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That is a work of art sir. Wow. Truly. Fair dues. Thank you. D David. Co-founder of Hiut Denim.

I love it. It is amazing. It feels like a pet. A new member of the family.

Gav. Founder of Giff Gaff.

What a Jumper!!!!!!! Got it yesterday. It's amazing... I love it xx Erica, Artist (Finland).





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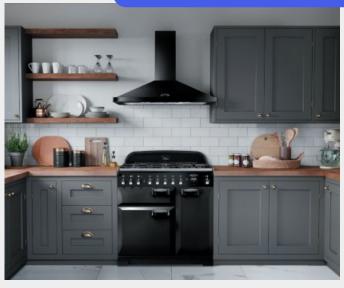
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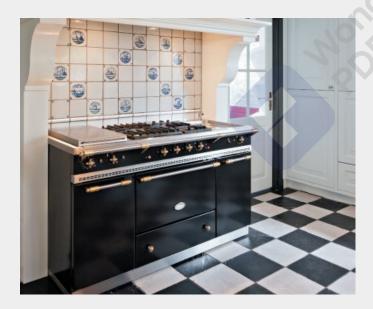
Walter Dix & Co are specialists in cooking ranges. Their experience over the past 40 years on the best brands and models in the marketplace enables their knowledge and expert advice to guide you on the best quality package for your kitchen. They can provide information on associated products such as cooker hoods and splashbacks, hobs, built in ovens and refrigeration products.

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Whether you require all electric models or dual fuel, from 600mm to $2.2\,$ metres there is a range to suit every kitchen, home and culinary need.

Some models of cooker are available from stock or with short delivery times other manufacturers have long wait times so all dependent on choice. So if your project is well into 2023 then now is the time to make a visit to the showroom.

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the December/January edition of Northern Insight.

2022 has been a tumultuous year which has seen the death of our beloved Queen, three different Prime Ministers and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

Life remains very challenging for many and we are therefore so appreciative of the support we have received whilst compiling our biggest ever edition.

Our cover stars are Sanderson Young Estate Agents who reflect on the quality of some of the fabulous homes they have sold this year.

Elsewhere we feature a range of terrific event coverage including Hay and Kilner welcoming guests to their new Lumen headquarters.

We also feature a plethora of "Year in the Life" articles from a wide range of North East businesses who look at their ongoing progress and assess forthcoming plans.

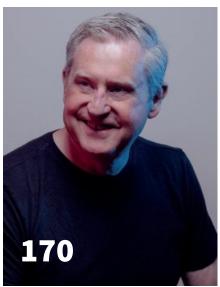
Within our burgeoning Arts section look out for an interview with the face of North East panto Steve Walls, whilst on our travels we make a welcome return to The Bank in Low Fell.

Some great ingredients for an enjoyable read over the festive period.

Now comes the time for us all to pause and review. May I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.







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Partnership for Percy Hedley Foundation

The Percy Hedley Foundation has teamedup with Northumbria Police to launch the UK's first Volunteer Police Cadet (VPC) scheme for students with specialist educational needs.

The cadetship, for students aged 18-25, is based at The Foundation's Hedleys College, an independent specialist further education provider.

The first cohort of cadets were officially swornin by the Chief Constable of Northumbria Police, Winton Keenen QPM, in October at a special ceremony. The VPC scheme aims to open-up policing to young people - giving them a practical understanding of policing and encourage good citizenship.

Over the academic year, the cadets will learn all about policing including the phonetic alphabet, hate crime, crime prevention, internet safety, dog handling, road safety and anti-bullying.

Joanne Rees-Proud, Hedleys College Principal, said: "We strive to offer education and experiences that help students reach their fullest potential; and are thrilled to be the first college in the country to offer our students this amazing opportunity. It's brilliant to see how proud and excited the first eight police cadets are to be embarking on this course."



"The application involved an extensive questionnaire to highlight our export strategy, successes and growth, along with an independent examination of our accounts. Once we were shortlisted, all the entrants went to firstly the prime minister for selection and then Her Majesty The Queen for final endorsement – in fact, we're one of the last to be honoured with a Queen's Award, as opposed to a King's."

Beanies was launched in 2013 to offer coffee lovers a choice of easy-to-make flavoured coffees, and it now sells to more than 30 countries. Since winning the Queen's Award, it has added Turkey, Indonesia, Malta, Kazakhstan, Trinidad and Tobago, and Sweden to its list of exports.



North East leathersmith polishes off the year with collection of awards

A North East-based luxury leather smith has added yet another award to his belt, rounding off 2022 on Insider's 42 under 42 list, crowned Leather products retailer of the year in the North East Prestige Awards, Best Men's Luxury Leather Goods and Accessories Retailer (North East) in the Northern Enterprise Awards, and now The Best New Young Entrepreneur of the Year in the Best New Tees Business Awards.

Stuart Coupland, owner of Coupland Leather, set the business up from scratch following redundancy in January 2020, turning a hobby into a thriving business just six weeks before the country plunged into lockdown.

Now, Stuart exports his handcrafted products all over the world, and has partnerships with Araminta Campbell, Master Debonair, the Engravers Guild and the Jet Centre, as well as selling through the Coupland Leather website. Most recently, Coupland Leather has started manufacturing its high-quality leather goods for other companies under the client's branding. This expands the availability of quality leather items available to the public and helps to combat cheap goods while raising awareness of fast fashion and the issues it causes – encouraging customers to invest in items which are made to stand the test of time and become heirlooms to be passed down.

Stuart said: "It's been another amazing year, and so exciting to be recognised on so many levels for everything we've done. I'm so grateful to all of our customers, our stockists, and to everyone who has supported me on this journey to get to where we are."

Flavoured coffee team wins Royal approval

A North East coffee maker has received royal approval for its range of flavoured beverages.

Beanies Flavoured Coffee, which is based in Darlington, recently won a Queen's Award for International Trade, following six years of growth overseas.

The team received their award at an event last month, which was attended by Lord Lieutenant of County Durham Sue Snowdon, Darlington MP Peter Gibson and Manuel Fantin, food and drink sector specialist at the Department for International Trade North East. The guests, including members of the Beanies team, enjoyed a presentation and tour of its factory.

John Evans, executive chairman of Beanies, said: "We got involved with the award scheme following a conversation with our MP, Peter, who got in touch to say that the North East was very underrepresented in the Queen's Award. I investigated it further and found that food and drink companies, particularly in export, were also underrepresented – an area in which we've done very well.



IF YOUR BRAND IS WHAT PEOPLE SAY ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS WHEN YOU ARE NOT IN THE ROOM, WHAT WOULD THEY SAY ABOUT YOUR COMPANY?

www.bradleyomahoney.co.uk



Expansion on the horizon for Pure Bliss

Award-winning Sunderland based salon Pure Bliss have announced they'll be opening another salon 'Pure Bliss @Halo' when they join the team at Halo Hair in Hebburn.

The new salon will officially launch in January 2023, but treatments are available now with two treatment rooms and a Glam Bar area with brow and nail bars in the salon.

The salon works with some of the biggest brands in the beauty industry and specially select the treatments offered. Their wealth of experience and prestige in the industry has put the salon on the radar of some of the biggest brands including NEOM, Guniot and Dermaforce.

To find out more: www.pureblissspa.co.uk



New data revealed on first anniversary of open-road-tolling at Tyne Tunnels

It's been one year since the Tyne Tunnels modernised by switching to open-road-tolling and new data just released shows journey times are down; CO2 emissions have been slashed; and the number of people paying their toll on time has surged.

A 12-month review of all the statistics collected since the toll booths were removed in November 2021, shows a positive overall picture of the tunnels' performance and that drivers are getting through the tunnels 42 seconds faster, on average, than they were before.

Under the new system, cameras

automatically register journeys and payment needs to be made before midnight the following day.

The tunnels have seen nearly 17.5 million journeys made in the last 12 months and almost 97% of drivers are now paying their toll on time – which is up from 94.6% a year ago.

The number of tunnel users pre-paying for their journeys via a Pre-Paid account has rocketed by 138% which the operator of the tunnels, TT2, says has considerably helped reduce non-compliance because it reduces the risk of forgetting to pay.

TT2, which operates the tunnels on behalf of the North East Combined Authority, says it is particularly proud of the emissions data which shows over 90% less CO2 is being emitted into the air at the tunnels, compared to 12 months ago. The CO2 saving over the last year equates to 26,987 return passenger flights from Newcastle to New York.

Philip Smith, Chief Executive of TT2, said: "I am incredibly proud of how far we have come in the year since we introduced such a significant, historic change at the tunnels. Our main objectives of delivering faster, smoother journeys, reduced emissions and better local air quality have been met and we continue to listen to customers and analyse data and feedback to make sure we continuously improve our processes and the customer experience."



TLC's award-winning formula puts accessibility centre stage

Things are heating up at Tailored Leisure Company (TLC) with news that the award-winning company has hit the shortlist for a flurry of high-profile regional awards.

TLC picked up the PNE Social Impact Award last year and since then there have been an influx of award nominations for the South Tyneside based company who have been a key driving force in developing accessible projects across the region.

TLC's award-winning formula has since seen the team awarded Corporate Social Responsibility award at the Sunderland Echo Portfolio Business Award 2021, Entrepreneur of the Year at the Best of South Tyneside Awards followed by an accolade at the BBC's Make a Difference Awards.

News is also just in that Tara Mackings has been shortlisted for Community & CSR Inspiring Female of the Year in the Chamber Business Awards, plus the award for Business in the Community at the Sunderland Echo Excellence Awards 2022.

The team at TLC are on a mission to overcome the barriers and social exclusion faced by disabled people, specifically in terms of access to leisure activities. TLC are committed to developing accessible opportunities to get fit, have fun and relax with as little stress as possible.

Tara Mackings, Director of Tailored Leisure Company who set up the company due to her own experiences of living with cerebral palsy said: "Collaboration is key to everything we do, and we are so honoured to see the vital work of the TLC team recognised at award level with a host of awards and nominations now under our wing. The award success cements the work that we do with community groups and partners to support the development and growth of our accessible projects, we really can't express how much the nominations mean to us."



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BRAND AND SHOW YOU OFF TO THE WORLD.

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It's genuinely hard to believe we have reached the end of another year. A year like no other and one to many which has provided more challenges than ever before.

As I sit and write this in mid November for the December edition, it's given me time to reflect and review our year and to be perfectly candid, it has felt more like a year and a decade than the standard twelve months, which I imagine many of you can relate to.

Working across a multitude of sectors we have seen a diverse range of insights, the challenges, frustrations, barriers and on the flip side - the positives, the wins, the good news stories businesses and individuals face. And its fair to say this year has shown a mixture across both. Recruitment, retaining and retraining seem to be a common theme, which we discussed in our October edition. I've been discussing with fellow business owners only this morning about the increasing cost of customer acquisition, marketing spend, in fact the increasing cost of everything, the constant margin squeeze and increasing expectations both internally and externally.

Let me be frank, we like many of you haven't had the growth we expected, we've faced challenges I wouldn't and probably couldn't have ever predicted, rising costs we hadn't forecast and a constant online battle with increased marketing costs. It has been a tough one but for what its worth, here's what I've learnt over the last year since launching Just Williams Sales Academy and training over 3000 customer service and sales professionals – which I hope in turn may help you too.



- Training needs to be a long term plan, built into a business strategy, supported by an IDP and reviewed and reflected on monthly.
- Forced fun on training days isn't fun (for anyone.)
- Very few people truly know their Customer Lifetime Value.
- Taking time out of your business to reflect and create a long term sales strategy bears fruit
- Even fewer people think to maximise their existing customer spend before attracting new business and have calculated or know their Customer Acquisition costs.
- A long term training plan for your team supports retention and recruitment.
- It is possible to transform a poor performing team or individual into highly successful cohesive sales teams.
- Investing in your team is the most important investment of all.
- A sales tracking system eg a CRM system is utterly essential.

As a result of all we have learnt, we have launched a new branch to The Just Williams Sales Academy for 2023. Our monthly webinars will provide an opportunity to come together and discuss key topics in a roundtable format – each session will have a theme and provide an opportunity for one to one mentoring after the session.

If you'd like to join our customer service and sales community to learn, network and build your knowledge and contacts in the industry – get in touch and make sure you register for our monthly webinars and our newsletter full of ideas and ways you can increase your return.

Have a great break over the festive period and thank you for your support in 2022.

See you all in 2023 www.justwilliamsltd.co.uk Thank you to all of our customers for an incredible year!

Here's to 2023!

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Online Modules
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Join us from January for a free monthly webinar.

Topics include:

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Retention

Creating Client Profiles

New Business Development

Roundtable Q&A

Diversification

Successful Sales Mindset

Imposter Syndrome

The Top Books / Podcasts and listens for Sales Professionals

Closing Deals

Christmas Collaboration.













rare! From Sanderson Young







A SNAPSHOT OF OUR 2022!























"Looking back on 2022, we have once again been highly impressed with the quality of some of the fabulous homes that we have sold and the great interest we have received throughout the year for unique, bespoke, and often very special properties.

This year has seen the highest amount of 'low profile' sales that the company has ever undertaken, with a number of buyers and sellers choosing to transact without the public glare of open marketing and the internet. This form of sale process has to be very carefully handled and because of our knowledge of individuals looking for houses at any given time we are capable of placing the right buyer with the right home.

If you are considering a sale in the near future, please ensure that we know about it, even on a quiet basis, so that we can ideally match you to the right buyers at the right price point.

As we go into 2023, we see a rollercoaster of headlines impacting on the confidence of the economy, but I suspect that the reality is that the market is already calming down and interest rates are showing signs of dropping and returning to more affordable levels.

We know that there are more buyers out there than there are sellers and therefore prices WILL HOLD in popular locations.

We very much look forward to helping you with your house move in 2023."

Duncan Young Chairman SANDERSON YOUNG Duncan.Young@sandersonyoung.co.uk







This December, Sanderson Young Estate Agents are urging the North East to 'support local' and have created an interactive Advent Calendar at each of our regional offices, where the public can scan QR codes to be led through an online festive trail.

This digital campaign will be displayed at each of our branches in Gosforth, Alnwick and Ponteland, as well as being shared over Sanderson Young's social media channels. The display will take the format of a traditional Christmas advent calendar with 25 'doors', depicting lovely Christmas scenes, and each day the offices will 'reveal' a window.

Behind each door we will be either promoting a local business, championing a charity close to our heart, or publicising a festive event. Interspersed within the calendar design will be the reason why we have chosen the advent and our desire to support local and champion local causes, all whilst having a bit of festive fun!

Please visit your local branch to take part and 'support local' this festive period. If you live further afield fear not, as there is still an opportunity to open the advent windows with us over social media! Please ensure you are following @sandersonyoungestateagents on Instagram and Facebook, where we will reveal each window digitally and provide online links to the charities, businesses and events we are championing this Christmas.

Visit Us:

rare! & Gosforth Office 95 High Street Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4AA Ponteland Office Coates Institute Main Street Ponteland NE20 9NH

Alnwick Office 35 Bondgate Without Alnwick Northumberland NE66 1PR



THE LATEST PROPERTY NEWS... DIRECT TO YOU



Last month we teased something new and exciting from Sanderson Young, and we're pleased to announce that in November we released SY Edition, our monthly newsletter, bringing property news direct to you!

Each month SY Edition will feature exciting developments at Sanderson Young, plus features including our SY recommends, expert advice, property of the month, and more.

Don't miss out on our December edition and sign up as a VIP on our website to receive your monthly newsletter!

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STOCKSFIELD, NORTHUMBERLAND



GUIDE PRICE: £2.995 MILLION

A rare opportunity to purchase a magnificent, newly renovated family home with extensive accommodation to an exceptional standard. This beautifully presented house sits on a stunning 4.5 acre plot with principal rooms facing west to maximise light and views over formal lawns and woodland. The property has incredibly versatile accommodation including 7 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms, a fabulous kitchen by Mowlem & Co with open plan living and dining areas, a formal lounge and a snug/office. Externally, the gardens comprise of several lawned areas with well stocked borders, a 1.2 acre paddock with stables for 2 horses and a woodland dene with stream backing onto open countryside to ensure complete privacy. The extensive driveway provides parking for many vehicles and there is a detached double garage with an office above.

Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: H.

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...



Owner of Riverside Marketing Solutions.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

More of the same from 2021 to be totally honest! I'm lucky in that I have a very stable client base but I did look to increase the amount of one-off projects I offer such as website copywriting and email campaigns.

I'm delighted to have recently worked on copy for three websites which are now live. There's nothing better than seeing your work in print and a website is such a prominent part of a business so I'm delighted I've completed several projects for local businesses this year.

Has everything gone according to plan?

No! I think you're very lucky to have everything go to plan and of course I'm no different, some things work and some don't but that's all part of the learning process. Don't be afraid to try something new and if it doesn't work out, learn from it.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

Luckily, as I started the business during the pandemic I was really well placed to adapt quickly as we started to get 'back to normal'. I've really enjoyed getting out and about more as restrictions were lifted and to meet my clients face to face again is great.

What are you most proud of this year?

I was super-excited to be shortlisted as a finalist in the StartUp Awards in the Professional Services category. I couldn't believe that only two years into my business which was started at the very start of the pandemic, I was a finalist. I may not have been a winner on the night but it was fabulous recognition and really gave me more confidence in moving the business forwards (plus it's always good to get your glad rags on!).



What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

It's not advice as such but I've certainly learned a lot from the director of Compliant FM, Mark Henderson. Mark has been a client since I started the business and has massively grown Compliant during the last two years. I've really taken a lot of inspiration from how he invests in his business in the right way, is very focused and subsequently, has had great success. He's really shown me that if you want to grow, don't be afraid to invest.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

I quite enjoy being out of my comfort zone. I became an Enterprise Advisor at Durham Sixth Form Centre earlier this year and while it may be nerve-wracking to talk to lots of students about your career journey and give advice on their future, it's so worthwhile. I'm a big believer that businesses should take an active role in the local community if they can, it's brilliant for me to give something back and it's something I've really enjoyed it. Not only are you helping the younger generation but you're also gaining valuable experience yourself, it really is a win

win, I would definitely recommend it to other business owners.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

Myself and my husband had a great time at the Grace House Trick or Treat ball in October. It was a fabulous night in aid of such a worthwhile local charity, I somehow ended off successfully bidding on a signed England football shirt from local Lioness, Jill Scott! Alcohol and auctions, it's never a good mix but all in aid of a great charity, haha!

Describe 2022 in three words...

Busy. Demanding. Optimistic.

What are you ambitions for 2023?

I'm aiming for more success for myself and my clients and getting more involved in my role as an Enterprise Advisor. We've also just welcomed a new puppy into the family so a big ambition is that he's fully trained by January!

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North Tyneside Businesses Celebrated at Awards

The best of North Tyneside's businesses have been showcased at the glittering North Tyneside Business Awards which celebrated its 25th anniversary.

The annual awards are organised by North Tyneside Business Forum and sponsored by Capita, Equans, Action on Climate Change, Shop North Tyneside and TEDCO with support from North Tyneside Council.



New Business – Blue Mental Health
Education & Training

Resilience - Littley Bay Ltd

Innovation – LamasaTech Ltd

Heart of the Business – Peter Adamson from NE Display.

Action on Climate Change –Ride Electric

The Heart of the Community Award Scentaholic.

The "North Tyneside Business of the Year" award for 2022 went to Blue Mental Health Education & Training for their pioneering work tackling mental health issues in children.



































CMYK BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS WITH NORTH EAST TECH CONSULTANCY OPENCAST TO DELIVER IT SUPPORT AND ON-BOARDING SERVICES



The Newcastle-based operation of national business technology provider CMYK has added fast-growing independent tech consultancy Opencast to its client portfolio, further strengthening CMYK's position as one of the go-to providers for workplace technology across the region.

CMYK is delighted to announce that CMYK has been selected as Opencast's new IT and business support partner, and proud to welcome this scaling and forward-thinking business on board.

Headquartered in Newcastle, Opencast is one of the North East's fastest-growing tech consultancy firms – and was last month recognised by international publisher Newsweek as one of the UK's top 20 Most Loved Workplaces in 2022.

Opencast's headcount has doubled in 2022 to nearly 400 people, with revenues projected to increase by 80%. It anticipates further rapid growth moving forward.

To support the business during this growth, CMYK will now look after Opencast's IT support, procurement and team on-boarding. The shift means that any IT issues faced by Opencast people will be handled by CMYK.

CMYK will also configure new hardware,

including laptops, and send these out to new starters wherever they are located. It will also dispatch merchandise and publishing material.

Welcoming the news, CMYK regional sales director Craig Pratt (pictured above with Opencast head of software development David Sarginson) said: "I've personally been a huge admirer of Opencast. They have been for many years a 'must-watch' tech firm in the region. Having tracked their success and growth, and the ethical way they operate, this makes our new partnership all the more special. Opencast is a modern day success story for North East business, with an increasingly UK-wide focus."

