy has to adapt and I am very excited to be continuing to grow the Bradley Hall brand. I look forward to seeing all of the hard groundwork which has been done by my team and I come to fruition over the coming months and years."

Matt Hoy, who will continue to lead the firm's residential operations, said: "Over the past few months, we've seen activity and values rise across almost every area of the business, and as we continue to expand into new areas and open new offices, I'm wholly confident that the residential business will continue to go from strength-to-strength."

David Cran will take on the responsibility of Managing Director for Yorkshire, as Bradley Hall looks to continue investing in the region and growing its footprint outside of the North East. As well as overseeing the main Leeds office, including management of all service lines, David's new role will also see him lead the firm's expansion into Sheffield, Hull, York and north Lincolnshire.

David said: "A huge part of my new role will be overseeing the next phase of growth for Bradley Hall as we identify strategic opportunities to expand into Lincolnshire and Humberside and become an agency that stretches beyond the North East and Yorkshire and I can't wait to get started."

For more information on Bradley Hall, visit: www.bradleyhall.co.uk



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INVESTMENT ZONES CAN STIMULATE ECONOMIC GROWTH

Kevan Carrick of JK Property Consultants LLP, advised on the first wave of Investment Zones in the North East and is currently advising on two proposed Zones and Development Corporation proposals. He advised the Secretary of State for the Environment in the formation of the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation in 1986 and went on to advise on the delivery of major regeneration and development schemes.



Kevan Carrick

Here, he looks at the Investment Zone proposals, put forward in the government's mini budget.

The government is in early discussions with 38 authorities and the sites will benefit from a range of time-limited tax incentives over 10 years. Those under consideration are:

Business rates – 100% relief from business rates on newly occupied business premises and certain existing businesses. Councils hosting Investment Zones will receive 100% of business rates growth above an agreed baseline for 25 years.

Enhanced Capital Allowance – 100% first year allowance for qualifying expenditure on plant and machinery assets.

Enhanced Structures and Buildings Allowance – accelerated relief to allow businesses to reduce their taxable profits by 20% of the cost of qualifying non-residential investment per year, relieving 100% of their cost of investment over five years.

Employer National Insurance contributions relief – zero-rate Employer NICs on salaries of any new employee working in the tax site for at least

60% of their time, on earnings up to £50,270 per year, with Employer NICs being charged at the usual rate above this level.

Stamp Duty Land Tax – full relief for land and buildings bought for use or development for commercial purposes, and for purchases of land or buildings for new residential development.

What is the impact?

My assessment is that the proposals are reminiscent of the first wave of Enterprise Zones that encouraged the private sector to speculate the development of commercial property, where there is a risk of little or no demand.

At that time there was no risk of paying empty property rates. That risk appears to exist in the proposed Investment Zones and could be a serious deterrent to building commercial property as, after six months vacancy, empty rates will be payable until newly occupied. However, with the councils' hosting the Zones there might be an amelioration of this risk by foregoing some or all empty rates for a period to make development viable and to kickstart a broken market.

All other fiscal proposals will be encouraging to the private sector to kickstart a stalled or broken market.

This should help to make space available where there is shortage and which retards or frustrates occupation by businesses because of shortage of space. For example, there is a shortage of factories. The risk, at present, is that the development of a factory is not viable. It can now be viable with these fiscal advantages.

There are significant advantages to the occupier with relief from the payment of business rates, enhance capital allowances for qualifying expenditure on plant and machinery assets, tax allowances on non-residential investments, NI employer savings, and Stamp Duty Land Tax. This help comes at a time when the costs of operating a business is volatile.

It is most important that the development of property should be at a quality that passes to the occupier significant reduction in occupation costs.

The overall impact, if the details are right in the final role out of Investment Zones, will be to accelerate the construction industry workload. But a word of caution, with shortages already in the system in skilled labour and ready availability of materials, there could be a hike in build costs and/or delay in delivery.

www.jkpropertyconsultants.com

HOST & STAY: HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF YOUR HOLIDAY LET – ANY TIME OF YEAR



Is a holiday let a sound investment, or will it only really pay dividends for six weeks of the year? Dale Smith, chief executive of holiday lettings management company Host & Stay, shares his tips on making your rental property work all year round.

A holiday let is for life, not just for the school holidays.

One of owners' most common queries, especially if they've bought the property with the specific aim of drawing an income from it, is if it's worth it and if it will stand empty for weeks at a time – no good for your wallet or the property itself.

The answer is yes, it is and no, it won't. Because while the holidays are the obvious time for people to get away, there is plenty you can do to make sure your holiday let is occupied all year round.

Diversify

Firstly, the word holiday let could almost be said to be a misnomer; with the way we work nowadays, there are plenty of people who need access to a short-term let.

With many people working from home, business trips can often be longer and, for companies, it's far more cost-effective to put up a group of colleagues in a self-catering 'holiday' let than splash the cash on hotel rooms and meals out. To capitalise on this, make sure your property

has decent Wifi and, if at all possible, a place to work. Nobody's expecting a full office, but a desk in a bedroom or a decent-sized dining table will make it much easier.

Styling

Now staycations are back competing with foreign travel, one of the best ways to make your home stand out – and increase bookings – is to give it the wow factor.

If you can, consider investing in some luxury touches that guests may not have at home: a roll-top bath, underfloor heating or a fancy coffee machine all add appeal, and help to attract a wider range of clientele.

Having a luxurious or unique look is a sure-fire way to encourage more bookings, so pay close attention to styling, as well as your fixtures and fitting. Of course, you'll also need to make sure the photography shows all of this in the best light too – poor-quality images can really put potential guests off.

Time limits

To make sure you're not limited to times when people can have a full week off work or school, consider offering breaks of varying lengths.

Many people can't commit to a full week away or to arrive on a Friday, so flexibility over arrival days and length of stay can dramatically increase your appeal.

At Host & Stay, we've been breaking the mould regarding the above, offering a degree of flexibility that is rare in the industry – and it's going down well with travellers.

Late bookings are on the rise, partly as a hangover from the uncertainty of Covid and party due to cost of living increases. If you're able to offer last-minute, short-stay availability, there's a market out there just waiting to be tapped into.

Guest experience

For the past few years, with pandemics and lockdowns and travel restrictions, a staycation was the obvious choice for many. However, the world has opened up again and holiday home owners need to compete with foreign travel.

To do this, make sure that your home feels like a holiday. This means making sure that everything is easy for your guests, from finding the property and parking to stocking up on essentials and making sure there's room for everyone; you'd be amazed by the amount of holiday homes with four bedrooms but just one sofa and one chair in the living room.

Another way to guarantee frequent bookings is to make it easy for your guests – as well as making your property easy to find.

Don't just list on one website, or worse, your own site. Instead, make sure your listing is seen by as many people as possible by featuring on multiple platforms.

At Host and Stay, we know how all of the above can be time consuming – which is why we offer holiday home owners a full end-to-end experience, from taking photos and styling the property to managing bookings and cleaning rotations.

After a stressful few years, more and more people are looking to get away whenever they can, and with working from anywhere still an ongoing trend, they're more able to than ever.

With the right marketing, the right look and the right amount of flexibility, there's no reason that a holiday let can't be occupied all year round.

If you need advice on how to make the most out of your holiday let, information on Host & Stay's holiday home management solution, or to book a stay in one of its luxury properties, visit hostandstay.co.uk



Horizon Works looks to the future with appointment of first digital marketing apprentice

B2B marketing company Horizon Works has taken on its first marketing apprentice, as part of its commitment to developing marketing talent and to support its long-term growth plans.

Jack Weir, from Cullercoats, has joined the Northumberland-based company as a digital marketing apprentice.

The apprenticeship programme is being delivered through Darlington-based Baltic Apprenticeships, which specialises in digital marketing and

IT apprenticeships. Horizon Works, which is based at Northumberland Business Park near Cramlington, supports innovators in complex industries and offers a wide range of integrated marketing services across strategy, PR, design and digital.

During the programme, Jack will work alongside Horizon Works' marketing specialists and gain hands-on experience in a range of digital marketing disciplines, including website development, e-marketing, social media marketing and SEO.

He will also learn how digital marketing is integrated into marketing and brand strategies, and gain valuable insight into B2B marketing in Horizon Works' core sectors, which include manufacturing and engineering, energy, technology, automotive, security and defence, and the chemicals and process industries.

Offstone Publishing and The Morgan Sports Car Club launch Morgan: The March of Progress

Northumberland-based Offstone Publishing has partnered with The Morgan Sports Car Club to release a new book which tells the story of British car manufacturer Morgan from 1909 to the present day

Northumberland-based Offstone Publishing has partnered with The Morgan Sports Car Club to publish *Morgan: The March of Progress* - a 288-page hardback book which tells the fascinating story of The Morgan Motor Company from its founding in 1909 to the present day.

Written by Charles Neal, the book charts more than 100 years of British engineering excellence at Morgan - from the company's launch in 1909 and the Morgan Runabout to its international racing success, the evolution of the Morgan Three-Wheeler, the current cars in production at Morgan's factory in Malvern, and the role the Morgan Sports Car Club has played in the marque's global reach and nurturing the enduring passion of its owners and admirers.



The foreword is written by Morgan Motor Company chairman Steve Morris, while the book features fascinating stories and more than 400 photographs from private owners, the club and The Morgan Motor Company.

Gary Ramsay, Offstone Publishing's owner, said: "We couldn't be happier with the finished book and the initial feedback from our partners at the Morgan Sports Car Club, Steve Morris and the Morgan Motor Company, and those who've read early copies has been incredibly positive."



Mediaworks chief named among UK's Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders

Brett Jacobson, founder and CEO of North East headquartered Mediaworks, has been named as one of The LDC Top 50 Most Ambitious Business Leaders for 2022.

The programme, which is supported by The Times and now in its fifth year, celebrates the inspiring leaders behind some of the UK's most successful and fast-growing medium-sized firms.

A record number of nominations - more than 750 - were received this year, proving that ambition is alive and well despite the challenges faced by increasing economic uncertainty.

The business leaders featured in The Top 50 demonstrate resilience, strategic excellence and export success. They operate across a broad range of sectors and are driving growth in every corner of the UK - from Edinburgh to Brighton, and Bath to Norfolk. Collectively, they employ almost 9,500 people and turn over more than £1.2 billion.

Mediaworks is a full service marketing agency, helping transform the digital footprints of clients which include the likes of Dune London, Cath Kidston, Puma and Southern Water. It was founded by Jacobson 14 years ago in Newcastle and has grown to a 200-strong operation with offices in Leeds, Edinburgh, Manchester, London and its HQ in Gateshead.

Brett said: "It's incredibly humbling to be recognised in this manner and be amongst such esteemed company, many of whom I've admired from afar from many years. But really, this is recognition for every single one of the Mediaworks team who've worked so tirelessly through what has been an incredibly challenging few years.

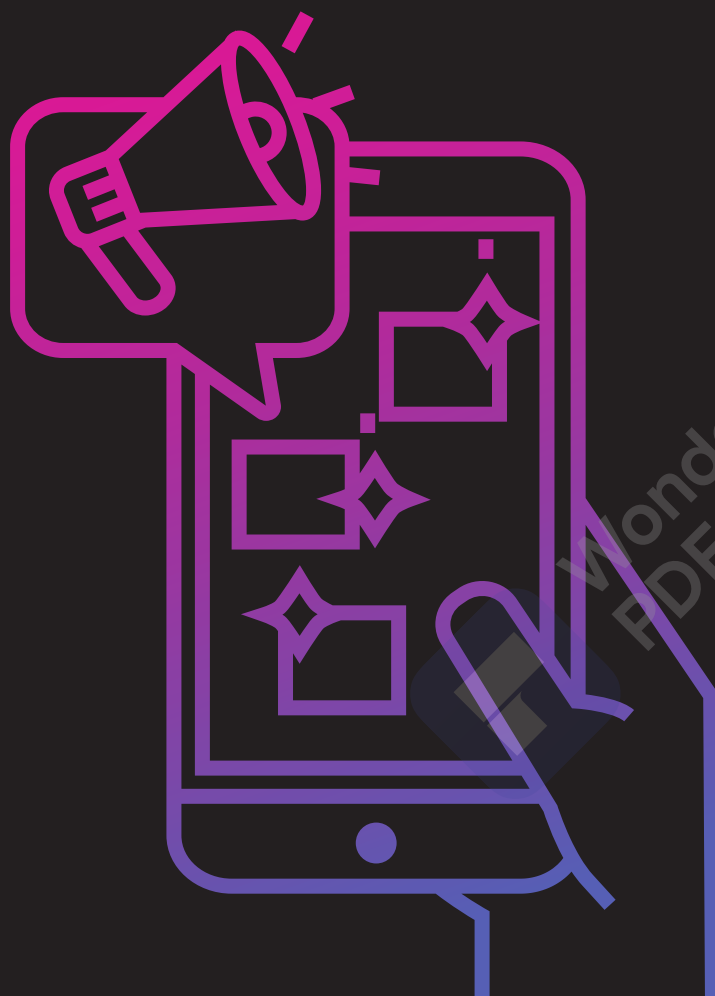
"The future is sure to bring more challenges, but I've never felt more confident, with the team we have in place, that we'll continue to thrive and grow alongside our incredibly supportive and ambitious clients and partners."

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MARKETING AND MEDIA MATTERS

In the latest in these popular series of features we speak to...

DEE MACDONALD

Founder, Dee Macdonald Consulting

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

When I started at University I was studying history and rather quickly I realised it wasn't for me. I switched to Psychology and Public Media- a new brand new course all about radio & tv production, PR and marketing...I'd found my fit and knew right away that's where I wanted to work.

What has been your career path so far?

I've had some amazing roles working for Land Rover, Bauer (radio & television), our now King- then Prince Charles at the Prince's Trust, a global humanitarian charity all of which lead me to set up my own PR/ Marketing consultancy: DMC.

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

The media changes every day- keeping up with it is a challenge. Back when I was a student the internet was just becoming popular, by 2005 social media began in earnest and since then it's been a full on assault on the senses! You no longer have to wait to publish a press release out to your media list- you can just get it out there on socials. You can organise an event on Facebook, have a debate on Twitter and 'Be Real' everyday capturing images that are shared with your networks. As a media consultant you've gotta keep up!

Who do you most respect in your industry?

Caitlin Moran and Tina Brown both get my respect for being strong opinionated women in the media, as does Anna Foster (BBC Newcastle) who has been on the radio for over 20 years and is still a brilliant broadcaster. However my deepest respect goes out to those who branch out by themselves and make it work.

Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

Patsy Stone darling!!

What are you currently working on?

For the last eight months I've been working on a project with, ...and I still can't believe it when I say it, His Holiness- The Pope. During lockdown a groundbreaking film was made that featured unprecedented access to Pope Francis, providing an intimate look at a global leader

who approaches challenging and complex issues with tremendous humility, wisdom and generosity towards all. I was asked to help promote the film across Europe and roll out the curriculum to schools globally. It's been a once in a lifetime opportunity and I feel eternally grateful I got the gig!

I'm also working with my ongoing clients who include NE Youth, North East Youth Alliance and Siren Films- all of them are great organisations which I'm proud to represent.

What is your greatest strength?

I'm a communicator, I'm creative, enthusiastic and determined.

What is your biggest weakness?

Asking for help - sometimes I can be too much of a strong, independent woman!

What has been your proudest achievement?

Having my son - becoming a mother changed everything for me.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

I want to continue working with people and organisations I believe in and that make a difference. I always wanted to be a presenter on MTV when I was younger...I'm guessing that's not going to happen now!

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

As we march towards the Metaverse in next 5-10 years I'm sure there will be more merging of the digital and physical world with immersive experiences becoming the norm. Get those VR headsets ready! I'm hoping that the media regains some integrity and the art of storytelling is not lost in click bait and sensationalism!

**www.deemacpr.co.uk
07791 860954**



“

*...becoming a mother
changed everything
for me...*

...THE DARK NIGHTS ARE DRAWING IN AND WITH IT THE COLD WEATHER...

Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what they are doing to raise their spirits or enlighten their clients on the good things they are doing.



To enlighten our clients, we are expanding our support network and bringing in a new customer flow. This means that our web clients will be able to access support 24/7 and for our other clients, we will have a new customer journey in place, along with a strong support structure for when they complete projects with us.

Dan Wilkinson, www.thedwmedia.co.uk



We know that this time of year can mean a dip in spirits for so many of our wonderful customers. That's why we always encourage the practise of Hygge in the home. It's a Danish practise of creating a warm, cosy space, ideal for snuggling up, cuddling in and relaxing in the sanctity of our homes. Even if you only have a tiny space, follow some of the principles of hygge by surrounding yourself with cushions, lighting lots of candles, snuggling under a blanket and reading your favourite book.