Lee Foster, chief technology officer at Opencast, said "We're delighted to welcome CMYK on board as our new IT and business systems support partner. The new partnership will help us provide even better IT services and on-boarding experiences for our people as we grow."

CMYK has been operating across the North East for two years, and continues to grow from strength to strength. The firm has already attracted new business from several of the North East's top firms and secured key business opportunities with some of the region's leading education, professional services and manufacturing organisations.

Craig added: "We are extremely proud to have been selected as Opencast's trusted IT partner and are looking forward to a long and lasting relationship as we help support Opencast on its ambitious growth strategy.

"Thanks to the CMYK team for delivering yet another incredible win for the business. Our partnership with Opencast further highlights our capability, skillset and ability to deliver a fantastic service and client experience."

www.cmyk-digital.co.uk 0191 389 7751





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Family additions such as an arcade, play cafe, sensory classes, and dance school creating an alternative use.

Unit sizes vary from 1,000sqft - 12,000sqft.









IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE EMAIL MATT DAWSON:

ENQUIRIES@ROYALQUAYS.NET

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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

JACQUELINE EMMERSON

Founder, Emmersons Solicitors.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

The last two years have been very strange due to Covid. Our aim was to get back to some sense of normal and to continue building upon foundations for the business that were cemented six years ago.

Has everything gone according to plan?

It took longer than we anticipated for various reasons but I'm very pleased to say that we are now back to where we need to be. In fact we are in a much stronger position than we were previously.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

We were very fast off the mark during the pandemic. Having lived through the last recession we knew which decisions had to be made quickly. The furlough scheme was announced on the Sunday afternoon, on the Monday morning we had a meeting with our senior staff and worked out who would be furloughed and how we would then cover the workloads. In the afternoon I renegotiated or cancelled nearly every contract that we had with suppliers.

We had already invested heavily in IT and telephone systems and we swung into action moving staff off site. It quickly became evident that many of our competitors had not achieved the same. We now use technology much more to our advantage and have just invested in a faster Conveyancing support package.

What are you most proud of this year?

The fact that we have been able to offer clients far more flexibility in how we offer them appointments. Some clients are keen to visit our offices as they always did. But for many the ability to have a consultation by Teams and telephone has been a huge saving of time. Making your will during your lunch break has never been easier.

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

That we have a strong business model, strong ethics and strong brand after being in business for nearly 25 years and that we should be very proud of that.



How has your team changed?

I am pleased to say that we have a calm, productive and collaborative team who take a huge pride in their work. Internal promotions have allowed some staff to step up to the mark and they have been very successful in what they have achieved.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That I still have a huge amount of resilience which is necessary to run a law firm and to overcome obstacles that businesses face from time to time.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

My admission ceremony at The Law Society in London. I qualified in 1991 after two years as an articled clerk, and was unable to attend my ceremony then. I thought it was game over until I found out recently that you can attend whenever you choose. So me and my husband/

Co-Director Michael Robinson were admitted on the same day. It made me feel very proud of everything that I have achieved in my 33 year career. Not least is the fact that I have kept going for that long in such a highly pressured profession.

Describe 2022 in three words...

Flourishing, Thriving, Trustworthiness.

What are your aims for 2023?

To continue to build upon the successes of our award winning Wills and Probate Team. We were voted Private Client Team of the Year at the British Wills and Probate Awards after building up our enhanced offering to clients. We go above and beyond for our clients, supporting them when society has allowed them to fall through the cracks. My aim is to make sure everyone knows just how much we can help them.

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WADDS INC.

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AN ASTUTE MOVE

For the last thirteen years, Sarah Waddington CBE has been best known for running Astute. Work, a management, PR and marketing agency that advised some of the North East and UK's biggest names. This year she's made audacious changes and has more big plans for the future. Here she explains more...

This year you've had a change of career direction. Tell us what you're doing now.

I had a brilliant time at Astute. Work doing incredible work with amazing people. Working with complex organisations like the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, North of Tyne Combined Authority, Health Education England, The Sustainability Group, The Common Room of the North, GB Bank, Children's Cancer North and more was a real privilege that gave me in depth insight into the regional and national economy, extended my stakeholder engagement and public affairs experience, and delivered the reward that comes with social impact.

The majority of my time was spent on the management consultancy side of the business. Like for many, the pandemic gave me pause for thought, and I realised that this was the area of work I enjoyed the most. That was the moment I decided to close my business and move fully into a business advisory role.

So as of this year, I'm a non-executive director (NED), professional communicator and activist.

I'm also an ambassador for the Institute of Directors (IoD) and chair of its North East (North) branch.

The skillset for the role of non-executive is a particular one. How have you developed your competencies in this area?

I'm a big believer in continuous professional development and have for years developed my skills while working in this space. I've held all kinds of senior positions, from various director and trustee roles, through to president of the Chartered Institute of Public Relations.

Throughout that time, I've done non-executive training with NEDA, a Level 5 Award in Organisational Skills with the Institute of Leadership and Management, the Oxford Saïd Business School Executive Leadership programme and Cambridge Judge's Steering Complex Projects course.

Most recently I completed my Certificate in Company Direction with the IoD and I've now started a Diploma in Life and Personal Performance Coaching.

As well as working as a non-executive director within the wider business marketplace, you're a director with Wadds Inc. How is this different?

My husband Stephen founded Wadds Inc., which is focused on supporting ambitious creative agencies and communication teams dedicated to achieving growth with social impact. With our overlapping skills and passion for the creative industries, it made common sense that I joined the family business too.

The Wadds Inc. offer is more niche than the work I do elsewhere, but equally as rewarding.

We support management teams in building a future proof, differentiated market proposition that exploits emerging opportunities, manages risk, embraces innovation and navigates economic volatility. With our combined experience and insight, we are able to act as policy influencers, data gatherers and change makers. It's an exciting job as we get to work with some of the most forward-thinking and innovative agencies in the UK and US.

How do you balance day-to-day business with running your community interest company, Socially Mobile?

Socially Mobile, www.sociallymobile.org.uk, is a community interest company founded by Stephen and I to support public relations practitioners from across the UK to increase their earning potential.

While open to all with two years of experience or more at a cost of £695, we offer fully funded places to those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and under-served groups, including minority ethnic colleagues, the LGBTQ+ community, those with disabilities and women returners.

Socially Mobile is part of my day-to-day business and always will be. Helping others up the career ladder is something that will always be a priority.

What's next for the future?

It's a good question and it's one I'm taking time over. While continuing to extend my NED portfolio, I am also developing my activism role with a focus on social mobility and opportunity for all.

I'm deeply committed to the success of the North East and levelling out the deep inequalities within the system. This is more critical than ever and I'm excited for what the future holds.

Find out more: www.sarah-waddington.co.uk www.wadds.co.uk



...Like for many, the pandemic gave me pause for thought...



Shard Credit Partners provides loan funding to support MBO of NAC Group

North East-based NAC Group incorporating independent training provider NA College is targeting expanding its vocational, industry focused training following a Management Buy Out (MBO), which has been supported by loan funding from Shard Credit Partners.

The provision of the loan funding from Shard Credit Partners also represents its growing support for the education sector with this latest investment aimed at providing greater opportunities for young people to establish

careers in the engineering and automotive sectors.

Founded by Paul and Wendy Robson, the Washington-based training company, offers a suite of courses ranging from school engagement activities through to highly respected apprenticeships and post-19 skills programmes.

Originally established to support apprenticeships and skills development for the advanced manufacturing automotive sector, NA College now works with a wide range of employers with skills training in areas such as Business Improvement, Lean Manufacturing, Engineering, Supply Chain, Warehousing and Management.

From 2020 NA College also became a partner of the North East Institute of Technology (IoT), a collaboration between education colleges, universities, and leading employers to strengthen the Higher Technical Education offer in the region. The IoT training offer is shaped to satisfy employers emerging skills demand in digital, electrification and sustainability and business improvement to train future leaders to support the transition to a Net-zero economy.

Currently holding a 'Good' Ofsted rating, NA College also works in partnership with New College Durham, South Tyneside Council, Sunderland College and provides services through the Department for Education (DfE).



Sintons completes over £100m of deals in three months

The corporate team at Sintons have reported a strong first six months of the financial year, with continuing high volume of deal activity, and advising on deals with a combined value of over £100 million in the past quarter alone.

The team has seen a sustained period of deal activity over the last 12 months both in terms of volume and value of transactions, successfully completing several high-value deals over the summer period in particular.

Despite the challenges ahead this coming winter, this trend is continuing with a strong pipeline for the remainder of the year.

Recent deal highlights include: completing the sale of leading UK-based Oracle Applications Partner, Claremont IT to DSP-Explorer, a business backed by private equity firm YFM Equity Partners • Acting for the existing shareholders in relation to Foresight Group's multi-million pound investment to support the growth of Quanta EPC Holdings Limited and facilitate a partial exit • Advising MGL Group on its acquisition of the quarry, civil engineering and haulage business of KW Purvis Limited • Acting for company and existing shareholders in relation to a £2.2 million investment into Ipac Packaging Innovations by the Maven VCT's and the North-East development capital fund Following this strong performance, the team continues to build its corporate team through adding new talent to complement the team's already significant expertise.

Its key corporate partners - Matt Collen, Adrian Dye, Emma Pern and Christopher Welch, also managing partner of Sintons - are all regularly hailed as leaders in their field, supporting businesses and their owners over many years to achieve their ambitions.

All four have again been hailed as leaders in their field by recently-published Legal 500 2023 and Chambers and Partners 2023, in which Sintons' corporate offering was praised as being "tremendously helpful, efficient and effective".



Playtime at Little Morpeth thanks to North East fund backing

Morpeth's first role play centre for young children has opened its doors with the help of a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Little Morpeth offers a 1,200 sq ft play space which features a number of different themed areas that are loosely based on locations within the town and that are equipped with all the costumes, toys and accessories required for imaginative play.

Located on the town's Grange Road, the

business has been set up by qualified teacher Steffanie Parrott after she decided she wanted to offer new play facilities to local families and realised there were no similar facilities to what she had imagined anywhere further north in Northumberland.

The £18,000 Small Loan Fund investment, which was obtained through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers, has supported the fit out of the new attraction and will also help with recruitment and marketing activity around the launch.

Three new jobs have been created at the new venue, with more expected to follow as it gets fully established, while in the longer term, Steffanie is potentially looking to open similar facilities in other North East locations.









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FUNDING A MANAGEMENT BUYOUT

Planning for succession is an important aspect of ensuring a business' longevity, and it shouldn't be underestimated how long it can take to put an exit strategy into action. Ensuring a smooth transition can take many months and sometimes years of planning.

One of the options to exit a business is through a management buyout (MBO). Essentially, this is where the senior management team steps forward to take on the business.

In our latest insight, Lee Humble, Corporate Finance Partner, looks at why MBOs are often a great succession route to ensure a smooth transition and continued business success, and some of the ways in which an MBO can be funded.

Why an MBO?

The best MBOs will have been considered carefully in advance and will have involved substantial planning, often meaning a gradual exposure of the management team to the day-to-day running of the business and strategic decisions over time. In some cases, new team members are brought in to strengthen the management team ahead of an MBO.

An MBO can provide a vendor with a number of positive non-financial considerations compared with selling to an external buyer, including:

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

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

At Azets, we have seen significant MBO activity in recent years. Key reasons for this are the availability of debt funding and vendors being prepared to form part of that funding package themselves through deferred consideration.

Management equity

Financing a buyout through pure management equity is a potential route but rare - it is often a common misconception that the management



team needs to fully fund an MBO by itself.
Typically, those taking on the business will invest proportionately based on their proposed role and their own financial circumstances, in the knowledge that their personal contributions convince other lenders of a clear commitment to the long-term success of the business.

Third-party lending

Deferred consideration is involved in the vast majority of MBOs and is effectively the vendor acting as a funder. Few transactions, whether third-party sales or MBOs, involve full consideration being paid immediately due to the significant sums of money involved, the challenges involved in raising funding and a wish to ensure the vendor is engaged in providing a smooth handover. Third-party lenders may require an element of deferred payment to ensure the vendor is also committed to the transition. High street banks and alternative lenders have all been supportive of MBOs in recent years. Regionally there are funders with economic development motivations who also value MBOs and therefore have an appetite to provide funding. Whilst we are seeing some challenges in the funding market at the moment because of economic uncertainty, the non-financial considerations mentioned earlier in this article are often considered to lower the risk for funders, mitigating the impact on the ability to fund a transaction.

Private equity

MBO funding is also available through private equity firms with an investor acquiring shares in the business, often as a minority shareholder. The total finance is often split between debt and equity elements. The investor is paid interest on the debt element, potentially dividends because

of the shareholding and will seek to support growth in the business to benefit from increasing capital value. In general, private investors support businesses where exit with a return can be achieved in a period of 3-5 years but potentially up to 7/8 years.

Planning ahead

Many MBOs still rely on traditional bank finance including loans for the transaction and products such as invoice finance for working capital, and the new management team will need a financial plan in place to demonstrate it can meet the bank's repayment and security requirements. Furthermore, different funding options will have different tax implications and therefore getting appropriate advice on a coordinated basis is important.

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

We are here to help

If you have any questions in relation to MBOs or would like to discuss your specific business' circumstances and the potential options available to you as a business owner or manager, please get in touch with Lee Humble.

For more information, call 0191 285 0321 or email lee.humble@azets.co.uk



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 3 years later.

She and her team advise owner-managed businesses and large corporates across and outside the North East on a range of tax compliance, planning and advisory matters. 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.

Rachel Warriner says: "We support a wide range of clients and the variety of the work has always made RMT an interesting place to work.

"I am delighted to have been given the opportunity to become an Associate Director of the firm and help develop the business further."

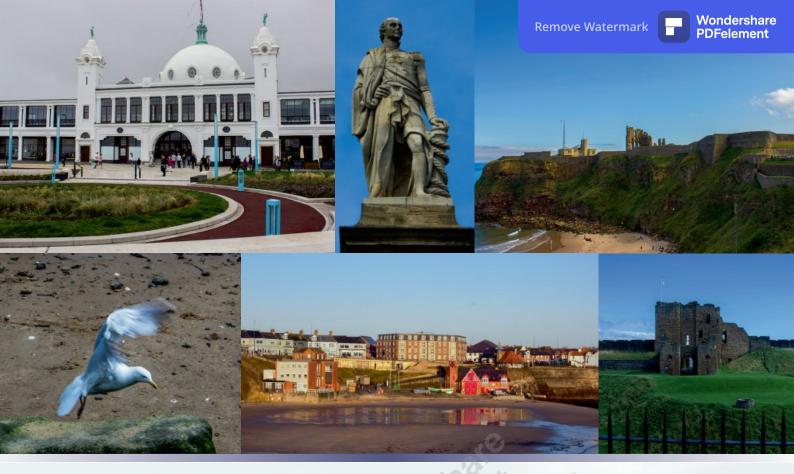
Chris Moir adds: "The breadth of work we do and the interesting clients we work with makes RMT a really enjoyable place to work.

"I've had the chance to develop my skills and knowledge throughout my RMT career and I am looking forward to assisting with the continued growth of the business."

RMT provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its corporate finance, accountancy, specialist tax, medical & healthcare, and recovery & insolvency teams, and works with firms of all sizes both within and outside the North East.

Anthony Andreasen, director at RMT Accountants, adds: "Rachel and Chris have both been key members of our tax team for many years, and their contribution towards the firm's continuing success and development very much merit their promotions."

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THE AUTUMN STATEMENT AND INCREASED NEED FOR ADVICE

Firstly, as this edition is for December and January, I would like to wish everyone a merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year.

To date, 2022 has been a tough year for nearly everyone, with financial markets generally falling, but with interest rates and inflation rising. Hopefully, 2023 will be better.

Autumn Statement

As I write, the Autumn Statement has just been presented in Parliament. I have to say that it is probably the least Conservative budget in my lifetime, and I am not a spring chicken.

I shall not comment on the details announced, but we all understand that there is a need to pay tax and to repair the UK's balance sheet. We shall see if these measures are effective over the next few years.

With the tightening of taxation, the freezing and reduction in allowances and thresholds, it has become even more essential that individuals and businesses seek quality independent financial advice. And we are very much open for business and keen to help.

Our clients know that we will work with them and their other professional advisers, solicitor and accountant, with the objective of producing a cohesive financial plan. Ongoing investment monitoring and advice are all part of the package we offer.

We pride ourselves on being friendly and approachable and endeavour to explain the issues and solutions in plain English. We do not limit our clients to just an annual review; our doors are always open.

Action - Seek advice!

If you would like more information, or would like to discuss your own position, then please do not hesitate to contact me...

Peter Rutherford, director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. Call 0191 229 9600 or email peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com

www.rutherfordhughes.com

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MARC MILLAR from North Wealth Management, and Senior Partner Practice of St. James's Place Wealth Management talks to Highlights PR's Keith Newman about his work and in particular pensions.

There's been lots of political comings and goings recently and many people are concerned about their pensions and about mortgage rates going up. What is this thing called the triple lock?

Triple lock is where the government over many years have been committed to increasing pensions in one of three ways and with inflation in mind usually straight forward, meaning that people on state pensions can at least see some increase in their pensions on an annual basis. The number of people on state pension benefit is a huge burden and a massive increase to the government spending. The problem is that inflation is close to 10% with the governments and the Bank of England's target around 2.0%. This therefore is an enormous commitment.

Should the ordinary man or woman in the street be worried?

I think people just under retirement age should have concerns but there's also a lot of people on state pension that live alone, or the pension is their only income because they haven't arranged company or personal pensions before they retire. It's a worry for them because the cost of living is increasing hugely including heating, energy, gas, electric so yes, some people need to think about what they need to do to maintain their standard of living in retirement in advance.

What sort of percentage of people actually have a private pension and why should they have one?

Difficult to put a percentage on this, with workplace pensions brought in which is a statutory guideline as anyone starting new employment with the company has to be enrolled in to a company pension. It works out that

the employer and employee contribute 8% of their income for the year. There are so many people in the UK heading towards retirement with no provision and everyone knows that people are living longer so the state pension may not be in its current form in say 20 years' time.

Everything comes back to affordability. Private personal pensions are what everybody should try to have because there's no guarantee that a state pension will be there later in life. It's just becoming more important for people to look at what their lifestyle is going to be like in retirement and how this can be funded.

Is it ever too late or too early to take out a pension?

It's never too early but it all comes back to priorities. When a person is young, they tend not to look at pensions as it's a little bit more important to look at the protection side of things. Life cover linked to mortgages and income protection being examples.

For someone older, it's never too late as again it comes back to affordability and depends on time to retirement, other provision, income required.

How do you calculate what a person needs from a pension?

I simply ask them what they need to live comfortably and then take it from there.

I visit the client finding out about their lifestyle, their finances, goals, pensions, assets and determine opportunities.

Any other information people might benefit from?

Yes, don't forget there's a lot of people who have pensions lying idle from previous employers. I investigate these and advice accordingly as to the options based on potential projections.

I would always advocate any person taking on a new job or moving employers to join their pension scheme immediately. Yes, your contribution is 4% but you're gaining 4% free from the company's legal commitment.

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



BUSINESS RESILIENCE

As we head towards the end of what many have found to be a challenging year, with new plans, aims and goals for 2023 one of the things that Andrew Marsh says is critical to get right, right now, is business resilience.

Andrew Marsh is an award-winning chair of Vistage for the North East and Northumberland, NED for numerous businesses and charities, and a successful entrepreneur. He spends his days helping business leaders achieve goal's and find opportunity. Here, he looks at business resilience, suggesting hints and tips on being better at it.

"2022 has been a tough year for many, but 2023 is expected to be tougher. As we found out in the new budget, we can all expect to pay more tax, cost of living is still rising, inflation is over 11%, the Bank of England have raised interest rates to their highest levels for years, the weight of a recession and supply chain issues continuing worldwide. Business resilience is more vital than ever

Some companies freeze and fail, while others innovate, advance, and even thrive. The difference is resilience.

What does business resilience mean? It is the ability of a company to quickly adapt to disruptions while maintaining continuous business operations and safeguarding people, assets and economic value.

This means having tools and plans in place that allow your company to deal with and capitalise in the event of threats and challenges. To make a difference and have impact Business Resilience must be built into everyday strategic plans and practiced. It's too easy for boards of directors to look short-term telling themself "It won't/can't happen to us" but the job of the

the company, and ultimately the board, is to not only create economic value but protect it – that's where business resilience comes in.

Remember COVID? No company had a resilience plan to deal with a pandemic but what some had was a business continuity plan (or BCP) that had basic scenarios allowing them to get operations back up and running quickly. For those that didn't have a BCP it took longer.

The difference between Continuity and Resilience is long-term impact. Continuity looks at processes and actions to take if a risk happens, whereas resilience includes holistic and strategic assessment, a crossfunctional and cross-disciplined approach. By identifying issues, they become strategic activities not just a plan in the event of.

There are seven areas of Business Resilience that we must consider. They are:

- Business Model the way we do business e.g., our Fly Wheel.
- Financial our working capital demands and cash contro.l
- Operational service/production line.
- Technology systems, applications, networks and infrastructure (external and internal).
- Growth where is the best opportunity.
- Organisational teams and support structures.
- Reputational how we are perceived.

In a nutshell, as a team within your SME or charity, you should be reviewing these areas on a regular basis with real actions and plans executed. As shown here:



There are many online resources outlining best practice for processes/policies that help a company work through disaster. The most important are those ensuring a quick return to a fully operational state, safely. Good business continuity plans protect companies by defending data, employees, and public image. The framework shown below really brings home the areas and the intra-dependencies.

My Vistage members benefitted this year from a session delivered by a Business Resilience expert, Steve Williams, founder of BCarm. He shared insights, experiences and several tools that enabled members to test their businesses resilience, allow them to share thoughts with peers and then take solid actions to address".

"Bcarm specialise in helping companies understand risk profiles and how to deal with them. Steve says: "We believe that risk management delivers more than just protection and compliance. It can enhance operational effectiveness, improves resilience, create employee engagement and accountability, delivering improved business performance and competitive advantage."

"Employing an agency like BCarm is a solid option, bringing reassurance, but at a cost that some SMEs haven't budgeted for. Rather than wait to afford to bring in the experts, there are things that leaders and board members can do without any hold up.

As I said earlier there are seven key areas to focus on, so I recommend spending time with your team to understand the risks open to it across those areas and see if perspectives can be widened, looking outside of normal inputs or sources. Remember this is not about operational risk but strategic long-term risk.

When considering these risks, there are three fundamental questions:

- What happens in the event of a crisis i.e., how do we recover? Can we still operate and for us what would define a crisis?
- How long is it before our clients walk away and use someone else?
 (Take this down to each service/product);
- Where are your financial sensitives as a result i.e., clients stop paying, orders dry up, suppliers withdraw credit functions, or employees leave to join other companies for more pay, working capital demands increase etc.

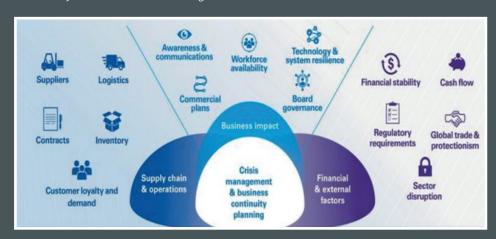
Only when you answer all of these do you get the actions needed to establish business resilience. When considering financial sensitivities, it's also important that investment doesn't just stop. It could be that investing increases resilience, de-risk an area or open up new areas not spotted previously.

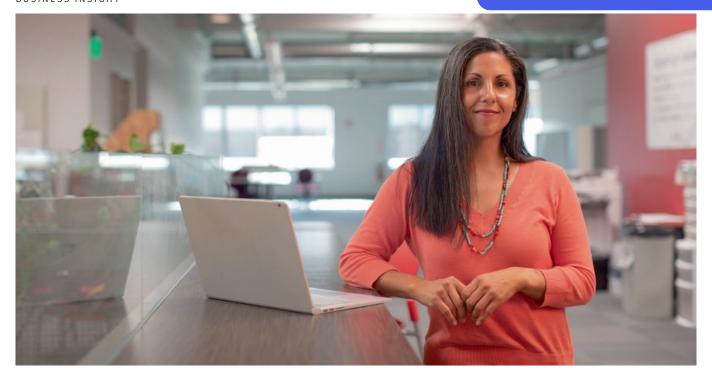
It's also important to acknowledge an important process to put in place is communication. Both internal and external. Routes to communicate should be agreed and actioned in event of a crisis or something that will disrupt performance, including emails, phone calls, messenger systems and calling face-to-face urgent meetings.

On a practical level, your plan should include a detailed file of critical information that is easily found. This includes insurance policies, financial documents, other vital records, as well as contact information for employees, suppliers, stakeholders, and key clients. Whilst an electronic copy is obvious, paper copies should be stored in several off-site locations.

Once your resilience plans are established, they should be reviewed regularly via risk management and crisis management processes. There should be a well-tested cycle for business resilience and continuity plans. Analysis, solution design, implementation, testing and acceptance, maintenance... and round again! Business Resilience shouldn't be a plan put into a cupboard, brought out when needed. It should be a fundamental part of the overarching strategy for the health of your company."

If you wish to check your current business resilience or are starting from scratch, then contact Andrew for his input on andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk or connect with him on LinkedIn.





THE ROLE OF A CHAIR

The appointment of a Chair is often one of the most important pieces in the puzzle of a successful private equity backed business. David Kemp, Portfolio Director at Maven looks at the crucial role they play in acting as the conduit between the investor and the management team and ensuring that interests are aligned.

It may be tempting to believe that finding a Chair for a business is a relatively simple process for an investor or management team, given the well evolved ecosystem that exists to facilitate it. Networking events and online resources, such as LinkedIn, are obvious starting points, and there are numerous specialist recruiters to use if budgets allow. However, the process of identifying a suitable Chair can be very challenging and therefore may take a long time. Therefore, it is critical to be clear minded about the benefits of a good Chair, the parameters of the role you are expecting them to fulfil (and conversely what they will not be expected to provide) as well as what will best suit a given situation.

The right candidate, as for any role, will bring a range of attributes:

Expertise

Expertise is an obvious requirement, and a common first port of call will be notable high achievers from the same industry. In some industries specialist sector experience is more important than others, such as the specific regulatory environments around healthcare or financial services. Often, however, it is situational expertise that is more relevant. For example, a proven track record of growing and exiting VC or PE backed businesses is highly desirable as is expertise in turnaround or overseas expansion and fund raising even if their experience is in an adjacent industry.

Relevant industry Connections

An accessible, up to date playbook of contacts relevant to the industry sector is most advantageous and often forms a prerequisite selection criteria. Management of VC backed businesses will often lean on the chair to make useful introductions, not to bring in sales opportunities per se, but leverage their connections to raise the profile of the business and management within the industry.

Independence

A track record in communicating effectively with different stakeholders is vital as difficult conversations are inevitable at some stage during an investment, albeit this may be harder to discern straight from a CV. Demonstrable independence is a fundamental aspect of the Chair role; providing a balance between the management team, board and investor stakeholders and avoid a bias to one stakeholder over another. As an investor, this is just one reason to cast a wide net rather than bring in a tried-and-tested friend of the firm.

An appetite for challenging

The ability to challenge, listen and encourage the management team, particularly the CEO, as well as raising their focus from the day to day to develop a wider strategic understanding of the business is essential. The Chair's personal style should be one that builds mutual trust and understanding with the CEO and management team and keeps the business focused on the longer term plan.

Flexibilit

Another obvious, but potentially overlooked trait, is time: a Chair needs to be available to a business when it most needs them, not when it suits the Chair's schedule. Whilst a high-quality Chair will undoubtably have other interests and involvements, even the best may struggle to give the position adequate time if they already have half a dozen other roles to juggle. When the unexpected happens, the CEO may not be able to wait until the next diarised appointment and needs to be sure that the chairman can commit the time required.

Diligent

Strong corporate governance is going to be an important feature of any successful investment and it is certainly a Chair's role to take a lead in this area; standards often need to be raised in a company receiving external investment for the first time and this is an area in which an investor should also be adding value. Maintaining appropriate standards of governance should be a relatively simple matter for experienced board members..

Overall, no Chair will be able to prevent industry headwinds or competitive pressures impacting on a business, nor the inevitable growing pains that strike even the more successful companies. However, the right Chair will help to ensure that the company is prepared and can make better decisions when the unexpected does occur. They will wear their experience lightly, listening far more than they talk, and the CEO will find themselves with a trusted partner to lean on. Any investor will also take confidence from this experience. There will typically be no shortage of candidates, but a good candidate for Chair will want to take time to get to know the company, its growth plan and the senior management team. Their valuable input will be more than worth the time and effort invested to find them.

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ENERGY TRANSITION – THE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

By Arran Taylor, partner, Deloitte.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities facing industry leaders as they plan and execute their decarbonisation strategies?

The highlights of the Reuters Events and Deloitte Global Energy Transition Trends 2022 survey reflects the responses from over 2,800 professionals across corporates of all sectors, sizes and geographies, to shine a light on the most pressing issues.

The report covers five main themes:

Delivering net zero

When looking at how industry will deliver net zero, we saw that while governments are still expected to provide leadership on net-zero targets, companies are increasingly seizing the initiative and implementing decarbonisation strategies. The increasing sense of urgency regarding emissions reduction is reflected in the survey findings, with almost 65 percent of respondents saying their organisations were highly committed to energy transition. The implication is that thousands of organisations are now planning and implementing their strategies.

Governance, society, and people

The ability to deliver on net-zero pledges is a key factor in helping companies attract the right skills and the best talent. The

growing importance of a route to net-zero within corporate governance frameworks is underlined by the fact that more than 64 percent of respondents said energy transition commitments would be 'a major factor' in whether they would work for a company. In contrast, just over eight percent said this would be immaterial in choosing an employer. From the findings it's clear that skills shortages are likely to become more apparent for those organisations that fail to align to the values of their prospective workforce.

Markets, finance, and investment

Who should bear the cost of a just transition to a more sustainable energy system? The research revealed broad agreement on this point, with almost 80 percent of the sample saying costs should be shared by everyone rather than being shouldered by governments, businesses, or consumers. At a corporate level, it emerged that most companies surveyed had already begun allocating financial resources towards clean energy and sustainability, with almost 31 percent having started this process more than five years ago and a further 36 percent had started investing in the last five years.

Clean technology and electrification

Technology is key to decarbonisation and electrification is viewed as the biggest near-term technology enabler for emissions reduction, but government support is still needed to electrify the industrial sector, particularly in relation to critical areas of access to grid capacity and connections. Companies face a range of challenges in pursuing an energy transition agenda, but from this survey the biggest of these appears to be technology with almost 88 percent of the sample saying technology was a high or very high priority for the transition.

The industry transition

While the transport sector is on its way to decarbonisation, there is still much uncertainty over when and how other hard-to-abate industries could achieve their net-zero emissions. Experts believe a combination of wind, solar and energy storage could help decarbonise up to 90 percent of electricity generation. For other industries it's not so straightforward - to the extent that around a quarter of the respondents had doubts over whether the industrial sector would be able to cut emissions to zero by 2050.

Its good news that this research reveals optimism over the energy, industrial and associated business sectors' ability to cut net emissions to zero by 2050, although uncertainty remains over some pathways and timescales. The trend towards a low carbon future has clearly been set and leaders must now harness this momentum and deliver at speed.

If you would like to make contact, please email me on arrtaylor@deloitte.co.uk



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UNW CELEBRATES £100,000 FUNDRAISING MILESTONE AS PARTNERSHIP WITH MAGGIE'S NEWCASTLE IS EXTENDED



Maggie's Newcastle, a dedicated cancer support charity, is celebrating the extension of its highly successful corporate partnership with Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW.

Located in the grounds of the Freeman Hospital, Maggie's Newcastle offers free practical, emotional, and social support to people affected by any form of cancer, as well as their families and friends. The aim of Maggie's is to empower people to live with, through, and beyond cancer by bringing together professional help and communities of support.

Built in 2013, the Newcastle centre is designed to be a warm and welcoming space with qualified experts on hand to offer free support and guidance for people across the North East and Cumbria. The team consists of NHS-trained Cancer Support Specialists with expert knowledge about cancer and treatment, as well as psychologists and benefits advisors for those who need help accessing financial support.

Through its employee-led Charity Committee, UNW regularly raises funds for a wide variety of organisations, with donations being match funded by the firm; previous beneficiaries have included Gosforth-based Smile for Life and MSRRF, based in Morpeth. Over the last decade, the firm has raised an impressive £100,000 for its chosen charities with that money going on to make a huge difference to a number of local causes.

A total of £14,000 was raised in the first year of UNW's partnership with Maggie's, with the firm's fundraising activities including a demanding 27.5-mile Castle Walk Challenge from Bamburgh to Warkworth in October 2021 and a number of raffles throughout the year. The second year's fundraising activities began in earnest with the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge in September 2022 raising close to £5,000.

Karen Verrill, centre head at Maggie's Newcastle

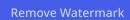
said: "We're incredibly grateful to everyone at UNW for their support so far and are delighted to be the firm's chosen charity partner for a second year running.

"One of the things that makes Maggie's is so special is that you don't need an appointment. You can just walk in to speak with our experts, over a cup of tea in our relaxed setting. The money raised by UNW's team will make an immediate difference. Thank you to everyone involved."

Anne Hallowell, Audit and Assurance partner at UNW, said: "We thoroughly enjoyed our partnership with Maggie's in the first twelve months and are delighted to have taken it into a second year. Our colleagues and their families have seen first-hand the remarkable work that Maggie's does for those affected by cancer.

"Our teams have regularly gone above and beyond in the last ten years to fundraise for our charity partners and £100,000 is a truly phenomenal amount to gift out to deserving local causes."

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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

PETER CROMARTY

Managing Director of CCBS Group.

November marks the end of the 8th year of CCBS Group. As the world of finance recovers from global factors relating to the pandemic, Brexit, and the war in Ukraine to name a few, this was always going to be a transitional year for the business.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

In 2020 we set out some clear plans about where we wanted to be over the next three years, and whilst this period has been affected by the global factors, we have in general achieved what we set out to achieve in the first two years. We also decided to strengthen the team, and Steven Foley joined us fresh from a 36-year stint with Natwest Bank. He has broadened our offering, brought stronger focus to some of our processes and will spearhead our client development strategy whilst also working closely with strategic partners of the business. We also found a new home and relocated to St Peter's Basin and have settled quickly into our new surroundings. So, all in all I think we have got to where we wanted to be this year which is testament to the quality of the team here.

Has everything gone according to plan?

We have been working with a client this year and the chairman said something I will remember going forward in relation to business plans. Point 1 – It will be wrong: Point 2 – they will fail at some part of it. This year has probably been the toughest one yet. We scaled up, moved premises but then found trading really tough in the early part of the year. This was probably affected by factors we have no control over, but we definitely found it difficult to get deals 'over the line'. As a business community we need to get back to the focussed approach of delivering for our clients. I am, for one, not convinced of the new working practices of 'flexible working' being conducive to that goal and advisory businesses need to realise that and take corrective action.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

The pandemic has presented many challenges to our clients, especially with how the funding marketplace has changed throughout. I feel we have had a pretty strong handle on which funders have appetite and more importantly able to deliver, so we have worked really hard to keep our clients and professional intermediaries abreast of the changes. This continues to change so we are staying even closer to our panel of funders.

What are you most proud of this year?

We will finish this year with more than 15% fee income growth in the year. As I said above, there was a period in the year where I did not think we would get there. To achieve that shows the tenacity of the CCBS team to deliver for our clients. We have also collaborated with our professional intermediaries to achieve some outstanding results. This level of collaboration shows the North East business community at its best.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

I was lucky enough to be invited to play golf at Royal Liverpool Golf Club which will be the home of the 151st Open next summer. It's always great to play a course on the Open roster, and to play well made it even better.

Describe 2022 in three words...

Turbulent. Transitional. Bruno.

What are your aims for 2023?

We have grown the team and settled into our new offices, and so next year will be to build on the success of 2022, with particular focus on driving efficiencies into what we do. That will allow us to better service our client base, professional intermediaries, and prospective clients. It certainly seems that we are going to be busy.

www.ccbsg.co.uk E: peter @ccbsg.co.uk M: 07715 409386





TaperedPlus reflects growth ambitions with finance director appointment

Roofing design specialists TaperedPlus has appointed Stuart Mitton to the newly created role of finance director.

The move underlines its growth ambitions and lays strong foundations on which to take the Stockton-on-Tees headquartered business to the next level.

Stuart, who will head up its established finance team, will provide strategic and financial guidance as well as developing policies and procedures ensuring sound financial management and controls.

Since it was founded in 2014 by directors, Aman Chahal and Rob Vass, TaperedPlus has grown to become a national leader in the provision of flat roof design and roofing materials.



North East LEP welcomes new members to the Board

The North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP) has announced the appointment of two new Board members.

Colin Hewitt and Phil Redman will join the Board as non-executive directors as the North East LEP moves forward with a refreshed role and a continued commitment to create more and better jobs.

Colin Hewitt is a Senior Partner of Ward Hadaway LLP. He is a lawyer of some 40 years standing and his expertise covers both commercial and public sector work.

Phil Redman is Area Director of Mott MacDonald. He brings with him a wealth of business experience and a deep passion for the North East.



Profile building agency Moja appoints Operations Director

Newcastle-based Moja, an agency working with business owners and senior executives to raise their profiles, has appointed Rachael Cook as Operations Director.

Moja was launched in March this year with its Newcastle office and is working with clients throughout the UK to get them known in their industries and beyond. Moja aren't your traditional PR agency and work with clients on a bespoke basis to raise their profiles via award wins, podcasts, books, media, thought leadership and networking.

This is the third time Rachael is back working with Moja Founder and CEO, Sophie Milliken.

Sophie said: "I'm super excited to be working with Rachael again. Everyone who has worked with her knows her commitment to excellence and in this new role, she will be instrumental in ensuring our clients are well looked after."

On joining Moja, Rachael said "I've admired Moja since it launched and have been waiting for the right opportunity to join this dynamic team. Moja are really innovative within the region and you can see how much impact they are having already with their clients being spotted everywhere. My role will oversee operations ensuring high quality client care and delivery on work."



Fab five join bank groups graduate training programme

North East property, renewable energy and minerals firm The Banks Group is continuing to invest in its workforce by taking five new recruits onto its graduate training programme.

Nathanael Cutts, Kieran Feeney, Sisi Spasova,

James Thompson and Katie Walvin have taken on a range of different roles with the family firm, including energy systems within Renewables, development planning, surveying and communications, and are based across Banks' Durham and Leeds offices.

The scheme offers the new recruits the chance to take on real workplace responsibilities with the support of an experienced team around them and to learn, develop and deliver across a range of disciplines that support Banks' planned and operational projects.



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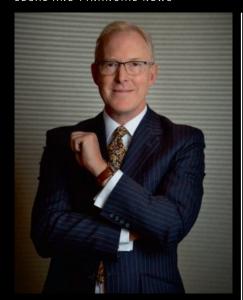


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North East family law firm achieves top rankings in independent legal ranking

Silk Family Law has once again been recognised as one of the leading firms in the north of England by the Chambers UK legal guide 2023, just released.

The firm achieved top-tier status for its family and matrimonial services in the independent research which is based purely on client feedback. Partners, Ian Kennerley and Margaret Simpson also received band one ranking - the highest achievement - and Partners Kim Fellowes and Wayne Lynn and Solicitor, Katie Machin received highly respected band two rankings.

For more than 30 years, Chambers and Partners has identified and ranked the most outstanding law firms and lawyers in over 180 jurisdictions throughout the world.

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.

The firm was recently also recognised as a 'top tier' leading firm in the Legal 500 earlier this month with Partner, Margaret Simpson, awarded one of only two places in the market-leading independent researchers' Hall of Fame.

Partner, Ian Kennerley said: "We could not be more thankful for the skill, commitment and hard work that the team has shown and this accolade cements that.

"A ranking from Chambers demonstrates we have emerged as one of the best in our field. To be recognised by clients as excellent at what we do is a great boost for us all as it means we are getting it right."

Charities joined Muckle LLP to celebrate the 20th anniversary of its Community Fund

Since it was set up in 2002, the Community Fund has awarded £603,370 in grants to 662 charities and organisations across the North of England. But grant giving is just one of the ways Muckle LLP and its people give back to the region. As well as donating 1% of its annual profits to the fund, the awardwinning law firm also gives up to £140,000 worth of free legal advice to charities and community organisations every year.

To mark the 20-year milestone, local charities Success4All, The Recruitment Junction, Oasis Community Housing and The Country Trust joined Muckle LLP recently to celebrate and share their stories of how they have benefited from the fund over the years.

Hazel Ditchburn, Corporate Relationships
Manager at Oasis Community Housing said:
"Muckle LLP is deeply passionate about making
a positive impact on our communities and we
are incredibly fortunate that they continue to
stand with us in our mission to give hope to
people facing homelessness.

"Over the years, they have given up their time to prepare and serve Christmas dinners at our



drop-in centres, headed out at the crack of dawn to take part in rough sleeper counts and provided pro-bono legal advice."

Hugh Welch, Muckle LLP Senior Partner said: "Twenty years is a significant milestone for the fund, and it was important to us that we used this opportunity to celebrate with some of the charities we've been lucky enough to work with over the years.

"Through the Community Fund, we have been able to build lasting relationships that have had an impact on not only the charities but also our firm and the people who work here."

20 Years to £100M: A North East Success Story

A Newcastle-based law firm has reported record turnover despite exceptionally challenging times in its sector.

Legal giant Winn Group has grown turnover from £54M in the previous year to just shy of £100M (£97.9M).