And if you're on the lookout for more cushions or candles, visit the Powder Butterfly website to stock up – they're some of the things we do best!

Corinne Lewis Ward www.powderbutterfly.co.uk



The nights may be drawing in, but the days still have the same number of hours, and we must use those hours wisely. The last remaining months in the year are a crucial time for many businesses, this year more than most they need those tills ringing.

It's the time of year to really make sure you're focused and know how to get those sales in and how to retain any new customers. Big bangs aren't just for Guy Fawkes, it's a great time to focus on your plans for the New Year so your business can start with a big bang too!

Karen Goldfinch www.facebook.com/yourbusinesspilot



Autumn and the dark nights don't stop our work, this winter is going to be one of the busiest! Our mentoring programme is receiving record numbers of referrals for support, and we have an exciting October Half Term and Xmas activity programme already planned. We are always looking for new and exciting projects for all ages and still have some slots for our ever-expanding tree surgery business which helps to fund the activities we deliver. If you're after-tree work at home or work drop us an email for a free quotation or if you're interested in working with us on a joint activity project, just get in touch via the website.

**Paul Kirkpatrick
www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk
paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk**



We're delighted to announce that we have received a National Lottery Community Award that will help hundreds of families cope with the stress and anxiety associated with mental illness amongst young people.

We will be running a new three-year mental health programme which will benefit 40 children each week over a ten-week period. Having the parents involved is a big thing because if they understand what their kids are going through, it helps them to cope as well. There is a lot of stress and anxiety caused when worrying about their children.

This is our biggest contract to date, and it means that we are going to be able to help literally hundreds of families all across North Tyneside who would perhaps otherwise have been waiting a lot longer for help. We believe that no child should have to reach a mental health crisis before they have access to help and support. The satisfaction we get from helping young people makes all of the hard work worthwhile. We're very grateful to our funders.

Rebecca Hetherington and Marisa May
www.Mindstars.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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IT'S AWARDS SEASON

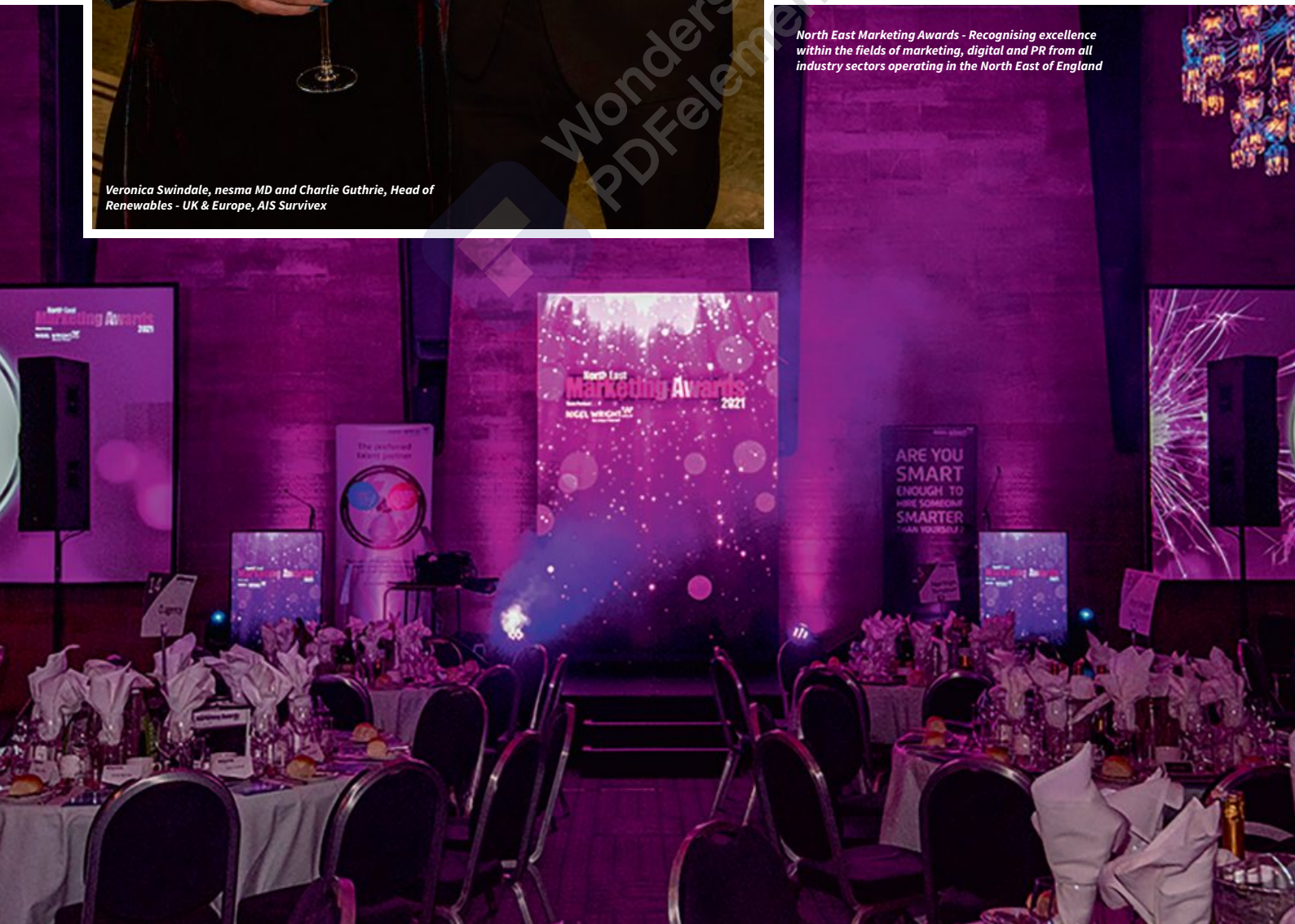
Business awards start to ignite as the nights close in, and it's time to celebrate.

nesma is thrilled to be the Corporate Sponsor of the North East Marketing Awards being held at the Hilton Gateshead on Thursday, 1 December this year.

No matter what your discipline or what sector you are in, there will be an awards ceremony for it! Undertakers, food and drink, construction, teaching, marketing, PR, and many more. So why do we do this? I have always maintained that writing an award entry is a very cathartic process. It's a great way of reflecting on your or your team's expertise and achievements, acknowledging work that has been done often under challenging circumstances without adequate resources but aren't we good at getting the job done?

North East Marketing Awards - Recognising excellence within the fields of marketing, digital and PR from all industry sectors operating in the North East of England

Veronica Swindale, nesma MD and Charlie Guthrie, Head of Renewables - UK & Europe, AIS Survivex



Showcasing your team's efforts and inviting them to the event to show your appreciation, even if you are not the ultimate winner, is an excellent opportunity to give thanks and recognise their contribution throughout the year.

Of course, this affords great networking in the sectors we work in. We love seeing how many companies with award entries are represented by people nesma has worked with over the years. From Rising Stars to Director of the Year, best agency, and best public sector campaigns, we could probably list them all in one way or another; it's nice to see the achievements of team members we have taught along the way. And to bump into them again further on in their careers.

Even the initial judging process, whilst time-consuming because there is a lot of rigour involved, and yes, we do scrutinise your entries very carefully, is a great day. It's invigorating to sit down alongside seasoned marketers who know their subject from some of the greatest brands in the region. I enjoy the healthy debates around who should be the winner because the standard of award entries is always very high, and it is often hard to choose. Frankly, they are all winners because of the quality of the entries and the fantastic work everyone does daily.

The event itself is fabulous. Last year there was a fantastic buzz in the room as it was the first time meeting up with everyone again that we hadn't seen for a couple of years. It was that tiny window between the end of Covid and the beginning of the Omicron variant, which had us all scuttling home again afterwards and, for some of us, cancelling Christmas.

The night was spectacular – lots of mutual celebration of the north east being rich in excellent marketing talent. Sometimes there is talk of making it a Northern event which would, of course, embrace Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool etc., but I think we should stay focused on the North East, and I would encourage you all to keep submitting your entries to keep it this way. We have enough clout here to keep it local so let's do that. It feels very special to be in a room of homegrown talent.

We are looking forward to seeing everyone again at the North East Marketing Awards on 1 December for more celebration of the region's marketing achievements.

Take a look at www.nesma.co.uk for marketing, digital marketing and communications qualifications and workshops for you and your employees.

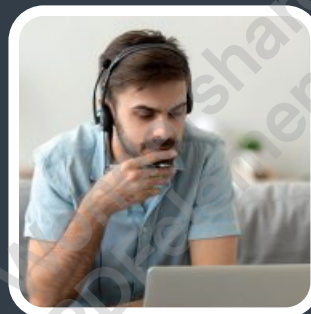
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L-R: Andrew Young and
Harvey Trent - Founders
and Directors of The
Pulse Rooms.

MATCHING YOUR BRAND'S VALUE PROPOSITION TO CUSTOMER NEEDS

By Andrew Young - Founder and
Director of The Pulse Rooms

Customer needs are complex and constantly evolving. Rapid technological advancements, changing lifestyle patterns, and external economic pressures are just some factors that can affect them.

Building a successful brand means consistently matching your Value Proposition to customer needs. Designing your Value

Proposition isn't a once-off task reserved purely for the start-up phase in business. You should regularly assess if your customer needs have changed and then alter things accordingly. Failure to do this can result in your brand losing market share to the competition or becoming irrelevant in the customer's decision-making process.

At The Pulse Rooms, we invest time in helping businesses define customer needs before building their Value Proposition.

Here are three things to consider when identifying your customer needs.

Know The Job To Be Done

American academic, Clayton Christensen, came up with a simple definition for customer needs. He referred to customers as having a series of 'jobs to be done'. In this day and age, we lead increasingly busy lives. We constantly try to tick multiple things off the to-do list and sometimes run into trouble. This is often when we actively seek a product or service to help in the process. Start by listing all the 'jobs' your customers need to do, and identify where your brand's offering can help them overcome any hurdles. Think about the conscious and subconscious choices people make to use your product or service to reach their goal.

Talk To Your Customers

Gathering insights around a table and making

assumptions about your customers needs is a great starting point. But, the only people who can honestly tell you about these jobs are customers themselves. Talking directly to your customers will help to uncover things you hadn't even considered. This doesn't always have to involve a formal process, such as running a customer survey. Anecdotal comments can be just as insightful.

A useful tool to apply is the customer journey map. With your customer, identify the different phases in their journey and their most immediate needs at each point. Doing this with multiple customers will start to unearth particular patterns.

Find The Basic Needs

Once you have a clear trend, it's time to delve deeper. Try to pick out those needs most of your customers have no choice but to deal with. These are known as 'basic needs'. The ones that cost them time and money, and cause the greatest amount of frustration. Ultimately, you want to tell customers how your brand directly meets those needs through your Value Proposition.

For further tips and advice on building a Value Proposition, visit www.thepulserooms.com. Alternatively, get in touch by emailing hello@thepulserooms.com

WHY THE NORTH EAST IS A GREAT PLACE TO DO BUSINESS

I was recently asked to give the after-dinner keynote at a conference on future energy resources. Initially, I was reluctant to accept this speaking engagement. After all, what the heck do I know about lithium mining? A little more now as it goes.

On enquiring further, the organisers wanted me to speak as the audience was mostly from outside of the region and they wanted someone passionate about the North East and entrepreneurship to sell the benefits of doing business here. Much more up my street!

When preparing my talk, I looked back at enterprise in the region and considered what might strike a chord with the audience. I was reminded of the great industrial history we have – engineering prowess, mining, ship building and more recently as key innovators in wind power. It made me think that as a region we are often too humble about our achievements, and this allows cities like Manchester to hog

the limelight when the spotlight hits those areas ‘up north’ usually as part of a levelling up agenda or in relation to the Northern Powerhouse.

I shared tales of the grit and determination of Geordies, how we graft hard and have a laugh along the way. How we don't take ourselves too seriously but can be relied on to get the job done, and to do it well. I spoke about the Angel of the North they passed as they headed towards Newcastle and how when she arrived, she received very mixed reviews with locals thinking it a waste of money and a blot on the landscape. But now our Angel is loved by most and a real icon that is as recognisable as our Tyne Bridge. I likened the Angel to our people. After all, what better representation could there be than a strong, powerful, and industrial angel with her feet firmly on the ground?

At Moja, we represent a variety of professional and inspirational speakers. Take a look at who we represent at - thisismoja.com/speakers

Sophie Milliken, Founder and CEO at Moja Group
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BOOK REVIEW



LITTLE WORDS

by Amife Sabatina

Amife Sabatina has released her new book, *Little Words*, which is a collection of poetry, prose and short stories, all of which encapsulate times, feelings and experiences which she, as a woman and a creative writer, has experienced in her life. Here Nellie Peters, avid reader, mum and businesswoman, reviews Amife's efforts.

"I got a warm feeling about this book the second I opened it and saw that Amife has shared her musical playlist, which she listened to whilst writing. It gave me great insight into the kind of strong woman she is and set me off on the right foot to read her musings."

"Going on to peruse the contents list, I was intrigued to see the mix of genre in the one book: 11 Chapters of Thought, 22 Things I Love (poems) and 22 Things I Feel (prose). I didn't know where to start, so I figured the beginning was as good as anywhere.

"11 Chapters of Thought' is split into life experiences. The different styles of writing throughout, along with the hand-drawn mono images, means the tempo you read at switches constantly. This is quite exciting as it doesn't allow you to get bored and is something I haven't quite experienced before.

"The letter to my 10-year-old self really resonated with me and made me think of writing my own. And I challenge every woman not to resonate with Chapter Two when Amife talks about size, eating and her looks!

"I continued to read, enjoying the change of tempo in each chapter, until I reached 'Chapter Six, Older'. I read this chapter three times before moving on. Having just turned 50 myself, lots of this chapter made me compare my life and thoughts with Amife. The anxiety, doubt, growth and feeling of gratefulness of aging can be confusing, but Amife pins it down effortlessly with well-written words.

"Now feeling connected to the author, I enjoyed the rest of the book immensely. I

roller-coasted through emotions of mirth, sadness, and warmth, nodding my head and even shedding the odd tear.

"Amife is an accomplished writer and this book is a triumph. Even as I recommend it wholeheartedly, I am ready to start reading it again. I am certain with each revisit, I will find deeper meaning each time."

Little Words is available to buy on Amazon or from amifeoluwa.com

Amife Sabatina is a Nigerian poet and writer.

A romantic heart and an old soul, she writes poetry about love, life and healing, drawing raw and honest feelings from the past, the present and the potential of the self.

Find Amife on Instagram at [@amiife](https://www.instagram.com/amiife), and online at www.amifeoluwa.com

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Thoughts from





John Porrett

A UNIQUE INTERVIEW...



JOHN PORRETT

Managing Director, Unique Magazines

How did you get into online retailing?

My journey started back in 2002 as a magazine buyer for a chain of newsagents. The role involved increasing awareness within the publishing world, to obtain more advertising spend in-store with listings and promotional opportunities. The stores were mainly Northeast and East Midlands based, at a time when it was early days of the internet regarding e-commerce.

I thought we could offer publishers a listing in-store for specialist magazines and visibility online. I quickly obtained over 500 listings to be added and promoted on a website we created in-house at £50.00 per magazine. Within weeks of launching, we were getting 20,000 plus visits per month, however, the customer could not order a magazine from the site and by the time we informed the publisher of the customer's interest, it was too late (not very slick).

However, this gave us the confidence to build an e-commerce website for customers to order and pay at the same time. This was the start of my online retail journey, even if at the time I did not know it would come to be my life and dream.

It was many years later in 2009 that I decided to go alone and focus on building a business, and as a small team of four we very quickly turned Unique Magazines into a one million plus business.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired every day by other business owners that share their ideas and passion for their businesses. I am inspired by my grandchildren to enjoy life and have fun and I am inspired by members of the Unique team I work alongside each day.

I love ideas – good or bad - as they keep us engaged and passionate about what we do.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into online retailing?

I would say you must have a passion for the product/products you want to retail online, make sure you use a reputable company to build your website (that is optimised for Search engines), do your research on your customer demographics and competitors, and make sure you offer brilliant customer service.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Obtaining new customers across the world and reading positive reviews about their Unique Magazines experience.

Building a team of like-minded individuals who have a passion for magazines and customer service and forming new business partnerships with suppliers and business clients.



What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

There have been a few, the day my wife told me to follow my dreams and leave my full-time job (a belief I'll forever be thankful for) to give Unique Magazines 100% of my time, getting through the pandemic and coming out of it a stronger business, relocating to a new office and distribution centre, every time a new person joins our team and when we reached over 100 countries worldwide where we have customers.

What are your favourite magazines?

I love magazines with a passion, the smell of the print, the feel of the paper, and the brilliant content. The titles I am currently reading are *Northern Insight*, *Fast Company* and *Entrepreneur*.

What's the future hold for John Porrett?

With regards to Unique Magazines, it's about making sure we have succession in place to continue growing the brand, improving our customer's experience, and building on the foundations we have created. I am very excited to be looking at how we can expand by acquiring other online businesses that fit within our model. I am also keen to get involved with start-ups that are looking to launch an online e-commerce business.

www.uniquemagazines.co.uk



IKIGAI- A WAY TO LIVE

I recently attended a Conference for Anglican Headteachers and, during one of the sessions on what makes us flourish as human beings, the notion of Ikigai came up.

The conference trainer asked us, a bunch of middle-aged professionals, who have all been in the teaching professions for at least twenty years- thirty in my case- as to what motivated us to get up in the morning or gave us a reason for being. The Japanese term Ikigai was used for this concept, as it is an idea that has gained a great deal of respect within western philosophy and recently. The word is actual a compound of two Japanese words, IKI meaning 'life or alive' and KAI, meaning an effect or benefit, with KAI pronounced as GAI, hence the current spelling.

Having Ikigai is, allegedly, the main reason the island of Okinawa, off the coast of Japan, has the one of the highest levels of longevity in humans. It is of note that the concept of retirement is alien to most Okinawans: they continue to work well past any western concept of a retirement age and their active lives include regular moderate exercise, and a close-knit friendship group, which is also considered to be a contributory factor for their longevity and happiness.

This set me thinking about western lifestyles, how many seem to be at odds with this idea of Ikigai, what we might gain if we were to actively espouse the concept, and, to misquote the Japanese American Marie Kondo, if we were able to articulate what is our lives actually 'sparks joy'? I therefore thought of a few things that we could do to adopt Ikigai as our modus operandus:



Simone Niblock

Have friends IRL. Like the Okinawans, who enjoy close relationships with their community, other places where human longevity is far beyond the western average are villages in Sardinia and in Greece, where great emphasis is placed on engaging in social activity and having a close-knit community. Amongst the many life lessons that the time of lockdown taught us was how important it is to connect with people in real life, and not over the interminable Zoom or Teams. Nobody can dispute how necessary such modes of communication were, and will continue to be, but they cannot beat a good one to one catch up, or a meeting of a group of friends over a meal or a drink.

Enjoy what you eat but don't overindulge. The fabled Mediterranean diet is another factor as to why the Sardinians and the Greek villagers outlast many of their peers. Similarly, the people of Okinawa enjoy a diet that has many health benefits, including moringa and green tea, and the use of tofu. They also

practise a form of eating that advocates one should only eat until your stomach is 80% full. I am not sure how one assesses 80% full, but I suspect that this means that you don't frequent an All You Can Eat Buffet, or that you raid the cheese board at the end of a three-course meal.

Pursue something that you love doing. This is crucial to the concept of Ikigai and could take the form of doing a job that you love so much that you never retire from it or taking up a hobby that will see you through your senior years. I recently met a man in his mid-70s who is learning French, despite hating it in school, and who finds the intellectual challenge exhilarating and life-affirming, spurring him on to study at an advanced level.

Bonne Chance mes amis!

Every day is an Open Day at Durham High School. Call 0191 384 3226 or email enquiries@dhsfg.org.uk to find out more or arrange a visit.



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NCFE COMMITTS TO STRENGTHENING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

North East based educational charity NCFE has gained Inclusive Companies Membership status, a nationally recognised body that's committed to the principles of equality of opportunity for all.

Membership encourages participating organisations to connect, collaborate and share best practice with cross-industry

sectors and offers members some unique benefits, including a wealth of resources that can be shared with employees and practical case studies from the UK's most inclusive employers.

It also includes access to the Inclusive Top 50 UK Employers List Survey, an innovative tool that allows organisations to analyse their progress and commitment towards achieving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

Adam Goldstein, Chief Operating Officer at NCFE, said: "Gaining Inclusive Companies Membership is an incredibly important and positive step on our journey towards fostering a truly inclusive environment here at NCFE.

"I feel strongly that the benefits membership brings will help us to learn, collaborate, and ultimately progress towards achieving our ambitious EDI goals. Over the past year, we've really focused on driving change across the organisation and bringing the discussion around equality, diversity and inclusion towards the forefront of our operations.

"We've made progress in several key areas, for example establishing our EDI committee, hosting workshops supported by external experts, and developing internal guidance for staff on the topic of creating inclusive content across the board.

"We are really excited to enter this partnership with Inclusive Companies and look forward to the knowledge, insight and understanding this membership will allow us to share in both directions."

A further benefit of membership is being able to share job vacancies on the Inclusive Jobs site – a digital gateway that's helping to further promote EDI when it comes to hiring talent across the UK.

Katie Newton, Talent Acquisition Partner at NCFE, said: "Part of NCFE's vision for our people is to attract and retain a diverse range of talent.

"The opportunity to advertise on Inclusive Jobs as the UK's most efficient diverse jobsite is a great way of encouraging applications from individuals with a diverse background, who are actively seeking employment with an inclusive employer."

The Inclusive Companies Membership exists to challenge the lack of diverse representation within UK-based organisations and to assist employers to foster a truly inclusive environment, within which they recognise and value the differences of each employee.

www.ncfe.org.uk

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FROM THE HEADTEACHER'S STUDY

In the return of these popular series of features, Michael Grahamslaw speaks to the newly appointed Head at Newcastle Preparatory School, about her story so far.

GEMMA STRONG

Head, Newcastle Preparatory School



Gemma Strong

Did you always envisage a career in Education?

I definitely did want to enter this profession from a very early age. I aimed to broaden my horizons with a psychology degree but focussed within this on the educational aspects relevant to children. After completing a PGCE, I worked for four years in a state school before joining Newcastle Preparatory School seven years ago as a maths lead and Year 6 teacher. I discovered that I absolutely loved the environment and to my surprise became Deputy Head before successfully applying for the Headteacher's role.

What can prospective parents expect from Newcastle Preparatory?

Enthusiasm and fun! We really are one big family where all of the children are happy and engaged. There are never two days alike here. We love to adopt a personal approach in which parents can have an input into a school which prides itself on high academic standards and excellent results.

We have just begun a new school year. What do the months ahead have in store?

Our aim going forward is to very much to return to the things we used to love pre-Covid times. This will include social events for parents, full performances and our eagerly anticipated Christmas Carol service at Jesmond Parish Church.

How much emphasis do you place on extra curricular activities?

This is a hugely important part to the school and we have appointed an extra curricular co-ordinator to oversee our activities in school. Amongst many things, the children enjoy dance, sports clubs, chess, crafts, yoga, philosophy and debating. Residential trips for our Year 4-6 pupils are to recommence this academic year as well as our international ski trip.

Tell us about your team?

I am very ably supported by three Assistant Heads who are all very experienced members of staff. Their roles are key to the successful running and support in school. Our Academic Assistant Head, Mrs Porter, oversees curriculum, planning and assessment. Mr Fargher is our Pastoral Assistant Head who takes responsibility for the wellbeing and shared community, including our house and buddy systems. Supporting children with special educational needs, those who have English as an additional language and our more able pupils is the role of Mrs Johnson, our Personalised Learning Assistant Head. Alongside all of our highly capable staff, it really is a team effort here.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Undoubtedly running the school with my predecessor Fiona Coleman through the pandemic. Fiona handled all of the in person duties at school whilst I dealt with the online learning aspect. It was very much like running two schools at times. We tried to manage the needs of the children and our staff with activities and a curriculum up and running from Day 1. It wasn't easy but we managed to maintain a dialogue between the school and the virtual school so we still felt like a community. We even celebrated National Pizza Day – very popular! – and did everything possible to make sure the children still enjoyed a positive experience.

What positive changes have you seen in education and what further changes would you like to see going forward?

I fly the flag for independent education and have been heartened to see more trust put in our schools and the way we deliver a broad curriculum whilst giving staff freedom and flexibility. I would like to see this replicated within the state sector. We need to remove statutory pressures which stifle creativity and should focus more on teaching children adaptable skills such as tenacity, patience and resilience.

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

I was very fortunate to follow Margaret Coates and Fiona Coleman at the School who were incredibly strong female role models who I admired greatly.

My parents also made me very self-motivated and instilled a strong work ethic.

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

'You can only do what you can do'

In this role, you are forever trying to balance many different needs and demands. As a self-confessed perfectionist, I naturally put pressure on myself in every element of my job but sometimes your best is indeed good enough. Sometimes, taking more time to focus on the things that really matter is what is needed. Stepping back and gaining perspective with a realistic expectation of yourself is so very important.

How do you relax away from the desk?

I have a lovely garden with six chickens and love growing vegetables - so therapeutic! I also enjoy playing in a brass band when able, baking, sewing or just curling up with a good book. I am also looking forward, when time allows, to travel again.

To find out more about Newcastle Preparatory visit the website...www.newcastleprepschool.org.uk



BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL TRIO AWARDED PRESTIGIOUS HONOURS



L-R: Captain Fairwood, Lt Col Connor and Major Monument

Staff members at one of the North's leading Combined Cadet Forces (CCF) are celebrating a series of significant promotions made by the Ministry of Defence.

Caroline Connor, Luke Monument and Henry Fairwood have each been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel, Major and Captain, respectively, at Barnard Castle School's CCF.

The trio possess 48 years' collective service to the CCF as adult volunteers alongside their duties as teaching staff and Housemasters at the School. Barnard Castle School's CCF has in excess of 200 cadets across its Army and Royal Air Force sections, many of whom pursue military careers after they have finished School.

For Lt Col Connor, who is the contingent commander, the promotion coincides with her 20th anniversary of commissioned service to the Combined Cadet Force. During this time,

she has been awarded the Queen's Diamond and Platinum Jubilee medals, a Lord-Lieutenant Certificate for Meritorious Service and a Cadet Forces Long Service Medal with first class.

Major Monument and Captain Fairwood both received Lord-Lieutenant Certificates for Meritorious Service earlier this year too, for their outstanding commitment and invaluable contributions to the CCF.

Tony Jackson, Headmaster at Barnard Castle School, said: "Barney's CCF has grown to become a popular co-curricular activity, which teaches young people important values and crucial life lessons. In the last two years alone, we have seen several cadets recognised as

Master and Lord-Lieutenant cadets, as a direct result of their invaluable experiences at our School.

"I am delighted for all three of our staff, who devote a great deal of time and effort to solidifying our contingent's position as one of our region's leading units, and these latest achievements are fully deserved."

Lt Col Connor added: "I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in the CCF, no more so than at Barney where it is a major part of School life and continues to thrive year-on-year.

"I am delighted to celebrate such a significant landmark in my career with this latest promotion alongside both Luke and Henry, whose commitment and loyal support of the contingent is second to none, for which I, and the wider School community, are very grateful."

www.barnardcastleschool.org.uk



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SME LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME SET TO SUPPORT MORE BUSINESSES IN THE REGION TO GROW



Following the success of the 12-week leadership course *Help to Grow: Management*, eligibility criteria has been changed to allow more small business leaders to take part.

The government subsidised programme supports SMEs to boost productivity, gain critical skills and access personalised mentoring to help them build resilience and stimulate economic growth across the North East and beyond. A recent change to criteria means that two participants per business (employing 10 people or more) can now complete the course.

Rollled out nationally by the UK's leading business schools, and in partnership with the Government and the Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS), *Help to Grow: Management* is a practical training programme designed to fit alongside full-time work commitments.

SMEs in the region can access *Help to Grow* via Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University, with future cohorts starting in November 2022 and in January, February, March, and April 2023.

Associate Professor Dr Matthew Sutherland, who is leading the *Help to Grow: Management* programme at Newcastle Business School, commented: "We're keen to spread the word about this programme which helps SMEs to tackle challenges, hone their leadership skills and really drive innovation and growth."

"The change in eligibility for upcoming cohorts is a brilliant opportunity for businesses in the region to put up to two people through this invaluable training and we would encourage SME leaders in any sector to sign up."

To support businesses to access the programme, 90% of costs are subsidised by the Government as part of its commitment to support post-pandemic recovery, meaning employers will pay just £750 of the £7,500 fee.

As part of a group of small business owners and leaders (20 to 25 per cohort), participants build their own networks and connections – and, following the programme, benefit from ongoing access to an extensive alumni network and a range of future events.

Speaking about his experience of *Help to Grow*, Dave Knowles, Managing Director of Alpine Online, which provides data and insights to clients in the grocery sector, commented: "I was pretty much at the start of my journey as an SME, so it was the perfect opportunity to challenge my thinking and then put solid foundations in place. Some of the tools that were shared with us enabled me to analyse where future growth could come from. It's really



Dr Matthew Sutherland

helped me to look at all aspects of the business from a completely fresh perspective."

The 12-week programme is built around a practical curriculum that includes modules such as leadership; strategy and innovation; digital adoption; employee engagement; sustainability; marketing; responsible business; and financial management, as well as the development of a tailored, actionable growth plan.

Delivered in an accessible format by a range of experts – including entrepreneurs, business leaders and academics with commercial expertise and small business know-how – *Help to Grow: Management* combines practical learning with support from a business mentor, alongside peer-to-peer support via online and face-to-face sessions.

To find out more visit: www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/help-to-grow-management-programme or to secure a place on the programme, visit: smallbusinesscharter.org/h2gm-registration and select Newcastle Business School at Northumbria University.

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Where teachers are really friends,
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MAKE KENTON SCHOOL YOUR CHILD'S 1ST CHOICE

It's that time of year again when parents have to decide which secondary school they wish their child to attend next year.



Lee Kirtley, Executive Principal

Chances are, your local secondary school will already have held an open day so that you and your child can come to school, see the facilities, meet the staff and take the opportunity to imagine what it would be like to attend the school every day.

But how do you choose the best school for your child?

In May this year, Kenton School, which is one of the largest 11-19 academies in the North of England, became part of the Northern Leaders Trust, marking a new direction for the school.

With Ian Kershaw CEO of the trust since the start of this year - an educationist with many years of school improvement experience - together with the newly appointed executive principal, Lee Kirtley - another highly experienced education specialist - supported by a dedicated and highly motivated board of trustees, the school's transformation is well underway.

How do these changes affect my child's education?

They mean that Kenton School and Northern Leaders Trust will do their utmost to ensure that your child has the best possible education and school experience.

Students are at the centre of everything we do. Through collaboration, every aspect of our work is of high quality. Our academies deliver an ambitious and inclusive curriculum. This enables all students to have high aspirations and to excel academically and socially.

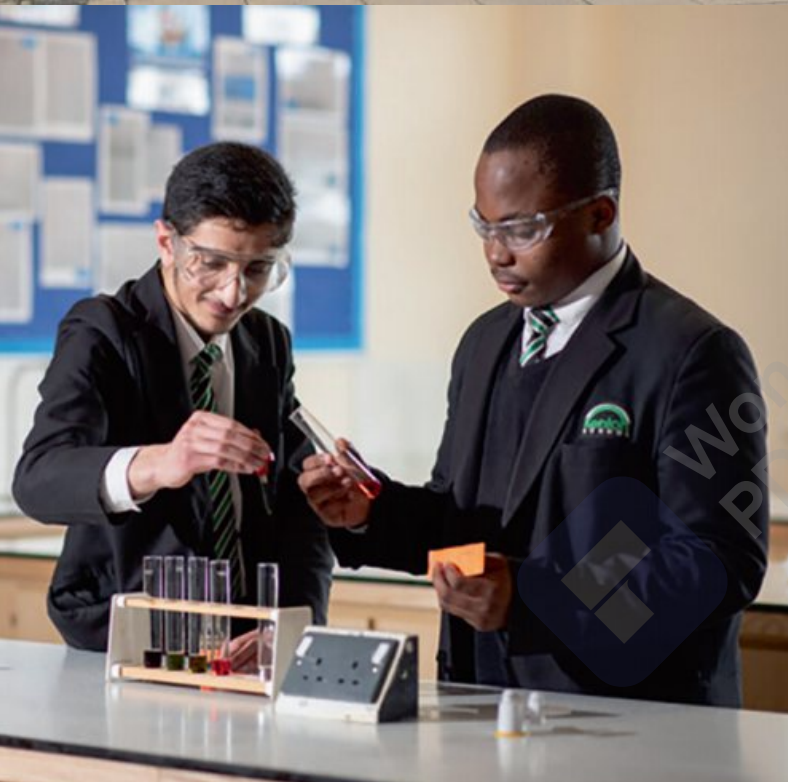
Students speak warmly of Kenton being like a big family - they feel welcome, valued and secure.

This summer, our A-level students demonstrated another year of great results with many students meeting or exceeding their offers, allowing them to go to the UK's best universities.

This year, outcomes in Biology, Sport, English (both Language and Literature) and Mathematics were particularly strong with a number of students gaining top grades.