The milestone figure is the biggest leap in annual turnover since the company was founded in 2002. This momentous achievement follows the recent introduction of Whiplash Reforms which have forced many competitors out of the market.

However, even with the Personal Injury sector in turmoil and the subsequent shrinking market, Winn Group has emerged triumphant and stronger than ever as rivals either decline, exit the market, or go bust.

Winn Group CEO Chris Birkett said: "Even throughout the pandemic, as a group, we have been working hard in all areas of the business. As a result of new contracts won, our work volumes have more than doubled from before the start of the pandemic."

The growth allows the company to continue its recruitment drive with aims to double headcount, bringing more job opportunities to

the region and acquiring new premises close to its headquarters to house its growing team, which currently sits at 530. Conducting huge volumes of claims, coupled with contract wins and acquisition of new business streams across a range of the group's businesses are the driving forces behind the company's impressive growth and turnover.

Birkett continues: "We have recently expanded our premises and located 75 members of staff into a new purpose-built office space. Our sales pipeline opportunities continue to grow and 2022 is proving to be another good year for growth."

The company's record-breaking success comes as the firm celebrates 20 years in business, with an impressive eight brands now under the Winn Group umbrella

Winn Group Executive Chairman Jeff Winn said: "There always needs to be evolution in any business, so it gives me a great sense of pride to see how Winn Group has become a major player in the industry over the last 20 years.

"Growing to encapsulate a number of brands that combine to deliver the best one-stop-shop in accident and claims management, the vision is to continue the rapid growth in provision of non-fault insurance and claims services to insurance brokers and the public."



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GENDER CRITICAL BELIEFS

In fulfilment of my Masters' project at Northumbria University I wrote a dissertation on the subject of gender norms and gender dysphoria and how this has translated into employment law. Whilst this was an academic exercise, I identified the potential issues for employers and employees and this article aims to inform and advise you on this subject.

Gender identity is an evolving concept, and its importance has gained more traction in recent years. The stereotypical gender roles have come to be broken down and people are now able to express themselves more freely.

Changes can be seen in every aspect of life, but in the context of employment, this has altered the position on things like dress codes as well as the discrimination provisions.

Case Law

Whilst many attitudes towards gender diversity have become more favourable, the recent case of Maya Forstater v CDG Europe [2021] WL 02365047 has highlighted that there is still a strong argument, backed by religion and biology, which supports the preservation of sex-based rules. Beliefs that one's sex is unchangeable and a lack of belief in gender identity have been determined by the Tribunal to be protected against discrimination via section 10 of the Equality Act (EqA) 2010 (the protected characteristic of religious or philosophical belief). Evident from other cases

after Forstater including Ms A Bailey v Stonewall Equality Ltd and others 2202172/2020 and the views expressed by others commenting on the subject, these views are somewhat widely held. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under section 7 EqA and the recent case of Mrs R Taylor v Jaguar Land Rover Ltd [2018] 1304471 suggests that this extends to include those who are non-binary too.

As a result of the Tribunal decisions, employers have obligations to both their transgender/ non-binary employees and to those with gender critical views, and striking a balance in these instances is bound to be difficult, as the two are inherently opposing.

Key points for employers

Difficulties are likely to arise for employers in supporting gender diverse staff, particularly in relation to right to work checks, implementing dress codes and the facilities offered to staff. When checking any employee's identity, ensuring only relevant documentation is requested and maintaining confidentiality is

paramount. Rules should be the same for all so as to preserve equality. Flexible dress code policies are recommended so that employees can adopt an appearance that best represents their identity. Any specific dress rules should ensure that there is a legitimate business aim in support of them. Single-sex bathrooms and spaces are likely to indirectly target non-binary staff however employers only have a duty to provide the facilities that they reasonably can. Though the individual circumstances for each employee should always be considered.

Issues may also arise where employees are expressing gender critical views, the way in which this is done is key to how employers are able to react. Case law has made clear that simply expressing views of this nature on the likes of social media should not have an impact on one's job. Expression within the workplace or the targeting of other employees on the other hand is likely to justify some disciplinary action. Again, this is very circumstance specific and therefore it is key that legal advice is sought before any action is taken so as to avoid discrimination claims.

Employers should maintain sensitivity throughout, those who are transgender and non-binary are likely to be experiencing/have experienced great difficulty with their identity and therefore ease in your approach will be welcomed. Employees should also aim to be sensitive in the way their validly held beliefs are expressed in the workplace. In the interests of a positive working environment for all, respect for other's views and/or way of living should be preserved.

Anna Ramsden, Trainee Solicitor CLR Law, hello@clrlaw.co.uk

PREVENTING FUTURE UNCERTAINTY

Lydia McCaslin, Head of Wills, Probate and Trusts at Mincoffs Solicitors and a member of Solicitors for the Elderly (SFE), advises on putting legal protections in place for the future.

Many of us might prefer to pretend it's not true, but the fact is that getting older is inevitable.

While there isn't much you can do to avoid ageing, there are plans that can be put in place to make sure you avoid any nasty surprises for you or your loved ones later down the line.

Making a will sooner rather than later gives you peace of mind for the future. Without a will, an estate will be distributed according to intestacy rules, which could be very different to your wishes and even leave a surviving spouse or partner in a significantly different financial position. A solicitor can advise you and draft your will to be tax efficient and reduce the risk of a claim being made against your estate after your death.

Those worried about the uncertainty of the



future may also wish to consider a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA), a document which allows you to choose someone (the Attorney) to make decisions about your affairs if you are not able to do so for yourself. There are two types of LPA; one covering property and financial affairs, the other dealing with health and welfare matters. While it is possible that you could make Lasting Powers of Attorney and never need to use them, if you do lose mental capacity and don't have Lasting Powers of Attorney in place, an Order from the Court of Protection may be required – which can be costly, complex and time consuming and you will have no control over

who makes decisions for you.

These are not decisions to be taken lightly and that is why it is so important to take the advice of legal professionals. Their wealth of experience and training means a solicitor can advise on the documents you may need and draft them to suit your particular circumstances so you can rest assured that your affairs are in order.

For further advice from Mincoffs' Wills, Probate and Trusts team, contact Lydia McCaslin on lmccaslin@mincoffs.co.uk or 0191 212 7768.

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CANCER RESEARCH HITS THE FAIRWAYS

Kidd & Spoor Solicitors sponsor charity golf day at Tynemouth Golf Club.





As many of you reading this will appreciate, cancer touches a lot of families. Two things are of huge importance when it comes to cancer...diagnosing it early, and research to cure or prevent it.

Any sort of research into major disease is incredibly expensive, and that's why it's so important for companies and individuals to help raise as much money as possible to help with that research.

Which is exactly what The Eve Appeal is all about. They are the UK's leading national charity which helps fund research and raise awareness of gynaecological cancer. The world-leading research that they support is ambitious and challenging but they have one simple vision...a future where gynaecological cancers are a disease of the past.

And it's wonderful to report that Kidd & Spoor Solicitors in Whitley Bay, one of the oldest regional law firms, specialising in Wills, estate planning, family law and conveyancing, has teamed up with Tynemouth Golf Club to raise money to help this really important charity further its cancer research.

Over the last two years, Kidd & Spoor have sponsored four golf days at Tynemouth Golf Club in aid of The Eve Appeal. Thanks to its generosity, over £6,000 has been raised for this charity which is very close to the heart of many at Tynemouth Golf Club.

Carol Brodie is a very active member of the golf club and this is her story...

"In 2012 my sister Lynn developed breast cancer and the following year I also got breast cancer. We underwent surgery and a course of chemotherapy. We were aware of the BRCA (BReast CAncer) mutation and, because there was a history of cancer in our family, we got tested. Unfortunately we both carry the faulty gene, as does our sister Gayle. The decision to have

a double mastectomy and hysterectomy was easier for Lynn and I to make but a very stark and difficult decision for Gayle, a healthy person but still a carrier of the faulty gene. However, she also decided to take preventative measures and go ahead with surgery.

In 2020 I developed ovarian cancer, even though I had undergone preventative surgery. I had another round of chemotherapy followed by surgery and I'm now on incredible tablets which, research has discovered, are particularly successful for those who carry the BRCA mutation. My sister Lynn's breast cancer has also returned and she is presently going through chemo again. Needless to say that my desire to raise awareness of the BRCA gene is something which is extremely close to my heart.

My sisters and I have eight children between us who are now reaching an age where they would like to discover if they have the faulty gene. My hope for the future is that investment into research will help to find other alternatives for younger people who can be forced into making drastic life decisions when finding out that they carry the gene. Carriers of the faulty gene can now be monitored and research is looking at prevention for future generations together with development of treatment and new drugs to aid survival."

We're very happy to report that Carol is doing well and, yes, she's back on the golf course and is as competitive as ever.

Noel Dilks, a consultant with Kidd & Spoor said, "We're absolutely delighted to support The Eve Appeal. Everyone who participated donated generously and the events were great fun. Tynemouth Golf Club were also very helpful and supportive. The Eve Appeal is a fantastic charity and we hope to further support it in the future." Well done to Kidd & Spoor.

As we mentioned at the start, cancer touches a lot of families...but research is finding new ways to prevent and diagnose the disease. However, funding that research is critical.

For more information about The Eve Appeal, log onto their website, www.eveappeal.org.uk







If you would like some legal advice, the best idea is to contact Kidd & Spoor Law. You can call them on 0191 297 0011 or email wb@kiddspoorlaw.co.uk

You'll also find out exactly what they do by going to their website www.kiddspoorlaw.co.uk

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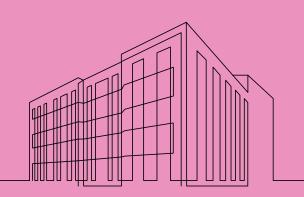
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WHY A LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY IS A GOOD IDEA FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Through many years of working with both commercial and individual clients, the Sweeney Miller Law team recognise that specialist legal advice for each often crosses over. A good example is the importance of having a business Lasting Power of Attorney.

As the owner of a business, regardless of its size, it is important to consider what would happen if you could no longer make decisions about its day to day running. For example, this may be because:

- You develop a medical condition that means you are incapacitated;
- You have an accident which means that you are temporarily unable to make decisions;
- You are abroad or working remotely and are unable to sign off on important matters.

To protect the interests of both you and your business, you should consider putting in place a business Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA). Something that the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated was that we really don't know what is 'around the corner'.

What is a business Lasting Power of Attorney?

A business LPA is a legal document which allows you to formally appoint people (your Attorneys) to help look after your affairs by allowing them to make decisions regarding the financial aspects of your business. It can be used by your Attorneys as soon as it is registered with the Office of the Public Guardian.

Who should consider making a business LPA?

Anyone who owns a business whether as a sole trader, a member of a partnership or a director of a limited company should consider putting in place a business LPA.

It is however important to check any partnership agreement and/ or the company's articles of association (where applicable) as these may already include provision for what should happen should one of the partners/directors become incapacitated.

Choosing a business Attorney

The Attorney(s) should be someone aged 18 or over who you trust to make decisions on your behalf. They need to understand the nature of your business so that they can step in and carry out key duties, such as authorising the payment of bills, paying salaries of employees and acting as signatory for important documents such as leases and contracts. It may also be prudent to consider appointing at least one replacement Attorney to step in should your original Attorney(s) be unable or unwilling to act.

How should my business Attorneys be appointed?

If you're appointing more than one person, you must decide if you need them to make decisions either:

- Jointly This means that your Attorneys must agree unanimously on each and every decision. It also means that if one Attorney dies or can no longer act then all your Attorneys become unable to act. This means that your LPA would stop working unless you appoint at least one replacement Attorney; or
- Jointly and severally This means that your Attorneys can make decisions independently on their own, or collectively.

How long does it take to make a business LPA?

It is currently taking up to 20 weeks to register an LPA. This may take longer if there are mistakes in the application. To avoid any unnecessary delays with the registration, it is important to get specialist legal advice when considering and making an LPA application.

What happens if I don't make a business LPA?

Commenting on the challenges faced if there is no business LPA in place, Sweeney Miller Law's private client specialist Solicitor, Gemma Brown said: "If you're unable to make business decisions yourself and do not have a business LPA in place then it may become necessary to make an application to the Court of Protection for the appointment of a Deputy. This process can be time consuming and expensive. It is therefore vital to be prepared by getting specialist advice about setting up a business LPA to ensure that the business is not impacted or held up."

Expert team

As well as offering expert estate planning and LPA advice, Sweeney Miller Law also has a team of Company and Commercial specialists, enabling us to advise on the best options for both you and your business. To find out more, get in touch for a no obligation discussion about whether a business Lasting Power of Attorney is right for you. Please visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk.

You can call us on 0191 568 2050 (Sunderland office) or 0345 900 5401 (Newcastle office). Alternatively, Gemma Brown can be contacted via email at gemma@sweeneymiller.co.uk



...vital to be prepared by getting specialist advice about setting up a business LPA...



A BONFIRE OF EU EMPLOYMENT LAWS?

Helen Scott is a Senior Associate Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Helen considers the implications of the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Repeal) Bill on employers

The UK's 47-year membership within the EU resulted in fundamental changes to employment law, but it is perhaps unsurprising that, following our legal withdrawal from the EU, that an assessment of these laws takes place. This "assessment" now has a legislative instrument, the Retained EU Law (Revocation and Repeal) Bill ("the Bill") and it promises a short life span for the EU laws which remain part of UK legislation.

What are the key components of the Bill?

The headline from the Bill is that the majority of laws which derive from EU law will expire ("sunset") on 31 December 2023 unless it is otherwise preserved. Importantly, this covers Regulations (laws made by Ministers) and EU Regulations which emanated from the EU directly, as well as the content of the various Treaties which governed the UK's membership of the EU (including Article 157 which has been used in various equal pay cases).

The Bill also removes the supremacy of EU law and provides courts with the authority to depart from any retained EU case law, particularly if it restricts the development of domestic law.

However, the Bill also gives Ministers significant power over the form that these laws can take if they are retained. Section 15 of the Bill allows Ministers to restate an area of retained EU law, but to use concepts or words which are different from that of the original piece of legislation and to make changes to, for example, improve the clarity or accessibility of the law in question. Ministers can also revoke and replace any piece of retained EU law with "such a provision [it] considers appropriate and to achieve the same



or similar objectives". As has been noted in parliamentary debates on the Bill, the impact of these provisions is that parliamentary oversight of potential significant changes to legislation would be minimal.

What laws could go?

As mentioned in the Explanatory Notes of the Bill, the Government anticipates reforms to 2,400 pieces of retained EU law. Most notably, regarding employment law, this could include:

- The Working Time Regulations 1998 (including the right to rest breaks and annual leave);
- The Agency Workers Regulations 2010;
- The Part time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000;
- Fixed term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002;
- Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (otherwise known as TUPE).

What can employers expect until 31 December 2023?

While it is unlikely that any government would allow the right to annual leave to "sunset", it

is not fanciful to suggest that the Government may wish to make incremental changes to other areas, such as TUPE. However, we await the Government's position on any specific piece of legislation.

It also appears unlikely that we are going to see a stripping down of workers' rights, particularly as this could lead to sanctions under the UK – EU Trade and Co–operation Agreement. However, the Bill is clearly not looking to strengthen any rights either, as Section 15 expressly prevents any revocation or replacement of retained law increasing "regulatory burden".

The Bill was introduced under Liz Truss' Government. While Rishi Sunak is unlikely to completely abandon the aims of this Bill, it will be interesting to see whether his government seek to provide greater certainty as to the process for deciding which laws are retained or whether they would seek to extend the deadline for laws to be retained or repealed until 2026.

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

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MUCKLE GOES PLATINUM WITH PRESTIGIOUS INVESTORS IN PEOPLE ACCREDITATION



Leading regional law firm for businesses, Muckle LLP has been awarded Platinum status by the internationally recognised accreditation scheme Investors in People, placing it 2nd in the world rankings of legal activities sector employers.

Investors in People (IIP) works with over 14,000 organisations across 75 countries and recognises those performing at the very highest levels of people management practice, with only 3% of organisations in the Investors in People accredited network of companies achieving Platinum status.

Survey results revealed that 100% of its people agreed that they shared the firm's values and highlighted solid leadership as a strength.

The Investors in People assessor reported that there was "clear evidence of strong leadership that was based on open and honest communications."

Jason Wainwright, managing partner at

Muckle said: "We're thrilled to achieve the "We invest in people" Platinum accreditation. To be placed second in the world in the legal activities sector and 69th overall worldwide is a huge achievement and a credit to every single person working at Muckle.

"As a team, we focus on our four core values of trust, teamwork, responsibility, and care. That approach has allowed us to create a people-focused environment where our people are happy and feel valued delivering a high-quality experience to our customers.

"Every single person at Muckle is involved in supporting each other and doing their best to make work better, but we won't be resting on our laurels - there's always something to learn, so we're using the feedback received to keep making changes, keep improving and keep moving forward."

Having previously achieved the Investors in People Gold Award and Health and Wellbeing accreditation, Muckle has built on past praise received for its values-led culture.

Paul Devoy, CEO of Investors in People, said: "We'd like to congratulate Muckle. Platinum accreditation on "We invest in people" is a remarkable effort for any organisation and places Muckle in fine company with a select group of organisations that understand the value of people." Investors In People also highlighted the firm's commitment to diversity and the local community, with the approach to Environmental, Social and Governance responsibilities being described as a "key feature of the business" that provided "an authentic, ethical purpose that further connected people to Muckle and its leadership."

The assessor commented that Muckle's sustainability and community scores are what they'd expect in a charity, not in a commercial law firm.

The Platinum accreditation requires businesses to show continuous improvement against a wide-ranging framework over 3 years. Assessors collected feedback from Muckle employees, reviewed documents and evaluation metrics, and held one-to-one sessions. They gave a total score of 817, which is 89 above the average IIP benchmark and places the firm 69th of all 50,000 organisations in the global Investors in People network, and in the top two of all organisations in the legal activities sector taking part across 75 countries.

For more information about Muckle LLP's people-first approach to business and associated accreditations, visit the Muckle website or call 0191 211 7777.

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MUCKLE LLP STRENGTHENS PRIVATE CLIENT TEAM TO MEET GROWING DEMAND

Newcastle-based leading law firm Muckle LLP has further expanded the support it provides to individuals and clients across the North East and Cumbria following a successful three-year growth strategy.

In the last 12 months, Muckle LLP reported an impressive 72% growth in its Agriculture, Estates and Private Client practice. And as one of the largest specialist legal teams in the North of England – with a combined 143 years' of experience and expertise - it has developed longstanding relationships with prestigious rural clients across the UK.

The firm has now appointed three additional private client experts, taking the number of legal specialists to 12. Rachael Stephenson and Tim Boardman join as Partners, and they will be joined in January 2023 by Associate Solicitor Winter Addis. All three have experience working together on behalf of farmers, landed estates, trusts, charities and private clients.

David Towns, Head of Muckle LLP's Agriculture, Estates and Private Client team said: "These strategic, senior hires demonstrate our increasing commitment and success in dealing with some of the most complex estates and succession planning legal work.

"I am delighted that we achieved 72% growth over the last 12 months, which testifies to our personable yet expert approach and enables us to invest in further growth. Rachael, Tim and Winter are well-known, highly respected lawyers committed to providing an exceptional client experience. I am hugely confident that our business plans will deliver continued success over the next few years."

Rachael Stephenson, 13 years qualified, has a strong background in all non-contentious tax, trust and higher-level estate planning. She often acts for clients with complex family arrangements, such as cases of vulnerable beneficiaries, second marriages, High and Ultra-High Net Worth clients, business owners and those with cross-jurisdictional estates. Experienced in advising on charitable and private trust matters, Rachael regularly acts as a professional trustee of will trusts, lifetime

settlements and personal injury award trusts. She also acts as an attorney for incapacitated clients.

Rachael is recognised by The Legal 500 UK and Chambers and Partners for being a "breath of fresh air", for "providing no-nonsense, straightforward advice" and for having a "vast amount of experience and technical ability, combined with a good understanding of what her clients need".

Tim Boardman, 19 years qualified, advises clients on estates and succession planning, including individuals and trustees on managing landed estates and agricultural holdings. Tim has worked with landed estates and families with significant agricultural business assets, a specialist in succession planning for families with private business interests. His expertise includes wills and trusts, estates, Power of Attorney and Court of Protection Deputyship Applications.

Rachael said: "I am delighted to join such a well-respected and nationally prominent legal firm. The growth and success of the agriculture and private client team are down to the team's specialist expertise, in-depth knowledge, and understanding of rural clients and communities."

Tim added: "Being part of such a skilled, growing, forward-looking team is exciting and I am looking forward to helping the team grow the business further."

To find out more visit www.muckle-llp.com/ what-we-do/sectors/agriculture-estates-andrural-property

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LEGAL FIRM DOUBLES IN SIZE THANKS TO ACQUISITION

One of the North East's fastestgrowing law firms has doubled in size following its first acquisition.