Within these results, there were some outstanding individual performances. To name a few, Katherine Nicholson, gained A*A* and A and is studying Veterinary Science at Nottingham University. Maria Salter gained A*A*AA. She is studying Mechanical Engineering at Newcastle University. Jessica Hastings was also successful in gaining A*AA and has been accepted to study Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics at Oxford. Scott Donaldson gained D*A*B and is studying Performing Arts at Sunderland.

ACHIEVEMENT, STUDENTS AND LEADERS MATTER



Everyone a leader

Our new strapline, **Achievement, Students and Leaders matter**, indicates our priorities and encompasses the idea that everyone is a leader and can be encouraged to develop leadership skills whether as a student, teacher or member of the support staff. This is how we can deliver the highest educational standards to young people.

If you have not visited Kenton School yet, please get in contact to book your personal visit. We'd love to meet you!

...and scan the QR code to watch our video about the fantastic success of our A-level students this year.

For more information contact us on
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RGS Engineering, Design and Technology department.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster,
RGS Newcastle

The Newcastle Royal Grammar School is driven by the difference we can make, not only to the trajectory of the lives of students who attend our school, but also to our broader community and wider society.

Founded almost 500 years ago during Henry VIII's reign, Thomas Horsley, five time mayor of Newcastle, endowed RGS as the City's first school; that early philanthropic gift and social vision has been a constant throughout our almost half a millennium of existence. Our social responsibility remains at the forefront of our minds and is central to our future endeavours.

We believe that the RGS is uniquely placed to stretch and challenge bright young people, and consequently we have a well-deserved reputation for academic excellence, consistently outstripping national averages.

Our students deliver phenomenal, nationally and internationally recognised achievements, with the RGS often cited as an asset when encouraging inward investment to the North East. However, we are an exceptional school in a relatively deprived area of the UK.

While we are convinced of the infinite potential of young people from the North East, the social mobility statistics in our region are some of the worst in the country and the challenges have

been compounded by the pandemic. Too many children are missing opportunities afforded to others born elsewhere. Our model of a highly academic education ought to be available to any child who is intellectually curious, able and aspiring, and who would benefit from a fast paced and challenging curriculum through RGS Bursaries and RGS Partnerships. RGS Bursaries open access to our school for children who could not otherwise attend, which creates deep and generational impact for both bursary children and their families; meanwhile, RGS Partnerships encompass the variety of ways we collaborate with state schools to deliver broad impact to bright, capable children from across the region.

We are incredibly proud of our achievements as well as being ambitious about what more RGS can accomplish. **In the last year, over 40 RGS Partnerships projects have taken place**, including STEAM, Sport, Languages, Classics, Debating, UCAS Mentoring and much more. **76 different schools across the region were involved in RGS Partnerships activities and more than 300 teachers received 1,500 hours of CPD** or collaborated on curriculum development. **Over 7,300 individual students in local state schools benefitted from RGS Partnerships activities, for a total 23,000 hours.** We are particularly grateful to the Reece Foundation, who a year ago provided funding for a Maths teacher and a Physics teacher to make much of this work possible.

As of September, British Engines have also now generously funded an Engineering/Robotics teacher. We believe this is a genuinely scaleable and sustainable way of helping to raise aspirations and attainment across the region with the potential to span across a wide range of academic disciplines. We would like to engage with any organisation willing to support this effort.

Building on this success, we are also now setting up a School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) hub to train people to become Maths and Physics teachers in the region with trainees



RGS stained glass window of Thomas Horsley.

being placed in our partnership schools. There are significant financial incentives for people taking this route into teaching and we would encourage anyone who is interested to get in touch with us or meet us at the Get Into Teaching event at St James' Park on 30 November.

Together we can make a positive impact on the life chances of so many!

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



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TO
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NHSG ADMISSIONS TEAM ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS



With a wide ranging awards programme on offer, the excellent admissions team at Newcastle High School for Girls (NHSG) answer your questions on scholarships, bursaries and exhibitions.

Why do you offer an Awards Programme at NHSG?

At NHSG, our aim is to empower girls to be leaders, trailblazers and world shapers. With this in mind, our awards programme provides transformative opportunities for pupils to join a school where they can develop the confidence to find their own voice and grow into the person they want to be.

What awards do you offer at NHSG?

We offer scholar and bursary awards for girls joining NHSG in Year 7 and Year 12 in September 2023. You can also apply for Year 7 exhibition awards for Dance, Drama, Music and Sport.

How many awards are given?

There is always a high level of applications for our awards and the number of awards given each year varies – it depends on pupil performance and the funds available in a given year.

What's the difference between a scholar award and a bursary?

At NHSG, a scholar award is an academic award based on a girl's performance in either our Entrance Examinations (Year 7) or Scholar Award application process (Year 12).

A bursary is a means tested award, so, in addition to performing at a high standard in our entrance processes, a family's household income must meet our bursary eligibility criteria.

How can I apply for a scholar award or a bursary?

There's a lot more detail about the NHSG Awards Programme on our school website but the next step is to make an online application for your daughter to join NHSG and respond to the questions included about the awards offered. It's worth noting that at Year 7 all applicants will be considered for a scholar award when they sit our entrance examinations in January 2023.

After making your application to NHSG, we'll guide you carefully through the next steps in the awards process. The deadline for all award applications is Friday 16th December 2022.

What difference can a scholar award or bursary make to school fees?

As well as the prestige that comes with achieving a scholar award or bursary at NHSG, the awards also include a remission of school fees. Our scholar awards can be for up to 30% per year, and, we also offer a head's scholar award for the highest performing pupil in our entrance/scholar

award examinations for up to 50% per year.

A bursary award amount is dependent on household income and can be for up to 100% of the school fees.

I am interested in an Exhibition Award, can you please tell me more?


At NHSG an exhibition award is an option for girls applying to join Year 7 who can demonstrate achievement, skills and passion in either Dance, Drama, Music or Sport. Again parents can use the NHSG application form to express an interest in applying for an exhibition award which, if awarded, can be for up to a £1000 remission of fees per year.

We've seen a reference to Reece Sixth Form Awards on your website. What are these?

In partnership with The Reece Foundation we are able to offer the brightest and most able potential engineers, who are currently in Year 11 at a maintained school, the opportunity to join NHSG. The Reece Awards are means tested and can be for a remission of up to 100% of school fees.

The NHSG Admissions Team is here to help you with all your questions. Please do get in touch, we'd love to hear from you: 0191 2016511 admissions@ncl.gdst.net

www.newcastlehigh.gdst.net



BLAZING A TRAIL OF HER OWN.

Scholar and Bursary Awards Application
Deadline 16th December 2022

Whatever her passions and interests, Sixth Form at NHSG
will help your daughter be the person she wants to be.
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MY WEEKEND



Jon Malton

JON MALTON

Jon Malton has a vast pedigree in business. Previously he was Managing Director of Ringtons and holds a number of non-executive directorships. He is also the founder of the Lighthouse Business Club, an organisation set up for business owners to talk about opportunities or concerns in a safe environment where they are surrounded by people that they trust and respect.

Here we find out what Jon gets up to on a typical weekend.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

I try not to but find myself trawling emails and LinkedIn. My clients tend to operate Monday-Friday, which makes it easier.

Are most weekends the same?

I'm very family orientated so I tend to be at home most weekends.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Yes. I wish I could accept the advice I give to others. My mind wanders, looking for solutions/alternatives/ideas all the time. Being 'present' is sometimes a challenge, particularly when I have a big and exciting piece of work on. We have a 'No Mobile Phones' policy during family time, which is absolutely the right thing to do and certainly helps. I'm definitely still a work in progress when it comes to switching off.

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

Workwise, it's mainly thinking time to be honest. The best ideas come when I'm away from the midweek distractions. Leisure-wise, I like to get out on my bike, weather permitting, or have a walk along the coast. We're so blessed to live by the sea – I wouldn't choose to live anywhere else to be honest.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

Morning exercise – I'm a regular at Primal Fitness in Camperdown.

Big night out or a night in the house?

Both! I love a big night out – a beer, a chat and a good laugh. Equally, I love to cook, so a night in with Adele, a Steak Diane and a glass of red is heaven to me.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I used to play cricket for Tynemouth, but my eyesight isn't good enough. I won Fielder of the Year during my last season so you could say that

I quit whilst at the top! For my sins, I'm a Leeds United fan and I've always enjoyed watching Rugby Union. I'm certainly a better spectator than I was a player! My rugby club nickname was Carthorse (built for power, not speed)...it's now Couch Potato!

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

We love our local Indian restaurants – in particular Gulshan, Takdir and Shampun. We also love Turknaz at Whitley Bay. We're spoilt for choice at the coast these days, which is great.

How important is the weekend to you?

The first 15 years of my career were in the 7-day-a-week dairy trade, so now I truly value the weekends. I do have workaholic traits, so I have to consciously uncouple (to quote Gwyneth Paltrow) but the family keep me right.

What's the best thing about weekends?

A bacon butty and a proper coffee. Sunday Love Songs on Radio 2. Watching either rugby or football (NUFC or Leeds United). A cosy night in, or a lively night out. All of these things make weekends special.

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

With Adele, and the kids when they're home, having a laugh and probably a beer!

To find out more about The Lighthouse Business Club visit www.maltonandco.co.uk or 07971178289.



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Legendary entertainer to star in Annie

BAFTA Award winning television, radio and stage star Paul O'Grady will star as 'Miss Hannigan' in their smash hit production of the musical Annie, playing Newcastle Theatre Royal (Tue 7 – Sat 11 Mar 2023).

Paul O'Grady returns to Annie having first played the role of Miss Hannigan at the Victoria Palace Theatre in 1998. His other theatre credits include playing the Child Catcher in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang at the London Palladium and many pantomimes including Cinderella and Goldilocks and the Three Bears at the London Palladium.

On television he is best known as the host of ITV's Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs, Paul O'Grady's Great British Escape, The Paul O'Grady Show, Channel 4's Blind Date and BBC One's Blankety Blank. He is also a highly celebrated writer, having written both autobiographical and fictional books and recently completed a 14 year run as a presenter on BBC Radio 2.

Set in 1930s New York during The Great Depression, brave young Annie is forced to live a life of misery and torment at Miss Hannigan's orphanage. Determined to find her real parents, her luck changes when she is chosen to spend Christmas at the residence of famous billionaire, Oliver Warbucks. Spiteful Miss Hannigan has other ideas and hatches a plan to spoil Annie's search...

With its award-winning book and score, this stunning production includes the unforgettable songs 'It's the Hard Knock Life', 'Easy Street', 'I Don't Need Anything But You' and 'Tomorrow'.

Strictly returns to the Utilita Arena

Clear the dancefloor and whip out your 10 paddles, because the Strictly Come Dancing Live Arena Tour is back for 2023! For the first time ever, Anton Du Beke will join fellow TV judges Shirley Ballas and Craig Revel Horwood on the Strictly Live Tour.

The tour will also see the welcome return of the sensational Janette Manrara, who will host the 31 supersized sparkle filled shows foxtrotting around the country in January and February next year, stopping off at Utilita Arena Newcastle on the 01st and 02nd February 2023. The 2023 tour will be directed once again by the Strictly TV Judge Craig Revel Horwood. The show will feature many of the celebrities and

professional dancers from the current series of the multi-award-winning BBC One show, together with the Strictly Live Band.



Disney's The Lion King returns to Sunderland Empire

The Walt Disney Company UK and Ireland and Sunderland Empire have announced that Disney's THE LION KING will return to Sunderland Empire's stage next spring.

The internationally acclaimed production will come to Sunderland for 7 weeks from Thursday 16th March to Saturday 6th May 2023.

The show returns to Sunderland for the first time since 2014, when it enjoyed a triumphant sell out run.

Marie Nixon, Theatre Director at Sunderland Empire said: "We are delighted to be welcoming the incredible Disney theatrical phenomenon, THE LION KING, back to Sunderland for a huge seven week run from next March. The show first visited Sunderland Empire in 2014 with a record-breaking run for our theatre - with audiences from far and wide rushing to the venue and selling out every show. Eight years on, it's a privilege once again to have the opportunity to welcome tens of thousands of people from across the region and beyond to see this world-leading production. The Sunderland Empire is the only theatre in the North East to host this spectacular show with tickets in high demand. We strongly recommend booking as early as possible to secure your place."

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

Seven Stories, The National Centre for Children's Books, brings stories to life for thousands of children and adults a year and it's right here in the heart of Ouseburn Valley. A registered charity and Arts Council accredited museum, they make literature more accessible through their free entry museum and visitor centre, and through extensive events and programme for the public, schools and community outreach audiences. They have a growing Collection of children's literature featuring some of the most influential works and artists of the last 100 years of children's literature, including Enid Blyton, Philip Pullman, Nick Sharratt and Judith Kerr.

Michael Grahamslaw went along to meet the Chief Executive, to talk about her story so far, the challenges faced with the role and forthcoming plans.

WENDY ELLIOTT

Chief Executive, Seven Stories

What attracted you to your current role?

Unquestionably the opportunity to make a difference. Reading for pleasure is such an amazing experience and free to enjoy, and by encouraging and enhancing it we can make a huge difference to the lives of children and families. We have an enormous opportunity to make Seven Stories an educational and social impact beacon that the whole region can be proud of.

What has been your career path so far?

I enjoyed a 22 year career working in HR with Hewlett Packard before moving to the North of England Refugee Service so I could do something which made a tangible social impact in our local communities. I then joined Seven Stories in 2018 in a further HR role before becoming Operations Director in 2019, Interim Chief Exec in August 2021 before being permanently appointed to the role in May of this year.

What is your long term vision for Seven Stories?

We know there are more than just economic barriers that prevent people accessing arts and culture, and removing the general admission entry fee in February was just our first step in a bigger plan to increase participation and widen access to everything that we do. The Collection is hosted in Newcastle but it could easily have ended up out of the region, in say the British Library. It's really important that it remains in our region and, remains a beautiful asset - a valuable set of resources which can be used by children and families in education settings as well as for fun and inspiration.

What events do you have coming up?

We have a packed Christmas season which is very exciting! It's the first year for a few years we feel that people will be able to spend time together in a more relaxed way, and so our Christmas programme really focuses on opportunities to celebrate with family and friends, and make memories. It will be a challenging time for many as the Cost of Living crisis becomes more acute and so we're including as many opportunities as we can to open the building longer, as a warm space, and to offer events at lower costs, for example adults go free to our Christmas events.

How does the venue work with local business?

We are actively looking for companies to champion what we do as part of their CSR strategy. Literacy, creativity and oracy skills change children's lives and build the innovative workforce of the future - an initiative which I think will resonate with all businesses. There are opportunities to hire our spaces, become a regular donor, sponsor our galleries and build long-term partnerships to support our work. For the first time, we are taking our Collection on the road, offering mini exhibitions in businesses and community spaces across the UK - so it's your chance to get Horrid Henry in your reception areas or Chris Haughton in your staff room!

What are the challenges of being book based in a technological world?

Books are vehicles for stories - and we're all about stories! Children are engaging with stories in films, comics, audiobooks, podcasts, and of course in sandbox video games like *Minecraft* where you can explore a story or build your own. We aim to champion and protect stories in children's books through our Collection, but we embrace and encourage the many ways children tell their own stories these days - including on our website [sevenstories.online](https://www.sevenstories.org.uk) where children's own work, inspired by our Collection, is exhibited in animations and interactive digital galleries.

Which fictional character do you relate to and why?

I'm going to cheat and say Jo and Amy March from Louisa May Alcott's classic *Little Women*. It was, and still remains, my favourite book of all time. I like to think of myself of a combination of the two characters - outspoken and headstrong, passionate and determined.

Who are your favourite children's authors past and present?

Eva Ibbotson and Roald Dahl are two of my all-time favourites, creating magical worlds children can explore and escape to. The illustrations are also really memorable.

How do you see yourself working with local authors in the future?

We work as closely as possible with emerging writers and aim to become a meeting hub for local talent in the region. We have regular 'writers' salon' evenings and intend to extend this to 'write nights' and other initiatives in 2023. We're very excited about the recently launched MA in Publishing at Northumbria University and we're talking regularly to forward-thinking publishers who have recognised the talent in the North and want to work with us to nurture it.

What does the future hold?

We are proud that Newcastle is the home of our nationally significant Collection of children's literature and we'll continue to build it with influential, modern and representative voices from across the country. We need to make sure that it accurately reflects modern British children's literature and the challenges and opportunities of modern society - and it's imperative that it is shared as widely as possible. And that's exactly what we're going to do.

I want our Visitor Centre, programme, family events, exhibitions and resources to reach more children and young people than ever and the only way we can achieve this is through collaboration, feedback and technology. Every penny spent at Seven Stories helps us to empower children and young people through the sharing and creation of stories, and we're putting the call out for businesses to support us in their own ways too - your local community needs you!

For further information visit: www.sevenstories.org.uk

“

*...Books are
vehicles for
stories – and
we’re all about
stories!...*



IT'S ALL JUST TALK

Jack Oddie talks to Jackie Marston about his latest achievements...

When it comes to chatting, there's one professional who knows a thing or two about it than most! Professional Voiceover Jack Oddie has impressively been nominated for Male Voiceover of the Year in the UK, three out of the last four years!

And, when you've just won yet another award and you're in the running for a further four at the Vox Awards, taking place in November, it's hard to see how he will have room in his trophy cabinet. Jack will be competing with other voice talent in the following categories: Best Visual Ad Campaign, Best Imaging, S+P or Promo Voice, Best Retail/Service Message or Commercial and Best Male Voice Performance.

Running his business at the Pride Media Centre in Pelaw, Jack has set a high president in the industry, winning an impressive

eight other awards, both nationally and internationally in his five years voicing. His recent win at One Voice USA 2022 held in Dallas, Texas, saw Jack win Best International Voiceover Performance, an award open to all voiceovers outside of the USA and Canada.

Beating off stiff competition from Japan, Brazil, Mexico and France, Jack's work with banking giants Santander won him first place and another trophy to add to his collection.

Jack, 35 told us: "I'm really looking forward to another VOX awards, its great that Northern talent are being recognised both here in the UK and across the world too."

Working with blue chip clients such as Tesco, Santander, Wickes, Nick Toons and Virgin Media, it's clear to see why he is in such demand.

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Lovage opens its doors in Newcastle

A unique restaurant which prides itself on seasonality, sustainability and quality has now opened its doors in Newcastle.

Lovage at St George's Terrace, Jesmond is the brainchild of chef and part-owner, Kleo Tabuku, who has finally fulfilled his life-long dream of owning his own Mediterranean style bistro.

Starters include calamari in chickpea and garden fennel pollen batter served with lemon aioli, cauliflower, cumin and spinach fritters with minted yoghurt, crispy sardines with lovage mayo and spiced local lamb koftas.

Diners can choose from main course dishes such as lovage pappardelle with girolles, peas and sun blushed tomatoes, sustainable cod

with Savoy cabbage, mussels and fish cream, gnocchi with smoked duck, ricotta and pears and salt aged flat iron steak.

Desserts also have a distinctly Mediterranean flavour including pistachio Tiramisu and roasted black figs with honey, marscapone and Prato biscotti.

The restaurant is also offering a special Sunday lunch menu, with a range of options including a traditional roast, with two courses for £28 and three for £32.

Kleo has been a well-respected chef for more than 25 years and has previously worked at hotels including Jesmond Dene House and Wynyard Hall.

He has launched the new venture in partnership with the award-winning Northumberland Pub Company, which also owns The Blackbird in Ponteland and The Northumberland Arms at Felton.



Acropolis expands further with latest North East site

A Greek street food business is continuing to expand across the region with the opening of its latest site.

Acropolis has opened new premises in Jesmond as part of its ongoing growth, meaning the business now has five static sites in the North East, in addition to its regular appearances at pop-up events.

Its new outlet in Acorn Road comes after it was forced to find an alternative to its hugely popular former home in STACK in Newcastle, with the site being demolished earlier this year.

However, Acropolis is confident its Jesmond restaurant - which has sit-in dining as well as takeaway options - will help the business achieve new levels of success, in addition to its flagship Grainger Market outlet, previous most recent opening in STACK Sunderland, and sites at By the River HWKR Market and Jesmond Beach Box.

The business was established by brothers Viktor and Filip Tachan with their 'brother from another mother' Yusuf Yenil in 2016, and now has a team of people who create its range of dishes - which include chicken gyros, Greek salad, Greek sides like dolmadaki and feta cheese - for numerous events simultaneously, in addition to operating its permanent sites.

"We have grown beyond our expectations since we first set up as a pop-up operator and have established a really strong and loyal customer base across the region, which is growing all the time," said the team.



Anchors aweigh as The Olde Ship prepares for its first Christmas

One of Northumberland's most historic pubs is throwing open its doors to customers this Christmas for the first time in living memory.

Perched on the harbour wall, overlooking Seahouses bay, The Olde Ship Inn, has been serving drinks since Nelson saw off the French navy at the Battle of Trafalgar.

But, for at least the past 100 years, its doors have remained closed at Christmas - until now.

This year it will stay open throughout the festive season - including Christmas Day and Boxing Day - so families, friends and colleagues can drink and dine in one of the most atmospheric venues in the county.

Christmas Day lunch will begin with drinks and canapés before guests sit down to

starters of roast Jerusalem artichoke soup with root vegetable crisps, sourdough and truffle oil, Alnwick cured salmon with crab, potato and watercress salad, pork and leek terrine with date chutney, pickles and toasted brioche or grilled goats' cheese and fresh figs with pickled beetroot.

Along with traditional roast turkey, main course options include Grand Reserve roast sirloin of beef, pan-fried turbot in a mussel cream sauce and beetroot and chestnut Wellington with roast sweet potato, greens, port and cranberry sauce.

Lunch will be rounded off with desserts of dark chocolate parfait with Kirsch cherries and vanilla chantilly cream, vanilla panna cotta with Campari oranges and gingerbread, a cheese board, or a traditional Christmas pudding with Alnwick Rum sauce and toasted almonds.

Inn Hospitality Group's portfolio also includes The Percy Arms, at Chatton, The Derwent Arms at Edmundbyers and The Anglers Arms, at Longframlington, all of which are open throughout the Christmas period and also offer private hire for parties.

Accommodation packages are also available at each venue over the Christmas weekend, which include all meals and a gift to open on Christmas Day.



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BERLIN – A CAPITAL OF CONTRASTS AND CULTURE

By Caroline Preston

Things are hectic as usual and I'm overdue a catch-up with my brother. But where do you go with a heavy metal and music-loving, vegan drummer? Berlin of course, but why?

Even since earlier times, Germany's contribution to world music has been mega, think Beethoven, Bach and Brahms, every decade since and they've delivered. I'll start in the 70s, when Baccara, filled dancefloors with the hit 'Yes sir, I can boogie'. A couple of years later Boney M released the popular 'Daddy Cool' still played in retro DJ sets today. Into the 80s and there was Nena and her '99 Luft Ballons' (Red Balloons to us) and rock legends The Scorpions with 'Rock You Like a Hurricane', what a time for music.

Fast forward to the '90s and '00s, and the Berlin club scene boomed with a new era of techno. Who could forget Sash, Scooter and Snap the German artists dominating the airwaves. With a bit of a reputation as a cool city, we decided to head there.

Berlin has a massive and diverse music scene,

something for everyone, even modern-day Vikings aka my husband. Pre-travel research done, we planned to see some of the city's more 'unique' places. The first, the Rock and Viking Bar. Located in a residential neighbourhood, this themed bar offered a warm welcome. We spent the evening chatting with locals and sampling traditional honey meads, a favourite tippie of the notorious Norsemen. www.rock-wikingerbar.de

Later that evening and a short distance from our Viking stronghold we ventured to Rock-café Halford, a bar dedicated to the legendary frontman of the rock band Judas Priest, apparently built by an obsessed fan...cool. www.halford-berlin.de

The following evening we explore Berlin's mindblowing food scene. From Michelin-starred finery to trendy Neo-Thai all tastes are catered for. Interestingly Berlin is also the Vegan capital of Europe. Veganism has seen a huge increase in popularity worldwide, and my bro, he's committed, so we decide to give vegan a try.

We head to 1990 Vegan Living on Boxhagener Platz, a Vietnamese vegan joint. Clearly, there are no King Prawns, so I select a Tofu dish, and I'm pleasantly surprised, and bonus,



signature cocktails, absolutely delish. www.restaurant1990.de

Despite this brief venture into veganism we're also in Germany, the land of sausage, beer and schnitzel which must be experienced. We head to Hofbräu Wirtshaus for Bavarian tradition in the city. We enjoy oompah music, giant beer steins and traditional fare, great fun www.hofbraeu-wirtshaus.de/berlin.

Despite our busy evening activities, our days here are just as packed. Berlin has more museums than it has rainy- days, 175. Its arts scene is even bigger, with 300 galleries and then there's the landmarks, the TV tower, the Brandenburg Gate, the Berlin Cathedral, the Victory Column and of course the wartime history and alternative culture.

So how do you cram it all in? That's easy, you don't, but you can sensibly see a lot in a weekend. Berlin has an excellent transport system, but the best way to pack it all in was in-fact by foot, on an organised tour with Walkative. Technically free, these in-person guided tours take you to most of the big sights in return for a suggested donation, believe me, you'll want to pay it, excellent! www.freewalkingtour.com/find-a-tour/berlin

Berlin is a city break brimming with diversity, contrasts and culture, it's not to be missed.

www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk



Travel notes: Caroline travelled with British Airways from Newcastle International via London Heathrow to Berlin staying three nights in the H2 Hotel, Berlin-Alexanderplatz.



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Receive a glass of mulled wine or mocktail on arrival included in the ticket price.

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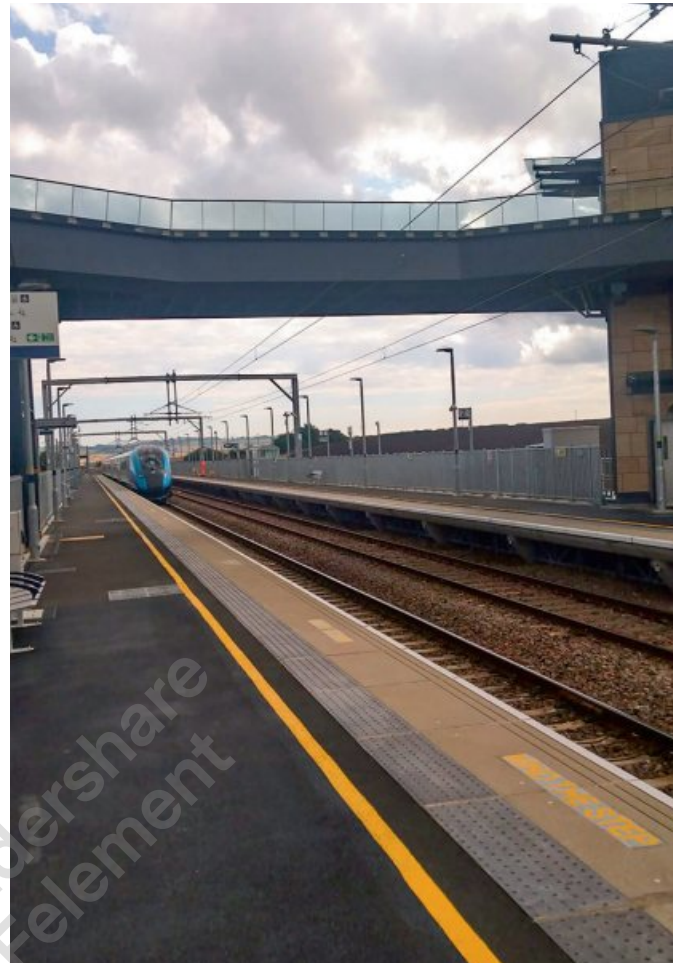
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OUT AND ABOUT - RESTON FOR AYTON CASTLE



On many journeys north over the border, I have admired the red brick baronial style castle on the north side of the railway line after the train turns inland from Berwick. I established from Streetmap that I was looking at Ayton Castle, in private ownership and not generally open to the public. The two gentlemen from London who own the Castle have, however, opened a railway line in the grounds in and the Ayton Castle Railway now runs on occasional dates from the Eyemouth Road entrance to the Castle where there is a tea rooms with attractive railway ephemera.

Reston Station reopened for business on 23rd May 2022, and I combined a visit there and to Ayton Castle, on 27th August. The station is a minor stop on the East Coast Main Line and opened after a £20 million investment, replacing an earlier station that closed in 1964. The large car park never had more than ten cars in it, and many of those were using the electric charging points rather than connecting with trains.

If you take an irregular rail service and combine it with irregular bus service, surprise surprise that they do not connect up. I had given up waiting for the 253 at 1251 and set off on foot but met it at the other end of Reston village. Five minutes later I was in Ayton, walking up from the South Lodge to find the 10¹/₄ in gauge railway for the short ride to Castle

View Halt, and a pleasant chat with the lady in the tea rooms dispensing coffee and cake in the Station Buffet which is inside the Castle. The locomotive which plies the line is known as Lloyd and local volunteers keep the line running.

The line is not long at 500m and, with no access to the Castle on a tour, which I would have enjoyed, I walked back to the South Lodge. I was uncertain what to do in the remaining 4½ hours before my train direct back from Reston to Chester-Le-Street - a real treat when most trains from my local station run no further north than Newcastle. However, it is a long time from 1500 to 1942, and my best option seemed to be the Travelsure bus from Ayton to Duns, which is a small Scottish town I had not visited before. Unfortunately, I would only have twenty minutes from arrival to departure on the same and last bus.

So there was no time to have more than the briefest view of mostly closed shops and facilities. Duns is the home of the Jim Clark Motorsport Museum, dedicated to the Formula 1 racing driver killed in 1968 after an illustrious career on the track, who came from the area.

I took the bus back to Auchencraw and spent a couple of hours in the pub, and booked a Pingo (a demand responsive bus service in Berwickshire) to run me back to Reston for the train. When these little buses run about with only one or two people, it's difficult to conclude they are nothing different to a cheap taxi with more empty seats. It turned up on time such that back in Reston I walked alongside the Eye Water, and met a man testing out his new drone in his front garden.

I sat on the station platform until the direct train to Chester-le-Street came in (other stations are available). Sometimes it's just a case of me making the journey, so you don't have to.

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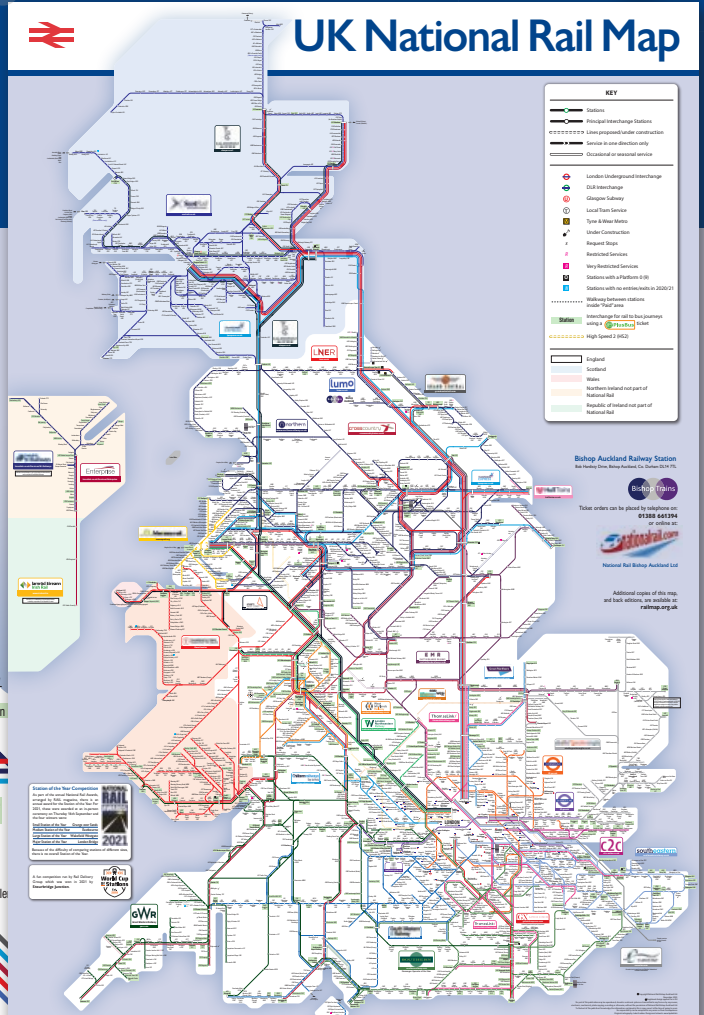
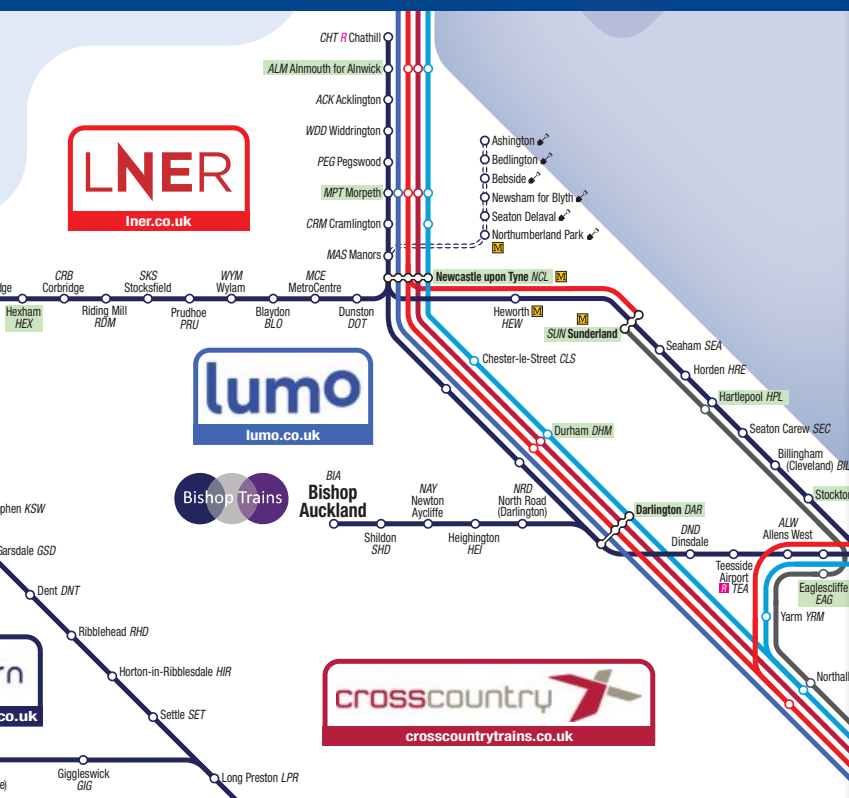
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Alex Nelson



UK Rail Map

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SALZBURG CHRISTMAS MARKET

Anticipation hangs heavy in the chilly early evening air at Salzburg's busy Domplatz. People of all ages are waiting on the square in front of the Austrian city's twin-towered cathedral. This is one of the sites of the popular Christmas market that sprawls through streets and public squares in the historic Altstadt district.