Grey-Smith Legal, which is based in Skelton, North Yorkshire, specialises in residential and commercial conveyancing, opened in 2021 and has since gone on to open a further office in Spennymoor.

Grey-Smith Legal has now acquired 25-yearold Cochrane's Law Firm, which serves the Stockton region, taking on its 15 members of staff. Dale Smith, Founder and Director of Grey-Smith Legal, said: "We have grown quickly since opening the doors to clients in early 2021, and the acquisition of Cochrane's Law Firm is a proud moment in our journey so far.

"Jim Cochrane and his team bring vast amounts of knowledge and experience, which will greatly support the growth and development of these two brands in the years ahead.

"It has always been our ambition to be one of the North East's leading law firms in relation to conveyancing and private client work, and our focus on providing an exceptional client service will remain as our core ambition."

As well as retaining all employees, Grey-Smith Legal will also take on the two Cochrane's offices in Stockton and Billingham to ensure continuity of service for clients and staff.

Jim Cochrane, Founder and Director of Cochrane's, said: "Our two firms are similar in size and make-up, so it made sense to come together to create a larger firm, able to provide a comprehensive legal service to local communities as well as further afield.

"My staff and I are looking forward to working with the Grey-Smith team and feel that exciting times are ahead with the extra manpower, skills and investment that this deal will bring."

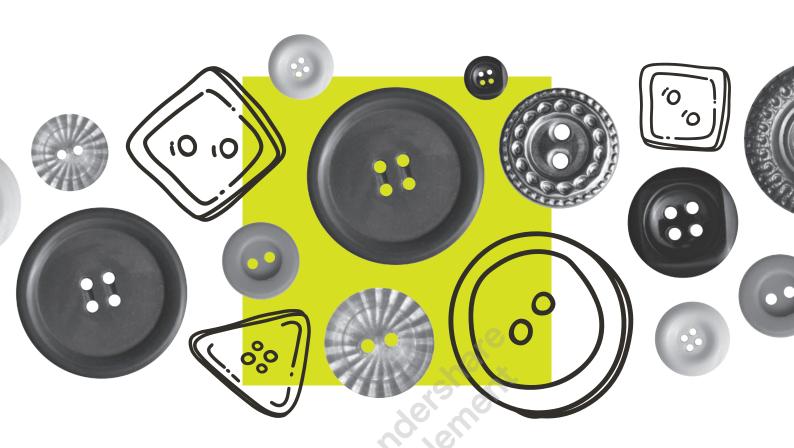
Grey-Smith Legal is expecting to see revenue in

the next financial year exceed £2.5 million and will continue to grow its colleague base from 25 to 40 accounts.

Dale added: "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."

Grey-Smith Legal is part of The SDDE Smith Group, a portfolio of property related businesses based in the North East, striving to push boundaries and support local communities to create better places to live, work and stay.

For more information about Grey-Smith Legal and its range of services, visit grey-smithlegal.com



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Hay & Kilner welcomes guests to new Lumen headquarters

More than 100 clients, contacts and friends of North East law firm Hay & Kilner have come together to celebrate the practice's move into its new state-of-the-art headquarters.

Hay & Kilner has taken over the fifth floor Boulevard within the Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter and offers iconic views over the surrounding cityscape.

Managing partner Jonathan Waters says:
"This has been a real landmark year for us
and it was great to be able to mark our move

































A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...



MARK HIPKIN

Partner/Head of Civil and Personal Injury Litigation – Alderson Law LLP.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

I set out to give my clients the best service possible in complex injury claim cases mainly for motorcyclists, scooter riders and cyclists; grow our business and make more clients, old and new, aware of what we can offer and enjoy more time out on one of my bikes.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Yes and no. I thought the first two years following Covid in March 2020 were busy but 2022 has been even busier than that! This has been the same for most professional people in my experience, both inside and outside of the law. I always think that service to your clients and raising the firm's profile are cultural/ second nature characteristics rather than being intentionally or consciously striven for. Getting on my bike however has very much taken, "a back seat" (sorry!) although I did have some life affirming runouts especially to the Scottish Borders several times this year, sometimes when it was even too hot to get on the bike. Can you remember that time?!

How has the ongoing Covid crisis affected your business and how have you mitigated this?

When you look back at those awful times from March 2020, no one really knew what the outcome was going to be. Most professional people adapt to any changes in society/the law and Solicitors are no different. The current uncertainty, nationally and internationally, is always seen by the media as a worry but our day jobs still need to be done to the best

of our ability. During Covid there were many challenges in terms of accessibility to the courts and in being able to process cases but I found that mostly settlement agreements were better able to be negotiated if everyone was realistic. After everything has returned "to normal", there have been different problems in everyone trying to catch up with delays in court and expert's availability but I what do know is that we have never been busier!

What are you most proud of this year?

Bringing two of the most complex, challenging and seemingly insoluble cases to a head, through patience and perseverance. One particular biker case involved four different court jurisdictions. My client's comment to me after having settled the case, two days before Trial, that he could "hold his head high", made it all worthwhile.

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

"Stick to your principles" and "Never give up".

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

An ability to balance the bigger picture with the detail needed to get there.

Mark Hipkir

What has been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

A Law Society Dinner at the Savoy in London when I was The Newcastle Law Society President. The Speaker was Clive Anderson. A hoot!

Describe 2022 in three words...

Intense. Insightful. Successful.

What does the remainder of the year hold?

That depends. Lawyers' answer! I can have the most well thought out plans for a case or project which could be changed next time I receive a letter, call or email. Hopefully no such "challenges" and then a restful Christmas & New Year with my family.

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From family roots to football boots

Football highlights are on the cards as a north east PR agency has sponsored a local under 7's football team.

Keith Newman who runs Highlights PR from Ulgham near Morpeth heard that Willington Quay Saints were looking for a sponsor and a series of personal circumstances from his past led to him firmly hitting the back of the net to help the team.

Keith heard about the sponsorship opportunity after an SOS was put out by the North Tyneside Business Forum and the request triggered a lot of thoughts which led to him sponsoring the boys and girls in the Under 7's team.

"I'd just attended the funeral of my Uncle Arthur and when I was there, I discovered that he was a coach and fan of the club. There were lots of players paying their respects and it was clear that he was a big part of their football scene," said Keith.

"I then thought about my late dad who was born in a terraced house under the Seven Arches Viaduct in Willington Quay which was subsequently bombed during World War Two and then the connections came thick and fast. Myself and my sister were born in Willington Quay Maternity Hospital and my very first job was in a clothing factory in the town too. There were far too many connections not to sponsor the team. Someone somewhere was giving me a lot of reasons to help the kids."



Matt Baker joins County Durham tractor club rally for Sir Bobby

Television presenter and producer, Matt Baker, joined a County Durham tractor club as it raised £2,000 for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, which is part of Newcastle Hospitals Charity.

Flass Vale Vintage Tractor Club holds tractor rallies in County Durham annually to support local charities and last year chose to raise funds for Sir Bobby's Foundation after a number of its <u>members were affected</u> by cancer.

They were joined at the event by Countryfile star and County Durham native, Matt, and the rally will feature in the third series of his hugely popular programme, Our Farm in the Dales.

Alastair Hopps, from Flass Vale Vintage Tractor Club, says: "We're extremely proud of our track record in raising money for local charities. Every year, we try to choose a cause which means something personally to the group and this time around, with a number of us affected by cancer, we were all keen to raise funds for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation.

"We normally host two rallies every year but that wasn't possible this time because of COVID, so we're really pleased to have raised as much as we have. Tractors come from all over the north and we love to see all the different models involved, and especially the older machines. It's a great day out and we were thrilled that Matt could join us."



Healthwatch search for an(unsung) hero

A digital support worker from a Tyneside charity has been awarded a prestigious Healthwatch Star Award for going above and beyond to help older people in the West End of Newcastle.

Kathleen Dickinson (31) from Blaydon works with Search Newcastle and has received the accolade from Healthwatch Newcastle as part of their "Star Award" initiative.

Healthwatch Newcastle champions outstanding health and social care services in the local area. They gather and represent the views and experiences of service users of all ages. They then analyse feedback to spot trends and needs, and work with service providers and commissioners to tailor services to meet the needs of local people. They also celebrate the outstanding achievements of health and social care champions, awarding Healthwatch Star awards to people and services nominated by the public for special recognition.

Search Newcastle, a Benwell based charity that seeks to enhance the lives of people over 50 years of age has run a series of courses to help people get to grips with technology. As part of her role as digital support worker, Kathleen organised a session for older people wishing to find out more about how their mobile phones worked. Healthwatch received a letter saying how much Kathleen had helped them and could she get some recognition for her caring attitude and patience.

Kathleen said "It was a really lovely surprise to be nominated. The charity is there to support people and through initiatives like this we can see the social side of people's lives improving. To think that someone took time out of their day to nominate me is really lovely especially for something as important as digital skills. I'm very pleased and proud."

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CITY LORD MAYOR VISITS KENTON FOOD BANK

The City's Lord Mayor took time out recently to visit Kenton Food bank. The Lord Mayor met volunteers, local supporters, service users and local councillors.

Loree Moran-Wilson, the Food Bank's manager said: ''It was great that the Lord Mayor took time out to visit us to see at first hand the work we do in supporting needy families and households.''

Lord Mayor Karen Robinson said: "I was most impressed with the excellent work Kenton Food Bank does with the support of sponsors and local

residents. It's sad and quite unbelievable, that in 2022 food banks like the one here in Kenton have to exist to meet growing need."

The Food Bank was set up in 2019 and aims to reach needy families across Kenton and beyond. With more than one in three youngsters trapped in child poverty the Food Bank provides food parcels for up to 80 people each week.

Working with Kenton resident Brian Dickinson the food bank is asking for donations like blankets to help challenge soaring energy bills.

Kenton Food Bank has teamed up with the charity, Mental Health Concern, to provide one -to-to one budgeting as well as giving support to those on low-incomes with mental health issues.

Coun Stephen Lambert said: "Kenton Food Bank working with our Welfare Rights project and Citizens Advice is playing an important role in supporting those in need and helping with the cost-of-living crisis in our part of the city."

177 Kirkwood Avenue, Kenton, Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 2BE Contact Loree on 07540 272 051



Start Christmas in aid of Sir Bobby

The spirit of Christmas is alive and well in Newcastle as one of Tyneside's favourite festive traditions is about to entertain and raise money for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation.

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

Organiser Jonathan Wallis is looking forward to the show which is full of Christmas songs, readings, and comedy.

"As ever, we are keeping the performers a closely guarded secret as it adds mystery and excitement to an already fantastic night. I will say however that each year the concert gets better and better."

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

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

Christmas at the Cathedral will take place on 15th December. Doors open 6.30pm, start 7pm. Tickets are now available from the Theatre Royal box office on 0844 811 2121.



Mindstars provide young people with positive mind set

A North Shields organisation that supports the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people has been awarded funding which will help hundreds of families cope with the stress and anxiety associated with poor mental health.

Rebecca Hetherington and Marisa May set up Mindstars in 2020 following their own personal and professional experiences of mental health. They realised that there was a gap in children's mental health provision and decided to do what they could themselves to make a difference to children in the area.

Mindstars have seen demand for their work escalate and they have risen to the challenge by adapting, creating a Hub in the heart of North Shields, and creating activities and workshops to ensure that help is available to every family that needs it.

Now, thanks to funding from the National Lottery and the NHS Primary Care Networks in North Shields and Wallsend, they are running a new three year long mental health programme. This will benefit 40 children each week over a rolling ten-week period who will receive full support in psychoeducation and give them the tools that they need as well as support for their parents or guardians.

"Having the parents involved in the programme is vital, they need support on how to manage situations just as much as the children. It is this full family approach that will create long lasting change and reduce the mental health crisis they are facing," said Marisa.

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 would make 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 further vocational and employability training before seeing a gap in the market for producing high quality performing arts qualifications and training.

Steve was introduced to SCL in early spring 2022, they gave him feedback that his programmes were some of the very best they had seen as an education subcontract. As a result, SCL have asked LEAD to deliver a substantial amount of work nationwide with a fully funded study programme meaning that his network of performing and creative arts courses will grow exponentially.

From humble beginnings setting up the business on his mother's coffee



table six years ago, Steve now has around 250 students and forecasts 500 students for the 23-24 academic year. He has amazing employees and over 50 contractors working on the LEAD study programme across the UK, all with exceptional industry experience.



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NORTH EAST CHARITY LEADS ITS NATIONAL NETWORK IN A NEW WAY OF WORKING TO SHOW PEOPLE IT CARES



A North-East based charity is taking part in a trail-blazing pilot to benefit its clients with extended hours and services and its staff with an innovative way of working that is believed will positively impact on their wellbeing and performance.

Spearheaded by CEO Alison Dunn, Citizens Advice Gateshead is the first one in the national Citizens Advice Network to lead the way with the new model of working.

This model will allow us to challenge traditional ways of working and the 9 to 5 model of delivering services which throughout the pandemic we discovered is broken for our clients, as it is too restrictive for their needs in some cases. So. the new rota includes the team working 80% of their hours within an extended parameter of delivery hours that will benefit clients who struggle to make appointments between 9 and 5 on weekdays, for 100% of their salary. This, over time, will enable the charity to better meet the needs of clients at times that suit them. Alison said: "This is an exciting, although initially challenging, trial for us implement to see if there is a better, long term, operating model for Citizens Advice Gateshead, which allows both an extension of hours for services to benefit our clients and a better, healthier way of working for our team.

"This Four Day Week model will allow us to be more accessible to our clients, which our funders welcome, and grants our team more time to have more flexibility with family and out of work commitments, leading to greater enthusiasm and productivity in their work.

"An immediate benefit to our clients other

than extended hours of service, and over time the introduction of more services, is that their interaction with us will undoubtably be with a Citizens Advice Gateshead team member who is less stressed by work, more productive, and more focused on giving the qualified, quality help we are so well known for.

"A further benefit is that it will remove challenges for those who feel excluded from our services and not just because we can't reach them geographically. They don't want (or can't) see us through the day, they are at work, or at the school gates, or at the hospital with their sick relatives, they need (and deserve) a more flexible service from us

"We will be monitoring the pilot closely, based on feedback from the clients, funders and the team along with facts that have been collated on what we expect will be an improvement in service."

In a recent staff survey, over 90% of staff were in favour of taking part in the trial Paul Oliver, Corporate Services Director at Citizens Advice Gateshead, said: "The great benefit is that with our increased staff engagement, services to clients will be more accessible later into the evening and at weekends. We believe that this is critical at this time in ensuring our services reach as many people as possible and we expect to see that the six months of a different approach has boosted not only our service delivery to our clients but also made us into a more agile and responsive organisation.

"The response in general has been very positive. It is important to us that our staff get down time and that their health and wellbeing is a priority, so this is a natural change to make if it proves to support that.

"The four-day week also has other positive impacts on society and the community, including reducing the impact on the environment, balancing of gender inequality and potentially increasing life expectancy."

Citizens Advice Gateshead is one of just 70

UK based organisations that have joined the national 4-Day Week trial, where they get support, advice and access to mentoring from companies who have successfully completed the trial already. Having onboarded the trial in July, the charity initial scheduled a six month trial, but because of the positive impact seen to date, the trial has been extended until March.

Staff feedback to date includes quotes such as: "So far it's great for me, the three days off is fantastic and I find that I have no issue at all hitting my target, I think that little bit of pressure knowing I must fit it into less time actually makes me more productive."

"I have really enjoyed it so far and have definitely felt more rested. I think knowing when your day off is and being able to plan time helps, so having fixed days is a positive."

"My work/life balance has improved so much! Now I can spend my weekends doing things I enjoy, knowing that I have a weekday to meal plan, clean and do any life admin. I have found that I'm sleeping better too, and getting just as much work done each week, if not more."

"We have clients who try to call us out of hours, sometimes as late as 8pm so working more flexibly will help us to give them the support they need at a time that suits them better."

"The four-day week has had a positive impact on the team who are all pulling together and there seems to be a lot more teamwork and sharing the admin duties. This means that staff are able to prioritise speaking with clients, which has seen an improvement in first contact success rates."

"Coming to work rested and refreshed after an extra day to recover means that clients are receiving the very best from me."

More information on the charity and job opportunities are available on citizensadvicegateshead.org.uk

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Text KITCHEN to 70490
followed by the amount you wish to donate
ie KITCHEN 10 will donate £10

Like us on Facebook for more into @PKNewcastle



WITH A SMALL DONATION YOU CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE TO SOMEONE THIS CHRISTMAS



The People's Kitchen have launched their annual "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign to help bring some much-needed festive cheer this Christmas to the North East's vulnerable people.

From humble beginnings almost 40 years ago, providing soup to homeless people in Newcastle, the demand for The Peoples Kitchens services has dramatically increased. Volunteers prepare, cook, and serve around 200 meals each day - Christmas Day is no exception.

The Charity relies entirely on the generosity and goodwill of the public, local businesses, and communities, who donate food and money. No government funding is received, and they are exclusively volunteer led.

For many people, The People's Kitchen is not only a place to receive a hearty meal but also a sanctuary where they can receive unconditional

friendship in a non-judgemental and caring environment, and benefit from the charity signposting to welfare, medical and housing services.

The "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign asks the kind-hearted North East public to donate five pounds to provide a free hot Christmas dinner to someone less fortunate than themselves. It will also help fund many more meals throughout the cold winter.

Maggie Pavlou, a Trustee of The People's Kitchen said: "We are providing more meals than ever before, and with the rising cost of living, we need more donations to ensure that we can continue to help those people who are in desperate need of our help. We know life is tough for more people this year, so anything you can give will be gratefully received and will make a massive difference to someone less fortunate this Christmas."

If you are able to donate please go to www.justgiving.com/campaign/PeoplesKitchen-Feed-A-Friend-For-A-Fiver





Projects with Pride 2022celebrating young people in the North East

NE Youth hosted their annual Projects with Pride Awards at the Grand Hotel Gosforth Park last month. It was a bumper year with over 150 nominations, 400 guests and 12 special awards.

Projects with Pride is now in its 11th year- the event's aim is to celebrate the achievements of young people, youth & community projects and youth workers across the North East.

The Awards were hosted by NE Youth Staff, Jamie, Amy and Aaron (who is only 17 years old). The evening included some fabulous performances by young people from across the charities membership network including True Colours Theatre, The Activity Den, Junior Samba, Sam & Nic and Abbie Bayes.

Attending his first event as a NE Youth Ambassador Durham cricketer Brydon Carse said: 'It's such an honour to come along to Projects with Pride and see what NE Youth do. Seeing all the young people and those that help and support them is really inspiring.'

Charles Penn from Perspective NE, main sponsor of the event commented: 'Perspective are very proud to sponsor Projects with Pride - there is no better time to be recognising the achievements of young people in the region.'

The event received extensive media coverage including pieces on ITV and BBC. NE Youth are already looking for sponsors for next year. If you are interested contact: Jon@neyouth.org.uk





























SEASONAL GREETINGS...WANT A NEW JOB? RIGHT TIME?

With the challenging war over talent continuing and the beginning of a new year upon us - what happens to recruitment and building our teams over the festive period?

Historically, recruiting during the kids summer holidays and around the Christmas break has been for very many of us the time to take down adverts and to wait until the focus on business returns. However, as we all know - 'historically' is a thing of the past (literally!)

So let's explore together the reasons why pressing the pause button on recruitment over the festive period is the right option for businesses still looking to expand their workforce -

1. Candidates focus turns to family and the time for rest and resetting.

- 2. Any business in hospitality knows that this period is one of their busiest and therefore talent is working – knee deep in extra shifts and longer hours.
- 3. Fewer businesses recruit drawing fewer candidates to the job boards.

However, what about the positives for recruiting over the festive and New Year period -

- 1. Many candidates have time to come off the 'tools' with annual leave booked in, resulting in more time to search for their next position.
- 2. 'New Year, new me' this still exists! The end

of the year is a new start for those who are fed up so they to jump onto careers pages and social media job sites while they have time from the comfort of their homes is a real possibility.

3. Fewer businesses recruiting at this time can only be a good thing – less competition!

Therefore, go into this time of year with your eyes fully open to the traditions and possibly of the 'quieter' talent market but also look at the opportunities.

Get your proposition right – use it as an opportunity to sell your values, your journey, the competitiveness and uniqueness of your benefits, role and business to wow those candidates who have made the commitment to look for a new role.

Should you need a hand with what your proposition is and how to make that advert stand out give Talentheads a call on 0191 3008688 or at hello@talentheads.co.uk

Talentheads - The internal Recruitment team for growing businesses.

talentheads.co.uk



NE YOUTH BOWLED OVER BY NEW AMBASSADOR

NE Youth are proud to announce Brydon Carse as their new ambassador. Brydon is a South African born English cricketer who plays for Durham County Cricket Club and the England Cricket team.