Shrieks and screams in the near distance cause people to murmur then fall silent. Clanking cowbells become louder. So too does the screaming.

A figure reminiscent of a character from a horror film bursts onto the square. With arching horns, jagged teeth and deep-set yellow eyes, the gruesome-looking figure is known as Krampus. He bellows and wide-eyed children retreat behind their parents seeking protection.

Another shaggy-haired Krampus figure arrives. Threateningly, he points at a giggling teenager with a claw-like finger then invades her personal space. Much like a predator examining prey, he looks her up and down. The girl falls silent, takes a half-step back and looks sheepish.

More demon-like Krampuses enter the square. A cacophony of laughter, shrieking, crying and bellowing has replaced the earlier calm.

Outsiders are likely to associate this kind of thing more with Halloween than the Advent season. What I'm witnessing is a Krampus run, a long-established Alpine tradition. They take place on the 5th of December, the evening before the Feast of St Nicholas.

According to local beliefs, the demonic-looking characters work for St Nicholas. They are the gift-giving saint's henchmen. They punish ill deeds by children. St Nicholas keeps a book listing every child's name. Those who have been virtuous throughout the year can expect presents on the 6th of December. Youngsters who have undertaken acts of naughtiness fear punishment from Krampus.

The marauding Krampuses show deference to St Nicholas when he arrives on the square. Wearing a red mitre and holding a bishop's crozier, the saint's flowing white beard is reminiscent of that of Santa Claus.

A young woman, playing the role of his angel, carries a red book with a gold crucifix on its cover. Presumably, it's a ledger with children's names and their good and bad deeds over the past year. Excited young children flock around St Nicholas and his angel.

The Krampus run moves on and adults go back to conversing between sipping from mugs of steaming mulled wine. Browsing the market stalls, I see hand-knitted woolen goods, carved Advent figures and models of half-timbered

houses with lights glowing from their tiny windows.

A man buys a Käsekrainer, a smoked sausage packed with melted cheese, served in a bread bun. The delicious aroma of the sausages sizzling over a charcoal grill is tempting but I have an imminent dinner reservation a couple of minutes' walk away.

The St Peter Stiftskulinarium is said to be the oldest restaurant in Europe thanks to Alcuin of York documenting a visit by Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne back in 803. After being outside in the cold my face flushes as I step into the warmth of the candlelit Baroque Hall to attend a Mozart Dinner Concert.

Musicians wearing costumes inspired by clothing worn two and half centuries ago perform works composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart throughout the three-course meal. When it comes to music, many visitors from English-speaking lands associate Salzburg primarily with The Sound of Music. Bus tours bring opportunities to visit locations associated with the Academy Award-winning film and to sing along to some of Rogers and Hammerstein's catchy tunes. Yet locally Mozart is celebrated.

His birthplace, in an apartment on the nearby Getreidegasse, hosts a compact but popular museum. So too does his former residence across the River Salzach, which flows through the city then marks the Austro-German border before joining the River Inn. After enjoying Mozart's music I stroll to the square that bears his name. A Zamboni is smoothing the ice on the outdoor skating rink.

I have a decision to make while walking in the direction of my hotel. To beer or not to beer? That is the question.



Travel information : Salzburg's Christmas markets are open from 17 November 2022 until New Year's Day 2023.

The salzburg.info/en website has information about things to do and see in the city while salzburgerland.com/en has details about attractions across the province. Crystal Ski, Jet2 and TUI operate flights between Newcastle and Salzburg Airport during the ski season. British Airways and KLM fly between Newcastle and Munich, via their respective London and Amsterdam hubs. Direct trains run between Munich and Salzburg.

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LOVAGE BLOSSOMS IN SUBURBAN JESMOND

By Jack Grahamslaw

Foodies will rejoice at the opening of Lovage, Jesmond's chic new Mediterranean bistro specialising in locally sourced and foraged ingredients.

Lovage is a joint venture between Head Chef, Kleo Tabaku and his partner Lisa Hide, who is running front of house, they are realising their dream of opening their first restaurant together.

Albanian-born Kleo brings real culinary pedigree to the role after honing his craft in restaurants across Europe and more recently in the North East at flagship venues such as Jesmond Dene House and Wynyard Hall.

Lisa meanwhile has given up her career at a local primary school to pour all of her energy and passion into creating a venue with a real community feel.

The duo have partnered with the award-winning Northumberland Pub Company who are also behind fellow foodie havens such as the Blackbird in Ponteland and the Northumberland Arms in Felton.

Situated in the former Sale Pepe site on Jesmond's St George's Terrace, Lovage boasts an ever-changing, seasonal menu showcasing the European flair sure to satisfy its swanky suburbanite clientele.

I had the pleasure of visiting with my girlfriend Rosie in only the second week of trading and encountered no such thing as teething problems.

The dining area is a stylish space bathed in sage green and neutral tones and punctuated by little nods to the menu's horticultural inflections. The open-kitchen lends a real sporting spectacle (no hiding places here) whilst the ambient mood lighting creates the relaxed intimacy of a neighbourhood restaurant at its best.

Signposted at the head of the menu is the restaurant's chosen 'Wine of the Week'. We couldn't refuse an excellent Finca Moncloa, an elegant, full-bodied Spanish red with fine oak and balsamic notes which we sipped on over bread and olives.

Next up came baby squid delicately coated in a chickpea & garden fennel pollen batter, served with aioli singing with fresh lemon zest. Rosie chose the wild foraged mushroom and asiago cheese arancini which was a real vegetarian treat.

The menu borrows much from Kleo's childhood featuring dishes he grew up cooking however whilst it harks back to the past, the restaurant is decidedly modern. Provenance is top priority and the restaurant looks to use the freshest, most sustainable produce wherever possible.

One such dish was Rosie's lovage pappardelle, scattered with morden blue and served with tenderstem broccoli and walnuts.

I chose the slow braised lamb shoulder atop a bed of jewelled couscous, a riot of colour and flavour accompanied by aubergine and a nicely

spiced sumac yoghurt.

Throughout our meal, we were looked after superbly well by Lisa whose exemplary customer service mirrors the kitchen's close attention-to-detail on the plate.

On her advice, we ordered the tiramisu dusted with crushed green pistachios which tasted every bit as good as it looked and provided a memorable, two-spoon finale.

With a cosy, convivial feel, Lovage is sure to be a real hit heading into the winter months. Both lunch and dinner time dining is available, in addition to a dedicated Sunday lunch offering.

It may be early days, but this classy, plant-inspired venue is already in bloom.

**For more information,
visit lovagejesmond.co.uk**





Fizz in the City

Recently, Fizz in the City, once again returned to the Crowne Plaza, Newcastle.

The popular ladies' networking event – hosted by Mincoffs Solicitors – raised money for Sunderland-based charity 4Louis, which supports anyone affected by stillbirth, miscarriage or the death of a child.

The firm welcomed professionals from a wide variety of sectors, including tech, charity, finance and professional services, and the team are already hard at work planning their Christmas event.





EAT, DRINK AND BE MERRY AT THE MUDDLER

It's the most wonderful time of the year, and one Pan-Asian restaurant in the heart of Newcastle is getting ready to ring in the festivities with its new set menu.

The Muddler Bar & Restaurant, the popular haunt of many a date night and celebration, has proved a hit with customers of all tastes since opening its doors on Grey Street in 2018. With plentiful portions and a feast of flavours in every mouthful – the opulent venue is a firm favourite for festivities.

And with the season of giving just around the corner, The Muddler's new set menu is a welcome treat for customers who wish to book ahead and organise their Christmas and New Year gatherings in style.

Aptly named after renowned cities across South East Asia and consisting of The Muddler's stand-out small plates, customers can choose from carefully curated set menus that explore a variety of flavours from across the continent, perfected by The Muddler kitchen team.

Led by Head Chef, John Buenaflor – the kitchen team have many years' experience within the catering industry with a real passion for Pan-Asian cuisine. Along with their infamous small

plates, popular versions of main menu delights have been remastered to sit upon the palatable menus:

The Manila (£28.00pp), pays homage to the bustling capital city of the Philippines, where food from across the globe is in abundance. Customers can enjoy a varied mix of Pan Asian flavours with Bulgogi Pork Belly, Vegetable Spring Rolls and deep-fried Chicken Katsu in panko, served with a spicy mayonnaise.

Osaka (£32.00pp), named after the street food capital of Japan, complements Teriyaki Chicken breast – marinated and fired over The Muddler's robata charcoal grill for a fiery flavour – with Crispy Chilli Squid and Duck Gyozas.

For a rich and moreish experience, indulge the senses in the Bangkok menu (£35.00pp). A city renowned for its vibrant street life and extravagance: this menu consists of The Muddler's premium plates: Beef Fillet marinated in coriander, robata Teriyaki Salmon, and signature Prawn Tempura cooked golden and served with a dipping sauce.

Of course, a vegetarian selection is also available for alternative diets. Named after the 'garden city' of South East Asia – the Singapore menu (£27pp) offers a delectable choice of Vegetable Spring Rolls, Vegetable Tempura and Vegetable Gyozas – each served with accompanying dressing and sauces.

Each set menus is served with steamed edamame tossed in chilli to start, and accompanied with a portion of fried or steamed rice.

Groups looking to book ahead can do so by enquiring online: www.themuddlernewcastle.co.uk. A member of the Muddler sales team will then be in contact to help arrange your special occasion or gathering.

And to ensure diners are well cared for on their



visit – newly appointed General Manager, Mark Hopkinson is on hand to offer a welcoming and outstanding atmosphere within the restaurant. With a wealth of experience working throughout well-known hospitality businesses over the years, customers can rest assured that they will be impeccably taken care of during their visit.

The Muddler continues to prove its excellence in service, quality and Pan Asian cuisine – making it the perfect place for a special occasion with work colleagues, friends or family.

Book your large group bookings and set menus now at:
www.themuddlernewcastle.co.uk

BIRRA MONTECASSINO – THE BIRTHPLACE OF MODERN BEER

By Zeno Meynell-Rea, Operations Director, Punto Italian Kitchen



In the mountains of central Italy, northeast of the border of Lazio and Campagna sits the commune of Cassino. It's a town our family is very familiar with being only 45km away from our home village of Arpino in the province of Frosinone.

Overlooking the valley, and town, is the stunning Abbey of Montecassino; a site of modern pilgrimage, utter devastation and the death of 20,000 men (not to mention civilian casualties) during World War 2 at the Battle of Montecassino, and also the birthplace of modern beer.

In 529 AD Benedict of Nursia, the monk and founder of the Benedictine order, came upon a former Roman temple to Apollo and decided to set up a monastery. As well as following the motto of 'Ora e Labora' prayer and work, Benedict was an advocate of brewing beer.

The birra d'abbazia (Abbey Beer) became well renowned throughout Europe but sadly, this 1500 year old beer disappeared following the destruction of the brewery during WW2, until a half-Yorkshire, half-Italian entrepreneur called Daniele Miri decided to resurrect this brewing tradition on the monastic land of Albaneta. Here, they not only grow crops for their beers but also produce local honey.

The monastery accounts for 700,000 visitors per year on a pilgrimage who mostly visit the abbey

and leave. There are also visitors to the various war memorials, especially around armistice day but otherwise, despite being a fairly industrialised part of Italy, Cassino has little else in the way of regional identity; there isn't even a regional dish as in many other parts of Italy.

Launched in 2018, Birra Montecassino is available nationwide in Italy and is a source of local pride in Cassino. As a result, Daniele hopes the small brewery of Birrificio Montecassino will become a place of pilgrimage for a different type of traveller.

Inside the brewery of Montecassino tourists can visit and learn more about this exceptional beer.

When Giordano Antonio, the director of Birra Montecassino UK, contacted us about their UK launch it's fair to say we were more than just a little excited. An authentic Italian experience is what Punto is all about, Birra Montecassino follow a similar ethos too; local ingredients from local suppliers and the desire to produce a product of exceptional quality.

We got to try the first product to be released in the UK in September when Giordano came to visit us at Punto Italian Kitchen in Heaton. Made using water from Santissima Madonna di Canneto, the exclusive water source for the monastery and the brewery, Birra Montecassino Alba is a spectacular naturally carbonated, unfiltered, trappist-style blonde ale characterised by a deep golden colour. Thus the name, Alba, meaning sunrise in Italian.

The first sip I took had a pleasant sweetness, I'm told by Giordano this comes from the caramel hops they use. Then comes a slight bitterness that is perfectly balanced by the malty body.

What surprises me most is how incredibly light Alba is. The natural carbonation makes it

incredibly easy to drink and not at all 'bloaty'. As such, it pairs exceptionally well with our sourdough pizzas, which we prove slowly at a low temperature for a rich flavour and easy digestion.

Daniele Miri, CEO of Birra Montecassino in Italy, shared his thoughts stating "I am very proud of the massive success Birra Montecassino has been receiving considering it has been in the UK for just a few weeks thanks to the launch of Birra Montecassino UK. Birra Montecassino is really excited to have Punto Italian Kitchen as part of the project being so close to the town of Cassino. We hope this partnership helps to tell the story of Montecassino as well as displaying traditional Italian culture and values".

Giordano Antonio adds "We are delighted to have Punto Italian Kitchens as part of our project. Birra Montecassino only works with the very best Italian venues and Punto Italian Kitchen certainly fits into that criteria – Zeno and his amazing team offer a truly authentic Italian dining experience. The family-run tradition creates a very welcoming atmosphere which is something Birra Montecassino loves. We cannot wait for Birra Montecassino to be enjoyed exclusively at Punto."

It's fair to say that we are thrilled to be the exclusive stockiest of Birra Montecassino Alba in Newcastle and look forward to giving our customers a real taste of Lazio along with our modern experience of Italian hospitality.

**For more information contact
Zeno Meynell-Rea via email to
operations@puntoitalian.co.uk or by
phone on 0191 258 7999**

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

The Royal Quays has a new name....the Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre. Michael Grahamslaw went along to meet Centre Manager

MATT DAWSON

to look at his story so far.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

To be a footballer!! I played on most school days and certainly didn't apply myself to my education or do my homework. I left with bad grades and fell into a sports course at college but realised I wanted to work and earn money.

I had spells with Coral and One Stop before landing a Supervisor role at Primark in Newcastle. A management spell at their branch in Tottenham Court Road, London followed and I even found myself working in their Philadelphia branch for a period.

What attracted you to your current role?

I used to go to the Royal Quays on a regular basis before I moved south as it was a focal point of the community. However my last visit had left me rather sad as it was a shadow of its former self. The opportunity to "come home" with the brief of transforming it was too good an opportunity to turn down.

What has been your proudest business achievement so far?

My ongoing work here has given me immense satisfaction. When I arrived in the middle of lockdown, we had 17 empty units and now have only four which we'll probably always have due to the inevitable churn of retailers moving in and out. I managed to reach out to independents very successfully and we have some great businesses on board such as Black Storm Brewery, Garden World and Stag Fitness alongside Next, Clarks, Moss Bros etc.

How has Royal Quays changed?

The concept of the Centre had to change and become more relevant to more people. Covid meant I had time to assess the situation and



Matt Dawson

put plans in place. Retailers are able to move in easily due to flexible lease arrangements which gives confidence to small independent businesses in knowing they are not going to be locked into a multi year deal.

I have been ably assisted by a fantastic tight knit team headed up by my Assistant Manager Marnie Coulson. They can see what we are trying to do and that Royal Quays has a stable and successful future ahead of it.

What are you currently working on?

A comprehensive Christmas programme including a reindeer parade and Santa weekends which are all free for everyone. 100% occupancy is always the long term goal. Also continuing to work on the visual aspects in and around the centre to improve the experience.

What has been your business advice?

If you believe you are capable of doing a better job, don't let anyone hold you back.

What has been your biggest challenge?

Setting up my own Menswear business at Royal Quays alongside my day to day role. I saw a gap

at the Centre and studied for four years before launching Attica Menswear which offers high quality leisurewear without high end pricing. We have already garnered 26 five star reviews on Google which is immensely satisfying.

Who are your heroes in and out of business?

My mother has always been my rock and has supported me through thick and thin. She is my biggest inspiration.

Elsewhere I am a huge fan of Steven Bartlett. I love his Diary of a CEO podcast and to build such wealth at such a young age has been phenomenal.

How do you like to unwind?

Spending time with my family and partner, a little bit of gaming and watching a lot of football!

Favourite Boxset?

The Bourne Identity trilogy...great action and escapism.

For further information visit
royalquaysoutletcentre.com



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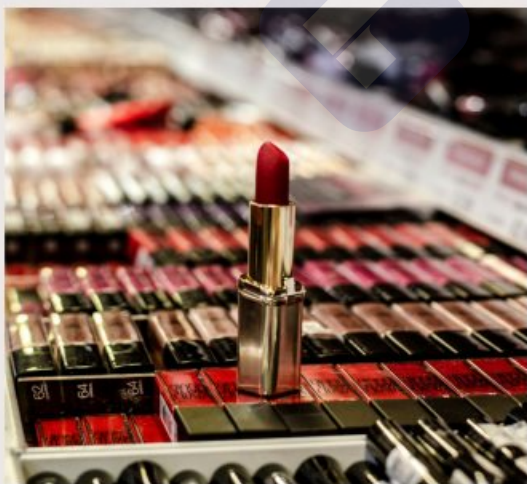
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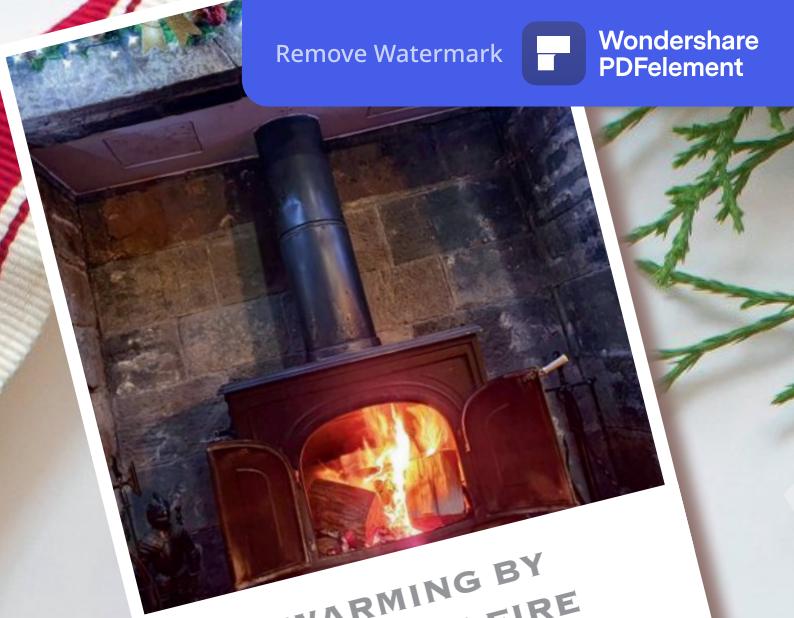
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DOG WALKERS IN ANNUAL FUNDRAISER FOR NORTH EAST CHARITY

Volunteers along with their dogs took to their heels recently to raise thousands for a North East charity that works to combat loneliness among older dog lovers.

Almost £4,000 was raised for Wag & Company following its annual fundraiser, the Walk for Wag, held at Kielder Waterside, Northumberland.

The walk - opened by Wag friend, Mrs Sheila Moody, 93, from Durham - featured around 90 sponsored walkers taking on the 10km Lakeside Way route or a 3km accessible option.

Diane Morton, Founding Director of Wag & Company, said: "It was a lovely day out shared by a number of Wag's older friends hosted by the charity team to give them a change of scene and

obviously lot of lovely dogs to stroke including the Wag N Wheels Newfoundlands and dogs from Northumbria Police Dog Section.

"This fabulous event would not be possible without all the walkers who support us, the event volunteers but also our business sponsors including Northumbrian Water's team at Kielder who host the event, provide the PA system, radios, and free parking for walkers. Their senior managers even become part of our set up and event management team physically helping to support the whole event."

Elsewhere, Arco Experts in Safety provided all the walker t-shirts; Feelwell's Healthy Dogs Treats provided all the doggie treats; and CostCo donated all the cakes sold on the day. Barbour, Arco and Servicemaster Tyne & Wear also provided raffle prizes including a two-night dinner B&B stay in a deluxe hotel, gilets and jackets.

Wag & Company was set up seven years ago to tackle loneliness and isolation among older and vulnerable dog lovers in the North East. The charity has a network of hundreds of volunteers who visit older dog lovers in their own homes as well as in care homes or medical establishments - the only visiting dog charity to visit people at home.

The charity is currently recruiting more volunteers with dogs along with corporate and community friends.

For more information on how to get involved contact: www.wagandcompany.co.uk



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Book now: 0191 691 7090 (lines open 10am – 8pm, 7 days a week)/events@spanishcity.co.uk

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

LYNN SANDERSON

*Sales and Marketing Manager,
Ellingham Hall.*

What were your career ambitions growing up?

When I was young, I wanted to become a lawyer, however during my studies at college and university, I soon realised it wasn't for me. I've always been creative and wanted a role which suited my skills and personality, and I started my career in the weddings industry, working for a leading events company. After seven years doing a job I loved, I decided to change sectors to broaden my experience, however in 2018 I joined the team at Ellingham Hall and it's fantastic to be back, doing what I love.

Tell us about your current role?

My current role is Sales and Marketing Manager, which involves looking after all marketing activities to continue to grow brand awareness and deliver sales growth at Ellingham Hall. However, the role is evolving and I'm currently working alongside management on the strategic plans for the launch of our new venues.

What are your forthcoming plans for the business?

It's a very exciting time for our business as we head for significant growth, with the launch of our new portfolio brand 'Unveiled Venues'. As well as running our award-winning exclusive venue Ellingham Hall, we are preparing to launch another luxury wedding venue; Lemmington Hall in January 2023. The Highlander pub just outside Ponteland, which we acquired earlier this year is currently undergoing renovation and will be launching in summer 2023.

What is your proudest business achievement?

It has to be helping smaller businesses to grow and succeed to become award-winning in their own categories. I've worked with a few businesses and achieved awards at both regional and national level. I was central to the launch of an educational brand, taking it from market entrant to win best small supplier within the education industry within three years. At Ellingham, I joined to help drive sales for corporate and private events, and within 12 months we won Best Independent Venue at the CHS National Awards. However, my focus now is ensuring continued success of our two-night wedding experience.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Having worked in the wedding industry on-off for 17 years, I've seen significant changes within

the last few years. The increase in the number of wedding venues within the North East, offering a wide choice for couples, which is fantastic for the region and helps to keep us on our toes. The way we communicate with couples has changed especially since the pandemic, with many planning meetings taking place over zoom rather than face to face. Social media has dramatically changed the way we engage with our couples and plays a huge part in couples decision making when selecting venues to view.

Tell us about the team you work with?

I'm incredibly lucky to work with a fantastic bunch who all are talented, hardworking individuals and we blend well together as a work family. Our team are extremely passionate about providing the very best experience for our couples and will pull together to ensure nothing is compromised.

Last year, we were crowned 'Events Team of the Year' for the North East & Yorkshire, at The Wedding Industry Awards and we're delighted to have been shortlisted as a regional finalist, in the same category, for a second year. This is a great boost for the team and reflects the fantastic feedback we are receiving from our couples.

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

I've been lucky in both my private and work life, to have had some great mentors. When I was

young, I remember my dance teacher saying to us, 'there's no such word as can't' and those words certainly stuck with me. I worked with a couple of mentors in my previous role who always advocated to look at the bigger picture and not to sweat the small stuff and to always try and put yourself in the shoes of the customer. Two great pieces of advice that certainly plays a huge part in the decisions I make in my current role.

What has been your biggest challenge?

My biggest challenge has most definitely been becoming a mum, to my two lovely boys. As any career minded person will know, the work-life balance becomes a huge juggling act when trying to be the best parent possible and delivering results for your employer. I'm so pleased to work for a family-owned business, who are fully supportive and understanding of the challenges faced by parents and offer flexible working hours.

How do you like to unwind outside of work?

Currently I don't get much time to unwind as I'm always running around after my children, however spending time with family is very important to me, as I've been told by many to enjoy it while it lasts, because they grow up so fast!



Lynn Sanderson

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TOP OF THE CHARTS

By Michael Grahamslaw

Just a hope skip and a jump away from the River Tyne, the recently opened Chart House boasts one of the more enviable locations for a bar & restaurant in Newcastle.

Older readers may remember the ‘vertical’ drinking haunt Flynn’s – which formerly occupied this site at the centre of the Quayside’s heyday. The grade II listed building has passed through many evolutions since but has really went up a notch recently with Chart House offering a swanky maritime dining experience with panoramic riverscape views as its backdrop.

The name itself refers to the building’s nautical heritage being the former dwelling place of

Matthew S Dodds, the esteemed Victorian printer of books, maps and charts that sailors setting out to see would come to buy. Uniquely, the building is one of the only ones of its kind to survive the Great Fire of Newcastle in 1854.

A mere century and a half later, this old sea dog pitched up one Friday afternoon to review the experience.

Not unlike a ship, the Chart House is set over a number of different levels with a staircase between the stylish bar and pavement terrace area, open kitchen pass and ‘top deck’ dining room.

On hand to meet us was Dan, the restaurant’s very amiable front-of-house manager who looked after us superbly well all afternoon.

The dining area features numerous little touches to the area’s naval past with rails of copper and chrome and a collection of carefully curated seafaring sketches. Its bright and airy aspect is really conducive to conversation, so we got the drinks flowing with a brace of Asahi lagers which foreshadowed the menu’s Asian influence.

Gastronomically, the restaurant offers a “Maritime Spice Route” with creative cookery inspired by the Mediterranean, Arabian and South China Seas. Its menu is exciting and varied in scope and offers the chance to dine all-

out as a tapas style feast or in traditional starter/main course fashion.

Kicking off, my Son Jack set sail for the seared tiger prawns, nicely potted in some posh crockery and served with crumbled feta, spiced tomato and ouzo salsa. I opted for the delicately battered salt and pepper chicken, singing with sweet red peppers and fresh chilli.

We followed similar chart maps for main course too. Jack chose the pan fried salmon with sliced roast potatoes, tender stem broccoli and caperberry sauce. I meanwhile enjoyed the red vegetable curry with supplementary chicken.

Desserts of Warm Honey and Almond Cake and Key Lime cheesecake couldn’t quite tempt us, but we did have couple of Irish coffees to guard against the early October chill.

The team at the Chart House deserve credit for this stunning refurbishment and have done this historic gem justice by creating a fully-fledged destination restaurant as well as a bar.

Dare I say it? The perfect place to be blown pleasantly off course on a Friday and into the cosy clutches of the weekend.

For more information, visit pubculture.com/charthouse





WINNERS ANNOUNCED – NORTH EAST HOTELIERS ASSOCIATION

After a two-year break, because of the Covid pandemic, one of the hardest-hit industries, a hospitality organisation, came back fighting last night and proved 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 celebrated the success of the industry with the Excellence Awards and recognised the most deserving at a black-tie ball, which took place on Sunday October 2nd at The Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park, where over 370 guests were in attendance and were treated to a three-course meal and a live band. Winners and sponsors are attached.

Collaborating with key sponsors from the region, the ball highlighted the individuals/categories with awards given to the best, and recognising the excellence within the industry, against all the odds. Their aim - 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 year's Excellence Awards Ball was 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 further information on NEHA visit www.nehotels.co.uk



North East
Hotels Association



A FARMHOUSE WITH A VIEW

By Jackie Marston

When it comes to being in the countryside, my husband and I are always up for it! We have a dog and therefore love going for lovely, long walks and making the most of the fresh air and tranquil surroundings. If you're like us, and you fancy a little get away, you can't go wrong with Chester House.

Based in Westgate Durham, you literally feel like you're driving up a mountain, but when you get there, oh boy does it make the drive worth it.

The views are literally breathtakingly beautiful, but the cottage itself is even better. Classed as a holiday let, it can take up to eight people and is really homely and comfortable. All bedding and linen are provided, and the kitchen is well equipped with a Rangemaster/Aga-look oven and dishwasher.

It has three double bedrooms and one bedroom

with two singles along with two bathrooms, so more than adequate for us and our friends. There are two log burners too, one in the sitting room and one in the kitchen, which we took full advantage of. The weather had just taken a turn for the worst, so we were glad of the heat from the log burners as well as the underfloor heating throughout the cottage.

There is also a lovely hot tub in the garden too, which is housed in a small unit, so you're away from the elements. This was a lovely treat, especially with the cost of electricity at the moment, so we all jumped in to enjoy the bubbles, along with our own bubbles in the form of Prosecco!

The place is dog-friendly, which was just as well as our Golden Retriever had given birth a couple of weeks earlier, so we made their lovely warm conservatory their home for the night, which suited mummy pooch down to a tee, as she basked in the sunshine feeding her babies!

One of the many positives about this place is the fact that it has a catering service, should you want to use it, but as we were only there for one night, decided to cook ourselves. There is also the opportunity to use the services of a 5-star spa service, where they come to the house and offer a choice of treatments.

Chester House is a great place to stay and make the most of the countryside, it helps that it is owned by people who care too, as nothing is too much trouble for their guests. As Arnie said, "We'll be back".

**Chester House, Westgate, Durham, DL13 1PG
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NETWORKING! DID A SHIVER RUN DOWN YOUR SPINE?

An activity that increases anxiety levels in most individuals, even the most confident people can be affected by the dread of networking.

But networking is a crucial tool for business and more importantly a useful resource of support for us humans.

I always say, 'I didn't network for years' however, this isn't quite true. Reflecting on my understanding has helped shaped my view of networking and removed the barrier.

When I first started out in business, most of my leads came from parent and child play groups. During sing and sign, the conversations I had with other parents weren't all dirty nappies and sleep patterns but were important connections to the adult world. I was absolutely networking

in these spaces, we all were. But I hadn't viewed it as networking because I was there as Mammy, bonding with my baby. My biggest clients and most valuable connections for my first two businesses and my social impact work were all formed during these activities. I was attending a different activity with my child every day, sometimes twice a day. They were instrumental in encouraging me to start my own business and become a regular volunteer and charity worker. Shaping who I am today; helping me to manage life with chronic illnesses and putting me on the Kind Currency path.

But I wasn't networking.

Or so I thought!

I didn't attend an actual 'networking' event until I had been in business for seven years. I was petrified. I ended up with sensory overload and imposter syndrome overwhelmed me, smiling on the outside, desperate to hide on the inside. It was another year until I plucked up the courage to attend another. I networked when my health and family needs allowed. I felt anxious before, during and after. But I was learning, growing and I was gaining so much despite the nerves. Networking wasn't just an opportunity for business but for me too.

The penny dropped.

I realised, remove the word 'networking', it's actually, learning and support with business as the primary purpose but with so many other benefits as a consequence. Much like the play sessions I had once attended, learning and support with the baby as priority but with added benefits. Same as meeting up socially with friends, learning and support with friendship as the priority but with added benefits. Same

principle, similar outcomes, exceptionally beneficial but just a change of priority.

With this understanding, when I developed Kind Currency, I wanted to help independent, small and kind businesses access the amazing opportunity networking presents by creating a safe space. A space to remove barriers, a space to allow relationships to flourish and a space to nurture people and business. The first Kind Business Gathering was held in September, we sold out quickly. Some people had never attended networking before, many suffered from social anxiety, and some disliked networking in the normal context. The feedback was humbling and highlighted the need, demand for another was significant and we can't wait to host another gathering in November.