A zippy fast bowler with a penchant for taking wickets quickly, Brydon made his debut for England in July 2021.

The cricketer recently attended the NE Youth annual awards ceremony, 'Project with Pride' to find more out about the charity and the work they do across the region, commented: 'I'm very excited to become an ambassador for NE Youth- it's a brilliant organisation. It was great to see all the young people being recognised at the awards night. I'm looking forward to learning more about all the great work the charity does at allowing young people to grow in the North East.'

Jon Niblo, CEO of NE Youth, added, "I am delighted to be welcoming Brydon Carse as our new ambassador. He really understands and supports our ambition to make a positive difference to the lives of young people. We are incredibly honoured to have his support and I know so many of the young people will look up to him as he is a fantastic role model.'

www.neyouth.org.uk

BERNICIA CANDLES POPS UP IN JOHN LEWIS



Bernicia Candles ethos is to make people calm and happy. Their scents will make you feel at home wherever you are and even spark off a memory of a special time or place. Inspiration for their fragrances from living amongst the most amazing natural, historic landscape and beautiful countryside & coastline.

The name Bernicia is what Northumberland was called in the Anglo Saxon times and the owner, Caroline, felt that it represents the brand perfectly. All her products are hand poured in Northumberland and inspired by our beautiful region. Caroline prides herself on sourcing the finest materials to create a range of eco-conscious and sustainable products, which look stylish in homes, including scented candles and diffusers. Her passion for making products means her customers return to Bernicia time and time again.

The sense of smell plays an important role in the physiological effects of mood. Specific scents can stimulate memory in the brain. Scent, emotion and memory are inexplicably intertwined. Certain fragrances can ease depression, anxiety and help with sleep. Choosing a scent we find relaxing, or a scent known for its calming properties, you can enhance your candlelight experience.

Bernicia Candles have been chosen to feature in John Lewis pop up Christmas store, Newcastle 12th- 18th Dec. After Christmas Bernicia are looking forward to 2023, lots of new products and a charity project is on the cards.

www.berniciacandles.co.uk

BUSINESSES JOIN THE GREEN REVOLUTION

By Phil Hewitt, director of EnAppSys

A lot has changed since I started EnAppSys nearly 20 years ago on my kitchen table. Back in 2003, the call for more renewable energy was only starting to gain momentum following the dash for gas in the 1990s. Now, cleaner, greener power is seen as an essential component in the global push to tackle climate change, secure our energy supplies and become a net zero society.

The North East of England is playing a key role in the green revolution. It is already seen as a leading light in offshore renewable energy production and now Teesside has been chosen as the preferred location for a multi-million-pound electric vehicle battery recycling facility. Aura Power Developments' plans to create a large solar farm in Darlington look set to be approved, while mineral processing specialist Green Lithium has announced plans to build the UK's first large-scale lithium refinery in Teesside – a move that will support the battery, energy storage and automotive sectors.

The need for renewable energy production (and more gas storage capacity) has been highlighted by the conflict in Ukraine, which has significantly reduced gas supplies from Russia into Europe. This has sent wholesale gas prices soaring to record levels and significantly increased energy bills for businesses, with some wondering how they'll get through the winter. This isn't just putting a large dent in corporate profit margins; it's leading to other problems. Some firms are finding it difficult to recruit and retain staff in the middle of a cost of living crisis, prompted in part by energy prices, with many people looking for jobs that offer higher wages. Others are finding it hard to access finance, with some institutions reluctant to lend money to businesses that are struggling to cover their increased costs.

However, there are things that businesses can do to mitigate these risks and reduce their energy consumption, such as installing motion-sensing lighting, looking to improve insulation, maybe using the roof for solar, installing batteries on site, turning down the thermostat by one degree, and switching



off electrical equipment that isn't being used. They can also access funds from the government's Energy Bill Relief Scheme.

Here at EnAppSys, we've been providing data, consultancy and information services to help companies understand the current and future challenges facing the energy industry, and maximise the value they're able to extract from it. Our customers have traditionally been electricity generators, suppliers and traders in the UK and all over the world but in future the flexibility in commercial premises and industrial processes allows consumers to become virtual power plants, moving their demand in response to price signals and providing services to National Grid which we have seen with their innovative Demand Flexibility Service this winter. Now and in the future, understanding how businesses can take advantage of their inherent energy flexibility will be a key driver to maximise profit and help the transition to a green economy.

For more information, visit www.enappsys.com

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

JASON KNIGHTS

Managing Director of Blue Kangaroo Design based in Newcastle.

Blue Kangaroo is a design agency that works specifically with entertainment character licensing and toy industry clients all over the world. He is also a Northern Powerhouse Export Champion for the Department of International Trade. Here we find out how 2022 has been for him and get his thoughts for the future.

What's the biggest thing that has happened in your business this year?

We've moved from our Gateshead office to one in the centre of Newcastle. There's a lot more bustle but we do a lot of work within retail toy licencing industries which means that we're closer to the retail environment. Business wise, we've seen really good growth and we've a fabulous team behind Blue Kangaroo.

Tell us about your workload...

It's as busy as ever and while we haven't any major new contracts, we are very focused on working with existing clients such as Mattel, the Walt Disney Corporation, and Universal Studios.

You're one of the most prolific exporters within the creative industries, how do you use your knowledge to help other people export across the world?

I'm an export champion for the Department of International Trade which is something I'm very proud of. It's nice to be able to give my experience back to people starting their export journeys. I work with a few smaller creative agencies who are on the verge of exporting or have just started out in business and I share my experiences of what we've done and how we've done it. I'm a great believer in the talent we have in the North East as it's a hotbed of creativity and we need to spread that globally. When I say creativity, I'm talking about everything from design, copyrighting, PR, IT digital etc.



I mentioned exports, because of that you actually travel the world. How many miles a year do you think you actually travel?

I think before the pandemic I was probably doing over 150,000 miles a year backwards and forwards to the USA and throughout Europe. That's slowed down quite a lot now as we use Zoom which for me is quite good because I'm scared of flying.

When you walk down a busy street and see one of your designs for a blockbuster movie what goes through your head?

It's cool. We were talking about this in the office recently because we're so busy with about 120 projects at any one time - something really small like a social media asset or it can be a large project which can take years so sometimes we see our work on display that we finished years ago.

When you aren't working what do you do?

I'm a typical business owner and I work regardless of the time. I've got three kids, two of them live away from home and I've got a wife and a normal day to day life. I watch football especially at the moment with Newcastle doing so well but when I'm at home I like to put my feet up and spend time with my wife doing what she likes to do including being dragged around the Metro Centre.

You're a great supporter of local charity – tell us about one of your favourites.

I like to visit Café B in Gosforth run by Smile for Life. It's a café where you can go where all the young people that work in there have various issues that stop them from working full time. I really enjoy going and they've got a young chef called James who recently got his apprenticeship sorted but the cost of the knives and his whites were really expensive, so Blue Kangaroo kitted him out. A small thing for us but massive for him.

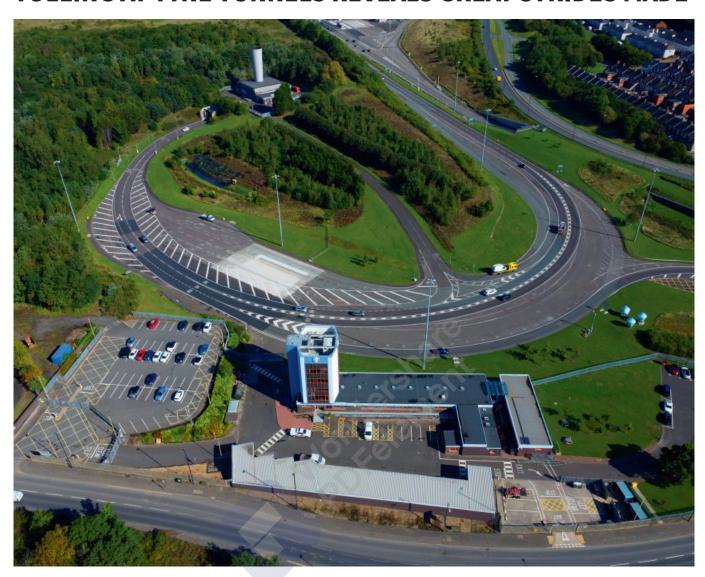
I always feel uncomfortable talking about charities because for me it's something that we should be doing as a society and not bragging about it, so we tend not to talk about it.

It's been a great year for you but what does next year have in store?

I think as a business we're going to have to learn to adapt because we're turning a lot of work away at the moment so I'm looking at growing the business which in the current climate is a blessing. I also want to fly the flag for the North East a bit more and telling the world how good we all are at what we do.

To find out more about Blue Kangaroo design see www.bluekangaroodesign.co.uk

NEW DATA ON FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF OPEN-ROAD-TOLLING AT TYNE TUNNELS REVEALS GREAT STRIDES MADE



It's been one year since the Tyne Tunnels modernised by switching to open-road-tolling and new data just released shows journey times are down; C02 emissions have been slashed; and the number of people paying their toll on time has surged.

A 12-month review of all the statistics collected since the toll booths were removed in November 2021, shows a positive overall picture of the tunnels' performance and that drivers are getting through the tunnels 42 seconds faster, on average, than they were before.

Under the new system, cameras automatically register journeys and payment needs to be

made before midnight the following day.

The tunnels have seen nearly 17.5 million journeys made in the last 12 months and almost 97% of drivers are now paying their toll on time – which is up from 94.6% a year ago. October 2022 is now the busiest month on record in the tunnel's 55-year history.

The number of tunnel users pre-paying for their journeys via a Pre-Paid account has rocketed by 138% which the operator of the tunnels, TT2, says has considerably helped reduce non-compliance because it reduces the risk of forgetting to pay.

TT2, which operates the tunnels on behalf of the North East Combined Authority, says it is particularly proud of the emissions data which shows over 90% less CO2 is being emitted into the air at the tunnels, compared to 12 months ago. The CO2 saving over the last year equates to 26,987 return passenger flights from Newcastle to New York.

Philip Smith, Chief Executive of TT2, said: "I am incredibly proud of how far we have come in the year since we introduced such a significant, historic change at the tunnels. Our main objectives of delivering faster, smoother journeys, reduced emissions and better local air quality have been met and we continue to listen to customers and analyse data and feedback to make sure we continuously improve our processes and the customer experience."

The number of Unpaid Toll Charge Notices (UTCNs) being issued as a percentage of journeys made in the month are down from 5.39% in month one, to 3.11% in October 22.

Northbound journeys are now 42 seconds faster and southbound trips, 41 seconds quicker – on average across a day.

The government required the construction of both Tyne Tunnels to be self-funded through toll revenue. As a private road, tolls are collected to pay for the construction and the crossing's extensive operation, safety and maintenance.

www.tt2.co.uk





IS NOW A GOOD TIME TO ENCOURAGE YOUR EMPLOYEES TO START RUNNING THEIR OWN BUSINESSES?

Turbulent and changing economic situations can give you both challenges and opportunities. If you are switched on and prepared to stand back from your day-to-day operational needs (not easy to do in a changing environment) you might be

able to see some great opportunities in offering an entrepreneurial route to your employees.

One such great opportunities lies in liberating your employees to run their own business. I don't mean let them go off and start their own enterprise (that could be a solution – more on this later), but I do mean to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to their role as part of your firm.



Having an open discussion and supporting and encouraging your team to adopt this outlook can help both your firm and your employees grow and develop. This needs to be closely aligned with your appetite for risk as a firm. If you are facing challenges and your appetite to risk in a volatile world is changing, exploring an entrepreneurial approach can offer you new and creative ways of working. Here are the major benefits we see when professional service firms take up this approach.

Employees feeling empowered and heard. Think about what running your own enterprise means. You get to steer the ship, you get to set the direction and take more control of day to day operations. This ties in very closely with purpose part of Dan Pinks work around motivation – see his book "Drive" to understand a little more about motivation and his three sided approach of "autonomy, mastery and purpose". Giving more control can help you harness peoples innate ability and experience to help grow your firm right at the front line.

Creating new ideas and improved ways of working. You might find that the team around you has some great ideas on services that can be improved or developed to really help engage more of your clients. Too often these ideas go unspoken. This can be because the culture and environment of some firms is based around doing what we have always done, or simply looking for incremental improvements in your current work rather than the step change that comes with exponential mindset. This is the mindset that challenges and says "there must be a better way to do this..."

Agility and speed of solutions can come quicker. By giving more authority to deal with challenges, issues or complaints and empowering people to take ownership to resolve client issues at the front line can overcome the over complex and slow systems that may have grown in more stable times. That speed advantage that smaller firms can have can be overcome in the largest organisation by refocusing on the client and empowering the team.

Connecting up the dots around income and expenditure. It's far too easy for employees to lose the link between income and expenditure. Just the other day I overheard two employees of a well know professional services firm say "Oh, I don't get paid to do that, so I am not worried about it". Everything that happens in your own enterprise is critical for you. As a business owner you wouldn't walk past something that wasn't working (this is what the two people I overheard were doing). If it was your business, you would either tackle it directly to resolve it, or you would pull together the right people in the firm to fix it. Thinking more commercially can help each employee make the most out of every internal and external stakeholder relationship.

Maximising client profitability. One key skill entrepreneurial staff develop is that of understanding how working with the right clients and doing the right things for them gets both you and your clients the right outcome. Entrepreneurial staff ask more searching questions of clients, they understand more of their clients world so they can help and serve them, and also to fully understand their clients perspective and world. This deeper client knowledge can be applied in each subsequent client interaction to inform, educate and improve each transaction.

Breaking down silos and department-based working. Taking an entrepreneurial approach to your role means breaking down internal barriers, maximising the resources a firm can offer and working for the whole firm and not just your department or team. Encouraging your staff to look at the whole client experience and needs can help retail a client for more work over a longer period. Great entrepreneurs look for long term client value, not just this current piece of work in front of them.

Now you might be thinking this all sounds fantastic (and it generally is), and there are some barriers and areas to consider when starting on this nath

Not every employee will get this and will need help and support to step away from the "employee" mindset to adopt these new approaches more readily. They might need training, mentoring, or coaching to help them build their confidence and competence when it comes to taking this step.

You need to overcommunicate! Be clear on exactly what you are asking your team to do, check in regularly to both celebrate successes and to identify and support when challenges arise.

Set clear guidelines and boundaries. If you are a legal firm, you don't want people setting up their own in house bakery! All their entrepreneurial activities need to be based around your mission and vision as a firm.

As a final though you may have some employees in your firm that have this drive, desire and entrepreneurial passion burning within them. You need to decide as a firm, do you want to fan these flames and help them harness this energy in your firm, or do you want to help them on their way to set up their own firm. Sometimes this is the right approach for you and for them. Make sure you understand where your key players are and how much of this entrepreneurial spirit you want them to apply to their own role. It's those with the entrepreneurial approach that can really help you and your firm survive and thrive in challenging times.

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



EXPRESS EXPANDS IN BOOMING SUBSEA EQUIPMENT SECTOR

Manufacturing, assembly and testing specialist Express Engineering is expanding and recruiting in response to further growth in global subsea markets.

The international business, based in Gateshead in the North of England, has been enjoying buoyant growth during the last 18 months and is now recruiting to meet further expansion, primarily in the oil and gas sector.

With buoyant oil and gas prices and optimistic five-year forecasts from energy specialists like Westwood, Express Engineering is already seeing a strong upturn in sales for its key products as well as in components for the defence industry.

Since embarking on a refocused business strategy, Express Engineering has seen sales in the oil and gas sector grow significantly resulting in a jump in revenues from £20m in 2019 to an expected £38m this year, forecast to rise to £45m in 2023.

Market intelligence shows a positive outlook for subsea 'tree' awards for the next few years, placing Express Engineering in a key position with customers in the subsea equipment sector. Outsourcing and supply chain management will also be an integral part of the accelerated growth strategy.

Last year Express Engineering invested in a 48,000 sq. ft. purpose-built international assembly and test centre to contribute to the company's

continued development in key global markets and improve the level of support provided to customers. Expansion of its capabilities is part of Express Engineering's broader product strategy to supply assembled and tested actuators, connections and tooling for wellheads and subsea production systems for the oil and gas sector.

During the next few months Express Engineering aims to recruit around 25 CNC programmers, bolstering its 220-strong workforce based across several sites on Team Valley.

Chris Thompson, chairman of Express Engineering said: "The subsea sector is in a really strong position for the next five years. We have a healthy order book for 2022/3 and anticipate significant market sector growth in the next few years.

"Our new assembly and test facility, positions us strongly for further expansion and success. The additional capacity will significantly enhance our response times and operational performance and productivity while maintaining the highest standards of safety and reliability."

Securing more skilled engineers is now the key to maintaining growth, he said. "We're able to offer exceptional rates of pay along with fantastic benefits and the opportunity for training and career advancement.

"Our renewed focus around the subsea oil and gas sector in recent years and the gradual energy transition has been key to our success. We're well placed to take advantage of increasing enquiry activity and order levels in a buoyant oil and gas sector. Based on current projections we see no reason why we cannot reach record revenues in two years time."

Express Engineering has become a global supply specialist for actuator assemblies, connection systems and tooling for wellheads, drilling and subsea tree structures. The company is also getting involved in subsea carbon capture projects.

Working with customers like TechnipFMC, Baker Hughes and Aker Solutions, Express Engineering is a significant exporter of products, operating within various geographical areas, including the North Sea, Gulf of Mexico, east coast of Brazil, east and west coasts of Africa, Malaysia and Australasia.

For more information visit www.express-engineering.co.uk

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

STEVE HARKNESS

Health and safety consultant and lead fire risk assessor at Carney Consultancy.

Can you tell us about Carney Consultancy?

Established in 2002, Carney Consultancy is a specialist health, safety, environmental and quality consultancy and training provider for the construction and engineering sectors.

Why do you enjoy working at the company?

Having met Angela Carney (and Dave Carney before his retirement) as our consultants during my previous employment as a contracts manager, we just seemed to click and had a lot in common in relation to thoughts on Health & Safety. I was already on my way to completing an industry recognised diploma in Health & Safety, so to move to Carney Consultancy seemed a logical career progression and I have never looked back. I was actually the company's first health and safety consultant.

I share the same values as managing director, Angela Carney in relation to how a business should operate, provide good quality customer service and how it should look after its staff - after all they are your best commodity.

What is your role?

My main role is conducting fire risk assessments for both our commercial client base and several property management companies across the North East and Yorkshire. Having also held several site management/contracts management positions and being a Director of my own company, I am also a CITB Approved Training Instructor and deliver various construction management training courses and I always enjoy the interaction with the management candidates. It also helps keep you abreast of new working practices.

Can you tell us more about your role as a lead fire risk assessor?

The role is to undertake fire risk assessments and advise our client base and private property management companies of any shortcomings in their legal obligations from a fire safety perspective. As part of the company's aims and objectives, the role of "lead" fire risk assessor is also to train my team so that the experience I have gained over the years is transferred to other members of staff.



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

I've been lucky that since 1987 onwards, the majority of my employers were open to employees improving their career prospects and were always fair and reasonable with their employees. Whilst I enjoyed my career in the more mainstream construction, after thirty plus years it was time for a change of direction and I now really enjoy my role at Carney Consultancy. I expect that I will continue with the company until I retire.

What is your proudest business achievement?

The development of others. I was lucky in that previous employers and Carney Consultancy, were willing to take a risk in employing others, including myself, and help to assist in my career development. Once I was in management position, I was able to influence some employer decisions, so I've always tried to get the same opportunities for others. It is always heartwarming when a former colleague thanks you for helping them achieve their goals, that's always a nice gesture.

How has the industry changed since you began your career?

Like a lot of people who worked throughout the early 1980s, the mindset in construction, and some workplaces, was totally different, with little regard to workers' rights and health and safety and that is borne out by poor statistics from that era. It's to the credit of a lot of good industry professionals that the mindset has changed over the years. There is now a greater acceptance to protect the workforce's physical and mental health.

However, construction as an industry is still not without its challenges and although some will disagree, there is a good argument for reverting to some roles that were abandoned in the past, such as the clerk of the works. Back in the day, if you had a clerk of the works on your project, they checked and dictated the quality of the workmanship and in my opinion it's the lack of checks on quality that has led to the industry's reputation being damaged, a typical example is the Grenfell Tower disaster and the cladding scandal.

What do you think are the opportunities going forward?

The way the company is structured with a clear succession plan for when older members of staff like myself retire, means Carney Consultancy can continue long into the future, which would be a good testament to Angela's original vision for the company - that it continues her legacy into the future.

www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk



ACHIEVING NET ZERO – SSCL'S PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability has become a word synonymous with business - in our post-pandemic world where for many, hybrid working is the new normal, how do organisations become more environmentally sustainable?

The idea that developing and implementing environmental strategies has long been considered vital to futureproofing a business yet a survey by recycling company Suez and British Chambers of Commerce found only around a third of businesses in the UK have an environmental sustainability policy.

Embedding environmental sustainability principles into everyday working is something that Shared Services Connected Ltd (SSCL) continues to apply and cultivate across its business. The organisation measures, monitors and manages its environmental impact with the aims of continually improving its environmental performance and management system.

From office lighting to carbon emissions, SSCL recognises the effect its day-to-day operations has on the environment and that protecting the environment is essential for the long-term success of its business. With this in mind the company has committed to achieving Net Zero by 2028 in line with European and UK Government initiatives.

For SSCL being environmentally sustainable goes far beyond recycling crisp packets or milk bottles – it's about recognising that creating and embedding environmental principles is intrinsic to promoting a positive sustainable and inclusive culture across its business.

SSCL's UK Head of Environment, Avinash Lunj explains: "We recognise that we must go further to achieve net zero emissions and play our part in limiting the rise in global average temperature. This will require us to work with all our stakeholders – our people, clients and suppliers - not just our own internal operations".

Having recently initiated a comprehensive company-wide programme to further enhance its sustainable delivery, SSCL has designed and implemented projects that have been successful in avoiding waste going to landfill whilst saving both the company and its clients money.

Recent office refurbishments have seen over 822 desks, 1000 pedestals and 80 cabinets recycled – saving almost 2000 items from landfill from one office alone. SSCL has incorporated energy efficiency into the design of its new offices by installing LED lighting which not only consumes less power but also has a longer lifetime. The existing 1,605 fluorescent lights have been replaced by brighter and more energy efficient LED light fittings saving 108 tonnes of CO2 in the process!

Avinash Lunj, continues: "This is a perfect example of how SSCL has embraced environmental sustainability principles and that even small changes can make a positive contribution to supporting a healthier planet. This office refurbishment project has illustrated their benefits of the practical application – for our business, employees, clients and the planet".

To find out more about SSCL and our Net Zero commitments visit – www.sscl.com



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

RYAN BLAKEMORE

Senior marketing executive at Elanders UK.

Can you tell us about the company?

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

What is your role?

As a senior marketing executive, my role is to drive the marketing department forward,

assessing different ways of communicating online with our customers, highlighting the successes of our team and streamlining the ordering process to increase agility and resiliency within the supply chain.

What do you enjoy most about your role?

The variety. As I am new to the role, I am enjoying meeting all the team and travelling to our sites. We have four locations within the UK, our headquarters in North Tyneside, Bellshill, Scotland, our dedicated packaging site, swing tag and fulfilment business based in Nottingham and our automotive supply chain site in Birmingham.

I am also enjoying a manager role, working with marketing apprentice, Mia Ojomo, where I am able to transfer my knowledge and skills and provide her with support.

Moving forward, I want to perfect our messaging, explore how customers are receiving our messaging and look to offer new

services and channels of communication.

It is an exciting time to be at Elanders UK, as part of a new marketing team driving the division forward.

What is your proudest business achievement?

In my former role, I helped take the business from offering its services directly to the customer to offering an e-commerce solution. I was able to streamline the ordering process for customers and this opened up new markets and opportunities for the company.

What is your mantra to do business by?

Don't stagnate. Innovate. Flexibility and adaptability are key within business particularly when change is always constant. I always look at how we can do things differently and to always keep moving forward.

www.elanders.co.uk





FOCUS ON: ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

The festive season is upon us and an area in the HR arena to monitor even more intensely at this time of year is alcohol in the workplace. Findings show that this is an area that is prone to escalation with the increase of festive events and parties, alongside heightened tensions, and pressures.

Louise Kennedy, Founder and Managing Director, Oculus HR said: "We've seen a recent influx of cases around alcohol in the workplace, and a key point to note is that employers didn't know or have the resources such as inhouse testing facilities to deal with the situations as they came to light.

It's important to note that alcohol in the workplace is not just a seasonal topic but at this time of year it can lead to enhanced triggers with the increase in social activities, plus the current pressures around the cost of living crisis.

Alcohol for many with this dependency is a coping mechanism and employers and employees need to be aware of some of the signs to look out for so an intervention can take place, allowing the relevant policy and procedures to take impact."

As an employer you have a legal duty to protect employees' health, safety and welfare and an understanding of the signs of alcohol within the working environment will help to manage health and safety risk in your workplace. There are many triggers and warning signs which include:

- Unexplained or frequent absences.
- A change in behaviour.
- Unexplained dips in productivity.
- More accidents or near-misses.
- Performance or conduct issues.

Having a clear alcohol policy will assist to ensure that the right mechanisms are in place to deal with the situation when it presents itself. It is vital that employers are aware of the potential consequences for their business and procedures need to be in place to action cases related to alcohol at work.

Louise added: "Alcohol in the workplace can link to other areas such as mental health and wellbeing, so it's important to have joined up thinking when looking at policies and procedures. We've had cases where mental health support and counselling has been utilised to support an employee. This was part of one particular case which brought to light drinking on the job, which opened up a swarm of issues as part of the process.

A degree of flexibility around policies is also recommended so that there is an element of flexibility for the business to do what they need given the individual situations. If the business doesn't have a policy the business needs to ensure that a best practice way of working is used, this gives people flexibility and doesn't tie people too tightly."

Louise added: "Another issue is employees and their reluctance to question a colleague's behaviour. There needs to be clear communication channels and processes in place, so an employee has the confidence to raise the concern with management. If triggers are left it can lead to serious health, safety and welfare incidents in the workplace."

Oculus HR recently launched their Real World HR podcast, and the next podcast is set to focus on mental health and the subject of alcohol in the workplace and its impact with special guest, John Devitt from Recovery for Life. The all-new Real World HR podcast will share real world stories behind HR processes, to put the human back into HR. The good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between.

Louise added: "With the podcast I want to address HR in a relaxed and informal setting, with some amazing industry and topical specialists. It is vital for businesses to have up-to-date advice and guidance to hand and this format is great for employers to hear about real life case examples and the chance to listen to some amazing guests."

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

To find out more about the 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

BEELINES NORTH EAST LAUNCHES NATURE NETWORK INITIATIVE TO CONNECT REGION'S GREEN SPACES



A local initiative, Beelines North East, is aiming to create and connect green spaces across the region with the launch of its new 'Nature Network' campaign, encouraging people to help preserve their local areas and to protect pollinators.

Beelines, which is funded by the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and overseen by Urban Green Newcastle and Northumberland Wildlife Trust (NWT), will develop the Nature Network project through working with landowners, local authorities, businesses, and communities to create pollinator-rich sites across Newcastle upon Tyne, North Tyneside, and Northumberland.

Alongside the green spaces in people's homes and gardens, Beelines North East is looking to create 45 nectar-rich public sites, with the aim of planting 2,500 trees, 25,000 bulbs, and creating 18 hectares of grassland.

The campaign will encourage and educate communities to explore and maintain their local green spaces, whilst creating pollinator-friendly environments in their own homes. These can range from a patch in a garden, to a window or balcony box, with the goal being to provide clear paths for bees and other pollinators to travel across urban areas more easily.

To achieve this, Beelines North East is partnering with local community groups and organisations across the region including; Great North Children's Hospital, YMCA, Healthworks, Foundation Futures, Kids Kabin, Scotswood Gardens, and The John Bostey, as well as several primary schools across the city. Beelines will provide educational resources, events, and activities to help people learn about pollinators and how their own green spaces will benefit the creatures and their community in the long term.

As part of the roll out, Beelines have provided local organisations with information about the initiative - offering activities and details around pollinators they can look out for in their own gardens and outdoor spaces. Activities include; creating a DIY bee hotel using bamboo, native wildflower seeds to create a wildflower meadow, making pollinator pebbles with rocks and paint pens, a pollinator pine cone craft activity with

pipe cleaners, planting daffodil bulbs, and crafting bee badges.

Ed Chivers, Project Manager of Beelines North East said: "We are excited to be launching our Nature Network campaign and working with people and organisations across our region to help bring their green spaces together and make them a place for them and pollinators to enjoy.

"Pollinators and nature have a huge part to play in our health, happiness, and economic welfare. Autumn is a crucial time in prepping green spaces for when pollinators re-emerge in the spring, so now is the time to work together to make sure that we create and improve spaces that will continue to benefit us for the long term."

With 'Nature Network', Beelines North East aims to help people understand the value of nature and encourage them to act, reconnect with the outdoors, and help create green spaces that allow pollinators to thrive.

For anyone looking to create their own green space at home, or to get involved in their local park, contact info@urbangreennewcastle.org



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FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA

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CAKES

Mince Pie Brownie Cranberry Slice Cherry Macaroon Sweet Mini Mince Pie

SCONES

Clotted Cream, trawberry Preserve & English Butte

Please call our Christmas team on **0191 236 4111** (select option 2) or email **wedding760@theelitevenueselection.co.uk**Office hours: Monday to Friday 9:00am until 5.00pm



wedding760@theelitevenueselection.co.uk to book directly with us.

ANOTHER YEAR – SOME THOUGHTS AND THANKS

It's December, and it's been a busy year for all. Just when we thought the pandemic topped it all, we have a war in Ukraine, nuclear posturing, a cost-of-living crisis, serial Prime Ministers and we have yet to see if that's 'trumped' by serial presidents! Whether a royalist or not, the demise of Queen Elizabeth II has made a significant impact upon the population in terms of their sense of continuity at times of real change.

Notwithstanding all this, the most critical challenge ahead remains the climate crisis, a clear and accelerating threat. We should not enter 2023 believing it should be subordinate to short term issues of the economy or just about anything else as this is truly a 'bigger picture' issue that all must take responsibility for.

The climate scientists have in many ways been over conservative and we are in a situation wherein billions of years of Earth's biospheric balance and hundreds of millions of years of evolution could be subordinate to significant planetary change and species extinction. Let's all reflect in the year ahead, particularly those fatalists who substitute responsibility with an abdicate inevitability for the world whilst continuing to generate vast carbon footprints with their chosen lifestyles and business practices.

I could be more profound, but as is the tendency in this part of the year to write to those who read my article's regularly, to the many wonderful clients that we have within Gedanken and to our loyal and reliable affiliate base with heartfelt thanks to all for placing their trust in what we do. Thanks to them also for being prepared to take a bit of a walk on the wild side in the context of their business and personal thinking, raise their awareness, explore their values, build teams, develop strategies and most of all, look for the advantages that are hiding in plain sight that so often our service throws light upon.

We continue our journey of seeking to make life an intellectual, emotional and spiritual journey with a strong credo to "keep the humanity in a busy world", a vision developed when the company was formed in 2006 and remains evermore relevant in a world of increasing inequality, apparent injustice and rampant self-interest. I'm pleased to see we have Lyn joining us as a new coach in the year ahead. Equally pleasing is the return of Michael, who having cut his therapeutic skills with Gedanken has, after further training and experience elsewhere come back to our small community to continue his journey with us. Thanks as always to Angie and Christine who continue their journey with us as stalwart associates, each with their own unique contributions.

Lastly, but not least, the ever-diligent Jeanine continues to ensure our varied work here runs smoothly and coordinates so much with understanding, grace and good humour.

In the January to March, we are putting together some specific 'surgeries' to allow people who have never had the experience of the power of coaching and personal development work, including those that perhaps have had unsatisfactory experiences elsewhere, to get a sense of what it's like to work with Gedanken. These sessions will be 45 minutes long, held in our Team Valley office and for which we will ask for a very small deposit/donation for the sake of good faith and your own 'skin in the game,' which will be given to one of the charities we support. In common with all important conversations, we have at Gedanken, we can guarantee it will be a worthwhile use of your time and effort. Feel free to contact Jeanine at admin@gedanken.co.uk to request a session.

The year ahead will see more articles here from Gedanken, some featuring the great clients that we have the privilege and pleasure to support, some commentary on social, psychological, business and political issues, as well as a deeper dive into areas such as mental health, leadership, systems, CSR and ethics, all of which are very centre stage in a post pandemic issues that comes with the climate crisis and some economic realities, that even the most resourceful are increasingly finding themselves struggling with.

But that's for 2023, meantime, may I extend customary season's greetings and every wish for 2023 to be great for you and the planet. Let's 'be' the change we want to see!

www.gedanken.co.uk





GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT IN A PREMIER LEAGUE CITY

As the New Year dawns, Newcastle United are riding high in the Premier League, heading into the festive season firmly ensconced in the heady heights of 3rd place, and inhabiting one of the coveted Champions League spots. Under new ownership, the club's ambitions and self-belief are clear, and the team's delivery on the pitch is a direct statement of intent. Not only do we have a Premier League club, we have a Premier League, nay Champions League, city, and we need to match that ambition, drive and determination with how we approach the future of the city centre.

Over the past few years, we have become accustomed to our daily lives being overshadowed by national and international events. Unsurprisingly, these have justifiably demanded our attention, making local concerns seem far less pressing. But as we look ahead to 2023 and the start of a new year, we need to recalibrate and remind ourselves of what is important locally, and what we can do to positively influence where we live and work.

We know that challenging times lie ahead, but we can't lose sight of what's important for Newcastle and the wider North East. 2023 marks my 15th year at NE1. In that time, we have had three Governments and six Prime Ministers. But for all these changes, it is collaboration, common purpose and local action that have yielded the greatest results.

We shouldn't allow economic decisions made centrally to get in the way of local priorities. Instead, we need to recognise that we are masters of our own destiny. Decisions we make locally can make the biggest difference to people's lives.

Whenever we ask businesses and the general public for their priorities for the city centre, responses fall into three main categories: cleaner, greener and safer. This is why these have been central to our city centre delivery since NE1 was created in 2009.

While it may sound clichéd to say they 'love the jobs we hate', NE1's Rapid Response Clean Team get tremendous job satisfaction working across the city centre, collecting over 900 bin bags of rubbish every month. They respond to more than 600 rapid response cleaning jobs each month and complete over 50 graffiti removals. Jet washing pavements, removing broken glass and other sharps, working hard in all weathers. They take real pride in the city, how it looks and how people experience it.

NE1's Street Rangers, are another highly visible presence on the streets of the city and play a major part in improving safety and security in Newcastle. Since launching the city centre Business Crime Reduction Partnership early in 2022, our Street Rangers have received over 600 reports from businesses, 167 involved the police, and four included weapons. Of the retail crime reported, NE1's Street Rangers have an astonishing 80% recovery rate. Having 'boots on the ground' really does make a difference and plays an influential role in tackling the problems of retail crime and anti-social behaviour in the city, making Newcastle a better place to work, live and visit.

All of NE1's efforts in these areas are in addition to those statutory services provided by the council and police and, whilst they have a significant positive impact on the city centre, we are under no illusions; they are not a silver bullet. The investment made by Newcastle City Council and Northumbria Police is vitally important in delivering a city that we want to live, work and socialise in.

Newcastle City Council recently unveiled £25 million in cuts, which set off alarm bells in the city. Increasing cost pressures on the city council and the police are worrying, and reinforce the need to keep our priorities in focus.

In Newcastle, we are right to expect and demand high standards. By demonstrating low tolerance for low level crime and antisocial behaviour we encourage people to take pride in their city and encourage a sense of ownership and community cohesion, with the state, businesses, and residents all working together in pursuit of the same goal. A welcoming, well maintained, and safe environment will encourage people to spend time in the city centre.

We can't afford to get distracted from this goal of getting the basics right, because if we do, the consequences will be dire and will be felt all too quickly. We need and want the city centre to be cleaner, greener, and safer and we have great teams in place to deliver this. We will continue to work with our partners to ensure that we provide complimentary support where it is needed most.

Working in close partnership with businesses and the statutory authorities across Newcastle has helped transform the city over the past 14 years. We can't let this be a casualty of the next round of budget cuts happening nationally or locally, we need to work together in partnership to continue our successes. This was one of the key reasons NE1 was set up 14 years ago. Emerging from the last economic downturn, we ensured that the business' voice was heard at a national and local level.

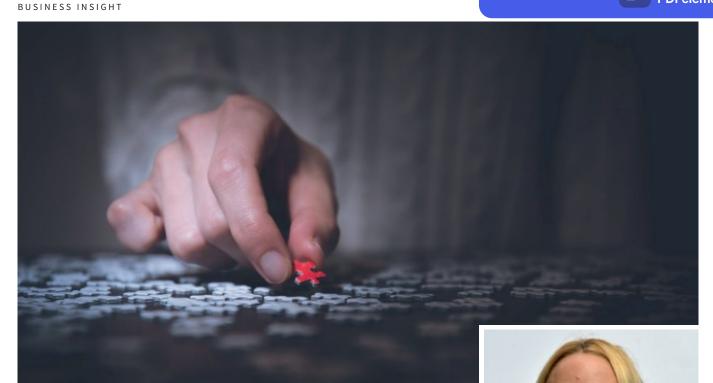
A reputation hard fought is easily lost and this is true of any city. We have made huge strides over the past fourteen years, and it is crucial that we don't lose sight of just how far we've come. We also need to be relentlessly ambitious, and not accepting of the status quo, focussing on getting the basics right, and planning for future success.

We have great cause for celebration, there is huge investment being made in the city by the public and private sector. People can visibly see the city being reshaped with old buildings coming down and new ones going up, creating jobs and opportunities for local people, but this investment needs to be matched in the public realm, our civic space. This is where people interact with and experience our city.

We know challenging times lie ahead but we need to hold our nerve and not get distracted. Newcastle is a Premier League city, and we need to keep it this way.

www.newcastlene1ltd.com





TUPE OR NOT TUPE?

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

If a business acquires another business with existing employees, an important piece of legislation called "TUPE" may apply. TUPE, also known as The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment), came into place to safeguard employees' jobs should a business or part of the business be taken over by another. You may well have heard of this but how do you know if it applies to your acquisition or sale, and what are your responsibilities?

When does TUPE legislation apply and what are my responsibilities?

TUPE may well apply when a business transfers to another with no significant change in function or activity e.g. when one business acquires another business or subsidiary, or if a contract moves to a different provider e.g. if a cleaning contract is outsourced or brought back in house. Under TUPE legislation, all of their terms and conditions of the transferring employees must

remain the same and their continuity of service is protected.

As soon as the service provision change or the business transfer is known, the current employer must consult with either a trade union or employee representative. They need to know that the transfer is happening, when it will happen and why, how it will affect them and whether any 'measures' will be put in place by the new employer.

If the employer has less than 10 employees, they can consult with them directly. If they have 10 or more employees, if there is no trade union, they should an employee representative is elected.

In addition to existing terms and conditions of employment, any collective agreements are protected and any failures of the current employer to observe rights i.e. any liability for discrimination or unfair treatment will pass on to the new employer.

What are 'measures'?

Although the terms and conditions of employment of transferring employees are protected, the new employer may impose 'measures' if they have a valid economic, technical or organisational reason to do so. This is known as a valid ETO.

Economic reasons are to do with how the company is performing, technical reasons are to do with the equipment or processes the company uses and organisational reasons are to do with the structure of the company. So, the new employer may have valid reasons for making redundancies post transfer so long as it's not connected with the transfer itself.

The employee also needs to be made aware of this measure before the transfer takes place and they need to agree to it.

If an employee doesn't agree to the transfer, they are effectively resigning, however if they object to the transfer because of more

detrimental terms and conditions, they could claim unfair dismissal, if they did not feel that the new employer had a valid ETO.

What information needs to be exchanged pre transfer?

The current employer must provide the new employer with information about the transferring employees. This is called 'due diligence'. This information includes personal details, details of any disciplinary and grievance action taken within the past two years, legal action or potential legal action that they think an employee might raise.

This information must be exchanged four weeks before the transfer takes place.

Changes to employee's terms and conditions post transfer.

Employees' terms and conditions can be amended even if this is financially detrimental to the employee post transfer but this is only permitted if it will prevent job losses and it must be agreed with trade union representatives and employees.

Any change can't break statutory employment

Cheviot HR help clients at the due diligence stage of acquisitions, from reviewing due diligence and advising on consultation. To find out more, please contact Heidi at heidi@cheviothr.co.uk



TENANTS ENJOYING LIFE IN NEW SUNDERLAND HOMES

Tenants are moving into their brand new homes in Sunderland following Bernicia's completion of a £6m housing development on the site of a former primary school.

The mix of bungalows, two, three and fourbedroom homes have been allocated for rent to tackle demand in the city for high quality, new, affordable homes to rent.

The properties in Cheshire Avenue are built on the site of the former Southwick Primary School.

The 37 homes are helping transform the lives of families and people from the local area, providing a high standard of living, the stability of a good home and at rents set to make them

affordable in the local rental market.

Laura Purvis, 32, has just moved into a fourbedroom home with her partner and young family.

"It's absolutely lovely, so quiet, so private," she said. "We got a phone call from Sunderland Council to tell us about the new builds and to wait to be contacted by Joanne at Bernicia.

"I cried when she told us we could have the house, I told her I loved her! Our family love it, there's so much space, we don't know what to do with all the space. It's absolutely amazing, it feels like we are living in a hotel."

Neighbour Leanne Whitfield, 33, is enjoying life with her four children in their new four-bedroom home.