Networking supports the individual, it supports business and it's an incredible support for the third sector too. Just last night I attended an event in support of Smartworks Newcastle. A wonderful opportunity to meet up with other women in business, a bit of wellbeing support and personal growth all whilst raising funds for the exceptional mission of the charity. The impact was layered and all wrapped up in an event, bringing people together for a shared purpose.

Networking is a gathering of people there to help.

www.kindcurrency.co.uk





THE ITALIAN JOB

By Michael Grahamslaw

Venture a little further out of the city and onto the buzzy high street of Low Fell and you'll find a suburb with a burgeoning culinary presence.

For many years now, The Bank has operated as the area's upmarket bar & bistro, whilst down the street, its sister venue Rosa 12 serves up a fine line in Italian cooking. This proved the perfect place to unwind on a Saturday afternoon.

Upon arrival the place was absolutely bustling, Rosa 12 is clearly a popular hub for Low Fell-ites.

Inside there's a neat fusion of the old and the new as they've created a lovely open plan dining area complete with leather-bound chairs and mocha horizontal shutters. Splashes of block red and white emulsion combine with spot lighting to create a modern interior whilst the monochrome wall imagery and waxed chianti bottles provide a quaint throwback to Little Italy. Rosa 12 ticks all the boxes in terms of style and panache then and our imaginations were certainly captured on arrival.

A bottle of white? A bottle of red? Perhaps a bottle of rose instead? Neither my son Jack and I could decide, so we each plumped for a large glass of Shiraz and Sauvignon Blanc respectively. Both were solid choices here with some eye-catching Italian reds also available by the bottle and earmarked for another visit.

Throughout our visit, we were waited on superbly well by restaurant manager Alex who brought us over some warmed bread and verdant green olives whilst surveying a menu exciting and expansive.

Rosa 12 aspires to offer the best flavours from the Mediterranean and beyond with funky happy hour fayre, steak night deals and a sumptuous a la carte menu on offer.

Jack kicked off with the garlic king prawns, pan-fried to perfection in lemon & herb butter and served with sticky rice. Prawn cocktail was a similar sage choice; a martini glass brimming with plump prawns, fresh lettuce, tomato and cucumber in a gloopy marie rose sauce.

Following on, Jack chose the 5oz petite fillet steak in a red wine jus with all the trimmings whilst I greatly enjoyed the French-style trimmed chicken breast in a creamy mushroom & tarragon sauce with mashed potato and greens.

Totally replete, it would be coffees over desserts!

Despite looking rather diminutive from the outside, Rosa 12 is actually anything but and boasts three levels of floor space, each possessing their own unique charms. Fortunately, after a most agreeable luncheon, we got the chance to have a quick explore and discovered that the ground floor is actually a popular spot for coffee and a cake whilst the basement is a fully-renovated cocktail bar tailor-made for live music and private functions.

Defined by low ceilings and lower lighting the "Lugano Cellar Bar" offers a trendy, rustic ambience. With all this to offer then, Rosa 12 struck me as a surprisingly multi-faceted venue with enormous character.

It's clear then that the good people of Low Fell have a winner here in Rosa 12. I'd meet you anytime you want, at this Italian restaurant.

For more information, visit rosa12.com





RELAX, REFRESH AND RENEW AT CITY RETREAT

By Holly Grahamslaw

Following a busy few weeks, I recently visited City Retreat for a much-needed evening of relaxation. An award-winning beauty & spa therapy service, City Retreat offers customers a welcome escape from the hustle and bustle of city life, whilst remaining on their doorsteps.

Owned by beauty therapy expert Lesley Caster, City Retreat has expanded since its opening in 2004, now operating from three luxurious salon & day spa locations. With premises on Osborne Road, Jesmond, and Grey Street, Newcastle, I was delighted to visit City Retreat's Gosforth site, situated in an easily accessible location on Gosforth High Street.

Upon arrival, I was immediately impressed by the venue's comfortable and luxurious ambience. With plush seating, gold décor and floral displays, City Retreat exudes both elegance and relaxation. The therapy room itself similarly promoted feelings of comfort and sanctuary, with snug

heated beds, ambient lighting and relaxing music adding to the venue's serene atmosphere. This five-star experience was coupled by excellent service, with the expert therapists on hand to make me feel the most welcome and comfortable during my visit.

City Retreat Gosforth specialises in offering advanced face and body treatments, using scientifically-proven, innovative technologies to energise and hydrate the skin. Spa therapies include both Dermalogica Spa Facials and Elemis BIOTEC treatments, which promote visibly nourished and energised skin. On this occasion, I enjoyed the Red Carpet PureHydro Aqua Deep Cleansing Facial Peel, a 90 minute treatment designed to make the skin feel smoother, fresher and cleaner.

PureHydro facials use bespoke technologies to combat a multitude of skin concerns. The facials can be used on all skin types and offer a range of benefits including hydration, skin tightening, brightening and congestion. The treatments can be tailored to an array of needs, such as anti-ageing, acne or sensitive skin, with 1 hour treatments also available to target specific areas.

Following an in-depth consultation with my therapist, Tina, the treatment comprised of eight steps, which used different technologies from the device to target various skin conditions. One of the first steps was the Hydrodermabrasion, which removed all debris and dead skin cells to cleanse and hydrate the skin. I also enjoyed the

Oxygenation step, which created Co2 bubbles on the skin surface to deeply exfoliate.

The Mesotherapy solution was then used to penetrate the product deeply, whilst Radio Frequency technology was used to lift and contour. This is particularly suited to those with anti-ageing concerns, as plumping collagen encourages the skin to appear tighter and firmer. Here, LED Light Therapy was also used to enhance the results, with different lights available for concerns such as defence, ageing and repair.

The standout feature for me, however, was the Fire & Ice technology. Here, a warm wand was used to encourage blood circulation at the beginning of the treatment, whilst the ice element was used at the end to seal in all the product. The experience was topped off by the Oxygen Mist, which left the skin looking and feeling both nourished and hydrated. I have to say this was VIP treatment at its finest.

After a follow-up consultation, in which Tina provided me with a thorough examination of my skin and some tailored product recommendations, I left City Retreat after an extremely relaxing and informative experience. With the PureHydro facial, the skin also continues to glow and reaps the best results a few days later, making it the ideal treat for yourself or a loved one before a special occasion.

All in all, City Retreat was just what I needed to completely unwind and de-stress. If you are looking to leave the city behind and indulge yourself, City Retreat provides the perfect place to relax, refresh and renew.

The Red Carpet PureHydro Aqua Deep Cleansing Facial Peel retails at £139.00 for a 90 minute treatment. Customers are entitled to £20 off with the code HF20-2022.

For more information, call 0191 281 9222, or visit their website at www.city-retreat.com

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This is our opportunity to show our valued Sponsors our appreciation and thank them their ongoing support. It was a great day as always and we'd like to pass on our congratulations to this year's Sponsors Day winners, Lubbers Group.





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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.





Lisa Seferi

20 YEARS OF PURE BLISS

The beauty industry is big business and award-winning salon Pure Bliss are celebrating 20 years in the fast-moving and innovative industry.

The Sunderland based salon quickly became one of the most popular in the region and were awarded the prestigious 'Decléor Regional Salon of the Year' over a number of years. The prestigious accolade recognises the salon and staff as being truly the best at what they do within the beauty industry.

The salon offers an array of treatments to their loyal clientele from the relaxing NEOM and Aromatherapy Associates treatments to the most advanced medical based treatments, Environ, Omnilux light therapy, C.A.C.I. and Microdermabrasion, Guniot, Hydrofacial, IPL, 3D Lipo and Dermaforce. The ethos is to offer

exceptional and high-end service in a relaxed and non-pretentious environment.

Lisa Seferi, Spa Director at Pure Bliss said: "My career started in five star hotels and luxury cruise liners. My previous roles include The Savoy Group where I worked for The Berkeley Hotel, the embodiment of luxury, nestled amongst London's elite. This is the level of service I embed in our team of now 24 staff; we want clients to have the best treatment and service they've ever had."

Pure Bliss have recently expanded their treatment portfolio further to become the first salon in North East to launch the latest medical grade treatment technology, Dermaforce, a powerful new force in non-surgical skin rejuvenation. Dermaforce is an advanced cutting-edge device combining microneedling and Radio Frequency (RF) technology to effectively treat a large number of facial and body concerns, with amazing results.

Lisa added: "We are approaching our 20th year in business and as part of the celebrations we are delighted to expand our treatment portfolio. We recently launched Guniot into the salon and the response has been phenomenal.

We were also really excited to be the first salon in the North East to bring Dermaforce to

the region. The treatment is so versatile and can be used to target a number of concerns, through the advanced device combining microneedling and radiofrequency."

The salon works with some of the biggest brands in the beauty industry and specially select the treatments offered in the salon. Their wealth of experience and prestige in the industry has put the salon on the radar of some of the biggest brands.

Lisa added: "NEOM Wellbeing treatments are normally only offered in large spas, however they are available at Pure Bliss as we've worked with them for a while now and have a great relationship."

Wellbeing is a high performing market, and the salon are keen to support women at various stages of their life. The menopause continues to be a hot topic and they've recently launched Meno-PAUSE, a truly nurturing treatment to fortify and strengthen the mind and body through difficult times. With the Inner Strength and Resilience Wellbeing Treatment for the face and body set to be pure bliss.

To find out more contact:
www.pureblisspa.co.uk



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NEED A KICKSTART?

If you are looking to build a healthier more energised lifestyle whilst boosting your self confidence, here are some of my tips to get you kickstarted:

Regular Exercise: Regular exercise is your key to longevity of life and ultimate health. Even a small amount of exercise makes a monster difference to the way you look and feel both physically and mentally. Find a way of adding it into your life.

You can't out train a bad diet: You can't out train a bad diet therefore the combination of regular exercise alongside a sensible diet, one that can be maintained, has never failed with any client over 25 years when followed correctly.

Lose your energy slumps: Lose your energy slumps by eating what our bodies are designed to eat. Take yourself back to palaeolithic days. Cut out processed food and look to consume fresh natural food - lean meats, fish, vegetables, fruit, eggs and water are your go-to foods.

Ditch refined sugar: Ditch refined sugar (or as I call it white death) you are effectively poisoning your body and I believe sugar is the number one cause of obesity in the world. Analyse how much sugar you are consuming daily and look to make changes if needed. The recommended daily allowance is seven teaspoons a day for an adult (28grams).

Alcohol: Two glasses of wine per day for a year adds up to a mammoth 110,000 calories, that's 31lbs of fat. Be aware of how much alcohol you consume and tweak things if needed.

Shopping List: If you are looking to lose weight it starts with your shopping list, make healthier choices. Cut out all snacks between meals and make sure you consume zero sugary drinks, most contain more than your recommended daily sugar allowance.

Exercise in a group: Exercising in a group is proven to work and the social interaction helps with self esteem and focus.

Goals: 70% of people who start on an exercise/diet regime, without a goal, fail. Set short and long term goals - they work.

Endorphins: A combination of aerobic exercise and strength will help with weight loss/strength/posture and that endorphin rush that goes with it, will leave you energized with a real positive mindset.

Be accountable: Be accountable by having your progress checked. This will hold your focus and give you that sense of achievement.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

Exercise and healthy food go hand in hand promoting physical wellbeing. Make changes now and give yourself the best opportunity of staying in good health for longer, therefore continuing to do the things you enjoy most.

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THE LAST WORD



Barry Speker

Resisting the depressing effect of political news and pessimism at economic prospects is a challenge. Despite uncertainty at home and abroad market confidence will slowly be restored with changes assuring that the books will be balanced - even if it will be a long haul. But who will be PM by Christmas?

In the meantime there is a diversion for next year. The date of the coronation of King Charles III is now set for 6 May 2023. This must be an occasion to unite the nation; a further opportunity to display to the world the benefits of our democratic system and Royal Family and our unsurpassable pageantry.

It has been announced that the event will be scaled down with the ceremony 'reflecting the modern-day role of the monarchy'. This may be a sop to the republicans, self-appointed egalitarians and saviours of the planet. There are concerns that the date might affect the climax of the Premier League season?

We should not be embarrassed about staging a coronation of pomp and splendour. The funeral of Queen Elizabeth II was watched by more than four billion people - that is half the world's population.

We have not had a coronation since 1953 and therefore a wholehearted national celebration

is justified. Certainly the numbers in the Abbey can be reduced and some of the liturgy and anointing with oil may be modernised and abbreviated. This should not require the Lords and Ladies to be in lounge suits and cocktail dresses. Ermine and gold coronets are needed, even if the Koh-I-Noor crown is not regarded as inclusive.

Careful planning will be needed to avoid the procession being delayed by un-glu-ing activists from the Mall.

Locally there is some bright news - the shelving of the ill-conceived plan to pedestrianise Blackett Street. Also the removal of the unnecessary Covid-19 bollards on Gosforth High Street, to restore reasonable traffic movement rather than a constant jam spewing out fumes from idling traffic. Well done to the indomitable Doc Anand.

The restricting impact of woke-ism and Newspeak brings the threat that soon we will have no words even to express what George Orwell called 'thought crime'. Ten years ago a style-guide in The Guardian recommended banning the word 'grandmother' as offending women of a certain age being described by reference to their offspring having produced offspring. Other words outlawed included 'gypsy', 'illegal asylum seeker', and 'turn a deaf ear'.

Woke language proliferates:- batters, postpersons, nightwatchpersons, pronouns of choice, chest feeding.

Now the Local Government Association has instructed thousands of councillors and staff what they cannot say to the people who pay for them. No more "mum and dad", or even "mother and father". It must be "birthing parents". No 'ladies and gentlemen'. And you must not use the words 'white', 'Caucasian' or 'foreign'. The proscribed list is almost endless including "homeless" - 'expat', 'lifestyle choice', 'deprived neighbourhoods', 'economic migrant'.



The so called aim is to prevent LGBTQ+ and ethnic minorities from being "minoritised" - which is not even a word!

The authors of such initiatives clearly have a political agenda - to attack the nuclear family, push the notion of victimhood and obscure the contradictions of their distorted world view.

We need to protect our plain speaking language before it is too late and dictionaries are redacted or banned, and Countdown is cancelled as politically incorrect.

It has been announced that Sunderland Air Show has been axed for good. This decision by the City Council supports its aim to make Sunderland carbon neutral by 2040.

Arranging multiple air flights for entertainment, rather than for transporting its citizens to Benidorm, is seen as causing unconscionable damage to the environment. The show first took place in 1988 but was not held after 2019 due to the pandemic, although in 2021 there were no Covid restrictions preventing it. In fact the reason for cancelling last year was related to cost.

The Council stresses that the show will be replaced by different events including a World Triathlon Series and an Armed Forces Day. It remains to be seen whether these will attract the same attendances, enjoyment and international coverage as spitfires and the Red Arrows.

And finally, schools have been forced to install digital clocks in examination halls for pupils taking their GCSE exams. It seems they are not able to tell the time on a traditional clock face.

Traditionally children learn to tell the time by the age of seven but many teenagers have forgotten the skill and are baffled by the hour and minute hands - needing to check their mobile phones. In the exam rooms they struggle to know how much time is left. Apple watches and smart phones may see the phasing out of the clock face. How long before Big Ben goes digital?

barryspeker@hotmail.com





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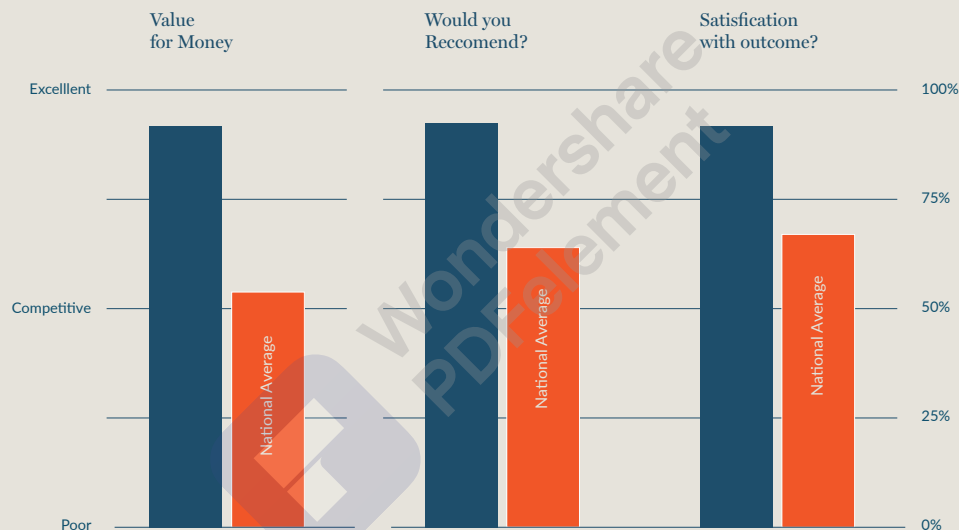
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