"The children love it, it's got a garden and they have a trampoline now - our other place only had a yard," she said.

"I was absolutely over the moon, I never thought I'd live in a house like this, it's a dream home for us."

Mother of two Ruth Arnott, 30, said: "We've got a three-bedroom home, there's loads of storage space, it's massive compared to my old place.

"Bernicia are a good landlord and it's just such a massive relief, I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders with this lovely new home."

Bernicia is committed to investing £85m into building at least 600 new homes over the next four years as part of its £210m investment into

homes and communities in the North East.

Michael Farr, Bernicia Executive Director of Assets and Property, said: "Seeing residents move in and the life changing experience they have in their new homes is fantastic.

"The properties are all at rents that local people can afford - the quality of these homes and the energy efficiency, which is clearly such an important factor at the moment, has made demand for them very high."

Councillor Kevin Johnston, Sunderland City Council Cabinet Member for Dynamic City, said: "It's fantastic to see the residents moving into these new properties and the amazing transformation of this former brownfield site by Bernicia.

"It's great to see what this means to families with young children and what it means to them moving into sustainable homes fit for purpose for the future in such a lovely area. As a council, we are continuing to work to deliver our City Plan for a more dynamic, healthy and vibrant Sunderland, and new and improved housing is very much part of this plan."

Bernicia worked with teachers and pupils at the new Southwick Primary School to name the new estate Cheshire Avenue – drawing on the 'Cheshire Cat' character in 'Alice in Wonderland' because of author Lewis Carroll's historic links to Sunderland.

www.bernicia.com

RECRUITMENT TRENDS 2023

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, offers an insight into the recruitment trends that are expected to impact employers in 2023.

As the year comes to a close, the recruitment industry is still dealing with the repercussions of the pandemic and postpandemic.

In 2022, this resulted in a seismic shift in the dynamic between businesses, employees, and job seekers. With an ever-increasing demand to recruit the best people, the desire for organisations to streamline designations and operating structures – combined with an almost universal acceptance of remote working – has also opened geographical barriers that have historically hindered access to talent.

Furthermore, while the majority of industries are experiencing a comparative reduction in recruitment activity for the fourth quarter, this is projected to improve in March and April as employers continue to consider "right-sizing".

As we approach 2023, having a clear and robust talent acquisition and retention strategy is critical.

HYBRID WORKING

Entire remote working roles are becoming more difficult to find, but the trend of allowing your team to work flexibly both in the office and at home will continue to become even more important if organisations want to keep existing talent and go beyond location to locate the best individuals for their team.

UP-SKILLING

Because talent shortages will continue, the need to upskill employees will become a higher priority for many businesses dealing with staff and talent shortages. This method not only boosts workforce productivity, but also saves costs, increases employee satisfaction, reduces staff turnover, and, more often than not, creates a more collaborative and dynamic working atmosphere.



RETENTION

In many industries, the "Great Resignation" is not slowing down and, as cost-of-living issues continue alongside economic uncertainty, this affects recruitment. The retention of your best workers will become increasingly important. In summary, if you want to keep the finest, you must be willing to look after them and fight for them because the battle for talent is underway and it's skilled people who have the upper hand.

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

The first impression you create for a prospective recruit has always been crucial but, with such fierce levels of competition for talent, it is more vital than ever to represent your company as one that values and supports its people. Take the time to assess the assistance you provide and, more importantly, how you plan to demonstrate it as part of a positive candidate experience, as this may make all the difference when a prospect has alternative options and a tough decision to make.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

It is widely accepted that a culturally diverse workforce fuels innovation and creativity, hence improving profitability. Currently, barely one in three businesses tracks candidate diversity, with gender and ethnic diversity indicators rarely employed. Similarly, companies frequently neglect socioeconomic diversity, but 2023 will see

positive movement in this area, hopefully helping to erase any remaining unconscious bias in hiring.

GOING VIRTUAL

As the first generation never to be without the internet takes on junior roles in the workforce, there will be an increasing expectation that everything is available online and at a fast pace. Highly collaborative, self-reliant and pragmatic, Generation Z values diversity, cooperation and connection, and wants to work from anywhere but also establish good relationships with their co-workers.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The perception of recruitment consultants is changing. The days of recruiters taking job orders and firing off CV after CV in the hope that someone resonates with you are long gone (I hope). That's not how I have ever worked; instead, I find joy in putting the right people in the right places. It often means that, in addition to the job search, I wind up collaborating with organisations on a strategic level, serving as a sounding board and a source of recruitment knowledge, market insight, and salary guidance.

While we will continue to face uncertainty, concentrating on these trends will help you not only to develop a solid recruitment and retention strategy but also in hiring the right talent to capitalise on the possibilities that 2023 will bring, despite the talent shortage.

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

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NORTHUMBERLAND DEMONSTRATES ACTION IN JOB CREATION AND ACHIEVING GREEN AMBITIONS



As world leaders and businesses gathered in Egypt for COP 27 in November to discuss plans to reach Net Zero targets, Northumberland celebrated a number of recent announcements that demonstrated the area's contribution to meeting Net Zero through renewable energy investments and job creation.

Recently JDR Cables broke ground on its new facility to manufacture, from start-to-finish, medium and high-voltage subsea cables for offshore wind farms.

The 69,000 sqm facility, on the site of a former coal fired power station in Cambois, south east Northumberland, is due for completion in 2024. Already expected to support more than 170 jobs once operational, it is also a strong demonstration of how Northumberland's economy is building on its heritage in power generation and transitioning to support the needs of the rapidly expanding renewable energy industry.

Northumberland Energy Park, where JDR Cable's new manufacturing facility will be based, is part of Energy Central, the UK's unique portbased service, investment and growth cluster for companies operating in the offshore energy, subsea, decommissioning, battery manufacturing and renewable energy markets.

Energy Central is a partnership between Advance Northumberland, Port of Blyth, Northumberland County Council and the Offshore Renewable Energy (ORE) Catapult aimed at attracting inward investment into the area. It boasts numerous assets for the offshore wind industry, including ORE Catapult's National Renewable Energy Centre, a leading technology innovation and research centre for offshore renewable energy.

In addition, on November 10, Port of Blyth announced its contract with North Yorkshire based Van Oord Offshore Wind UK Limited to store and mobilise around 350km of inter-array cable that will be installed at one of the world's largest offshore windfarms – Sofia Offshore Wind Farm.

The inter-array cable will pass through the Port's Battleship Wharf – a 19ha terminal that is frequently used in offshore projects owing to its deep-water berths and heavy lift quays – into quayside storage tanks. It will then be installed by Van Oord's cable-laying vessel, Nexus.

The 1.4GW Sofia Offshore Wind Farm project is located on Dogger Bank in the central North Sea, 195km off the North East coast of the UK. The RWE project represents a more than £3 billion investment in the UK's energy infrastructure industry. Once constructed, it will generate enough green power to supply the equivalent of around 1.2 million homes.

Jeff Watson, Chair of Advance Northumberland commented, "It's such an important time for the energy industry, not just here in the North East with discussions taking place last week at NOF's Offshore Wind Energy Event in Sunderland, but on a global scale with COP 27 in Egypt.

"I'm very proud that Advance Northumberland is supporting developments that are playing an active role in delivering against Net Zero targets, at the same time as growing our local economy and creating more and better jobs."

Martin Lawlor, Chief Executive of Port of Blyth, said, "It's fantastic that so many organisations are able to take advantage of the advanced facilities we have developed to support the offshore wind industry.

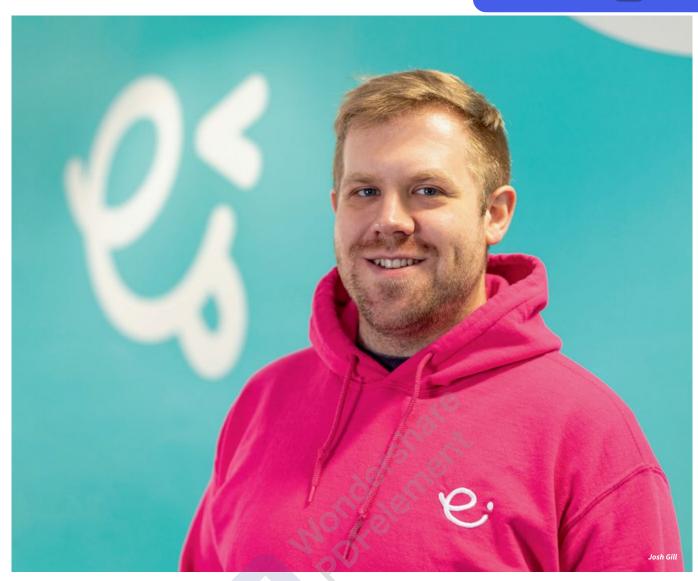
"Port of Blyth offers a well-established transport and supply network, so alongside the investment we've made in the capabilities of our terminals, the port is a sought-after destination for businesses who support the renewable energy sector"

James Young, Chief Strategy Officer of JDR Cables, added: "It is through the collaboration of a number of partnerships that we are able to further our journey and start the construction of our new medium and high voltage cable manufacturing facility. Once operational our facility will bring local jobs and opportunities to Northumberland and support the growing offshore energy industry in the region. Our project is supported by HM Government and BEIS through the Offshore Wind Manufacturing Investment Support Scheme and we look forward to working with all our local partners to make our new facility a success."

Advance Northumberland is the regeneration, physical delivery and business support vehicle delivering regeneration throughout Northumberland on behalf of Northumberland County Council. It has a portfolio of assets and land worth £250 million and can support businesses with access to finance, training and recruitment advice, supply chain connections and introductions to external support programme and business networks.

Port of Blyth is one of the UK's leading offshore energy support bases and is home to many of the renewable sector's leading businesses. The port is also home to extensive training facilities – including a £1 million wind turbine training facility – which is helping to develop the region's workforce and ensure young people in Northumberland have the relevant skills and qualifications to enter industries such as offshore energy, marine, logistics and subsea engineering.

www.advancenorthumberland.co.uk



WINTER IS HERE – HOW CAN BUSINESSES STOP THEIR PIPES FROM FREEZING?

By Josh Gill, Everflow.

The winter months are now well underway, and the cold is here to stay for the time being. While many are welcoming this weather – after all, it signifies that the festive season is around the corner – it does present unique challenges.

For businesses, cold weather can open up the possibility of frozen pipes. Frozen pipes can cause havoc for businesses - disrupting operations and leading to costly repairs. With this in mind, it is vital that businesses are prepared for the winter months.

Preparation is Key

If you don't know how to prepare for the winter months, then we have some tips for you:

The first step is identifying your water pipes as

it is less important to protect pipes that don't carry water. You can find this out by running water - if the pipe vibrates then there is water inside.

The next step is to cover those pipes which can be done by wrapping them with lagging. It's an easy job and you'll be able to buy pipe lagging from your local DIY store all year round.

Finally, cover your outdoor tap. As well as pipes, garden and outdoor taps are also vulnerable to the elements. When a tap is

frozen it can increase the risk of a burst pipe but when covered the risk is reduced.

Next Steps

Proper preparation means you've started off on the right foot – but there are other steps that can be taken, specifically to avoid frozen pipes.

Insulate water tanks and pipes and make sure there are no gaps at any point in the pipe network.

Additionally, fix all dripping taps and check that your boiler has been serviced. And when the business premise is vacant, it is a good idea to turn off the water – this will ensure you don't return to a flood!

What if they do freeze?

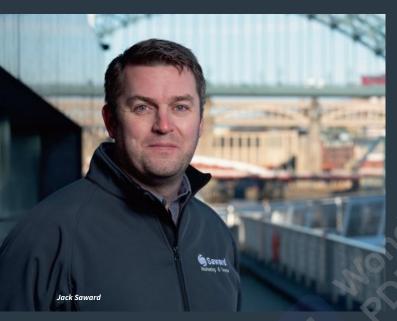
Preventative action should mean your pipes do not freeze but sometimes it is unavoidable. If you do find your business has flooded, the first call of action is to make sure the pipes are turned off at the mains. After this, turn off all taps and then call a plumber as they will be best qualified for the job.

For more information about how Everflow makes water simple for SMEs, visit www.everflowwater.com

GET NOTICED. MAKE AN EXHIBITION OF YOURSELF

Saward Marketing & Events will show you how. It's a tricky question that a lot of companies and individuals struggle to answer. How do I let people know what I do? How do I promote myself? How do I attract customers? Does anyone know, after the COVID lockdown, that I'm fully up and running again?





They're not simple questions to answer but...thankfully, there is help at hand. We're lucky here in the North East to have a vastly experienced events and marketing company who're also experts in project management and PR.

Their name? Saward Marketing and Events.

When we spoke to their director, Jack Saward, we were lucky to have caught him. He's just got back from a month working in Munich (some of the team were in Bologna at the same time) and he was already packing his bags before setting off on another project. Put it this way, he's so busy...and so popular...that he had to turn down work during the World Cup in Qatar.

"This last year has been incredibly busy," said Jack. "I'm lucky in that I have a background in both the public and private sector so I'd like to think I know what works and how to attract the right sort of attention. The key aspect is ensuring that our customers get the best and most relevant exposure for the market they are targeting. A scattergun approach rarely works...you need to be focussed."

Jack has been involved with events and marketing for over 25 years. He started off as a 10yr old earning pocket money from his father, who worked in the same industry, packing gift boxes for corporate events. Since those early days, he's worked on projects here in the UK, across Europe, North America, China and Africa. He's also got a list of contacts which would make bigger companies seriously envious. He's used to working in both tight, compact settings, and in huge indoor and outdoor locations.

"We're not always heading off to glamorous locations. One of our biggest events of the year took place in a quarry near Buxton in Derbyshire. It's an event which gives the quarrying industry a chance to show what latest products are available. We helped several clients plan, source, build and staff their exhibition stands, some of whom are based here in the North East.

A similar event was Scotplant 2022 which rates as Scotland's biggest construction equipment trade show. A few weeks earlier, we'd been in Coventry working for another of our North East clients, Snorkel, at the Executive Hire Show which is a national exhibition for the tools, equipment and plant hire industry.

We've also been in Birmingham at the NEC where we organised and built a stand for Bravi Platforms, one of our Italian clients...we've actually delivered three projects for them across Europe this year. There was then the small matter of the Commonwealth Games which I worked on during the build and eventually dismantling stages. The list goes on...we just haven't stopped this year."

Jack is one of the most self-effacing people you could meet. He's more than happy to give advice on how a company should promote themselves...point them in the direction...tell them where to find the best contacts and what they should expect.

"The one thing that never ceases to amaze me is how much money can be wasted by businesses. For example, if a particular business intends exhibiting at a conference or running an event on a regular basis, they shouldn't spend a fortune producing signage which has a date on it. I've lost count of the number of times I've been dismantling a stand and walked past piles of banners and hoardings which are being sent to the tip when, with a bit of advanced planning, could have been given a second life or a second home back in offices and factories. One recent 23m banner graphic is now up in a factory in Germany for one of our clients so that any visitors to the factory will see it too."

And if you need proof that people value Jack's opinions and advice, look no further than the fact that he was invited to speak at this year's International Confex conference at the ExCel Centre in London. For the last 39 years, Confex has ranked as the UK's leading exhibition for the events industry. His podcast has also now been listened to across all six continents and 65 different countries...not bad for something started to keep him busy during COVID.

It all comes down to experience and Jack and the team have got masses of it. Been there...done it...and, if not, he's got someone in his phonebook who has.

When it comes to exhibitions and events, you're in safe hands with Saward Marketing & Events. They'll help you make an exhibition of yourself....in the right way of course.

If you'd like further details about what Jack and the Saward Marketing & Events team can do for you and help you get noticed, give him a call on 07788 660996 or email jack@saward-me.com We'd also point you in the direction of their website... www.saward-me.com and we'd certainly encourage you to check out Jack's LinkedIn profile which has regular updates. www.linkedin.com/in/jacksaward





PLASTIC MOULDINGS NORTHERN LTD - ALWAYS THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

The main output at Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) is the production of vacuum formed plastic parts, which sees PMN supply high quality and often very intricate moulded parts to an array of industries.



The ethos at the heart of the company is 'we never stand still' and the industry innovator who've been established for 20 years at their expansive Bishop Auckland site have benefited from high growth, through leveraging their collaborative and innovative capabilities, alongside assessing new market opportunities.

Freddy Bourdais, co-founder and sales director at Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd said: "Diversification and spotting new market opportunities is a key mechanism of growth here, alongside our core operations in the production of vacuum formed plastic parts we have a number of other arms to the business.

We are now 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 and we are at the forefront of providing a more cost-effective and yet still durable option for customers."

Alongside their vacuum forming operation PMN are one of the UK's leading suppliers of plastic packaging solutions including euro containers across a wide range of industries. Storing over 100,000 products on an expansive site spanning three acres and 65,000 square feet of indoor storage, efficiency and experience comes as standard. Alongside the euro containers PMN is also a leading supplier of folding pallet boxes, solid big box containers and plastic pallets as well as offering a range of accessories, including lids, trolleys and bespoke dividers, trays and inserts from their North Fast site.

Over the past five years PMN have worked on a number of exciting projects which has resulted in the supply of euro containers and storage boxes used for production of big name TV and film projects including *The Grand Tour* and *Star Wars* franchise. Packaging solutions have also been supplied to a number of prestigious automotive companies including Lotus and Mercedes AMG as well as going around the world with the Aston Martin F1 team.

With the uncertainty around what is included in the Plastic Packaging Tax (PPT) PMN has taken steps to make sure customers don't get caught unawares. With the aim of the tax to provide a clear economic incentive for businesses to use recycled plastic, it will not apply to any plastic packaging which contains at least 30% recycled plastic, or any packaging which is not predominantly plastic by weight.

PMN have worked hard to ensure that their full range of Euro stacking containers, all contain at least 30% regrind material while still offering a durable and robust solution to all your packaging and storage needs. Offering a full range of standard sizes, PMN also

offer unique footprints that you won't find with other established suppliers, allowing them to provide solutions to any industry. With large stocks available for next day despatch, PMN prides itself on offering high quality products and top-rated customer satisfaction every step of the way.

With 95% of products hitting exemption from Plastic Packaging Tax, PMN is your one stop solution for all your packaging solutions. Alongside this, PMN run a buy back scheme offering both a recyclable solution and an additional revenue stream for businesses and their plastic waste.

Freddy added: "Plastic pallets have become a crucial part of modern day warehousing and logistics, largely due to their unrivalled performance and sustainable benefits. Our buy back scheme lets your plastic packaging pay for itself.

We can offer businesses the chance to make money on any unwanted plastic packaging. Whether it was bought from us or not, we can assess the plastic waste and give you a quote to buy it direct

The old plastic pallets will be assessed when they reach us and will either be put back into the market as second hand stock or sent to our recycling partners where they will be turned into plastic granules, ready to be used again in making more plastic pallets."

While the production of wooden pallets creates less carbon emissions during production, overall, the plastic pallet is better for the environment in that it has a longer life span and the lighter weight means less fuel is needed during transport, reducing the overall carbon footprint of plastic pallets.

Freddy added: "When the Honda car factory in Swindon closed down we were given the contract of clearing their now redundant plastic packaging. This included over 5000 folding pallet boxes as well as plastic pallets and euro containers previously used in their supply chain. Upon clearing the site PMN sent 25 tonne to regrind, saving over 200 tonnes of plastic waste and recirculating it back into many other industries and extending the life span of many products."

Operating for over 20 years Plastic Mouldings Northern has gained an industry leading reputation in dealing in second hand and reconditioned plastic pallets, large pallet boxes and euro containers alongside its manufacturing capabilities in creating new and bespoke packaging solutions.

www.pmn-ltd.co.uk • @pmn_ltd



BARGAIN CLEARANCE CENTRE – FIRST MONTH TRADING A HUGE SUCCESS



What was the old Nat West Cash Depository in Washington, which was taken over last month, has seen record sales after opening its doors just three weeks ago.

Lee Taylor and Dean Kelly, owners of Bargain Clearance Centre took over the premises at Windlass Lane in Washington and, after spending two months renovating the building, it opened mid-October to hundreds of eager customers, looking to bag themselves a bargain or two.

The 11,000 sq ft secure building was stacked to the rafters with clearance bargains which thousands of patrons took full advantage of as Christmas approached with pallets of new stock arriving daily.

Over 1000 people visited the venue on day one and even the Sunday of that week saw over 500 visitors to the warehouse site.

One of the fist patrons to visit the business was Diane Fyall from Boldon. She told us: "I wanted to see what all the hype was about, and I wasn't disappointed. I bought a lot of my grandchildren's Christmas presents there and I also stocked up some great bargain stocking-fillers, which usually cost me a fortune."

The stock, which are all from well-known brands will be a Godsend to families, as the cost-of-living crisis takes hold.

Since the opening weekend, a steady stream of

about 300 customers per day have filtered into the warehouse and over 5,000 purchases have been made.

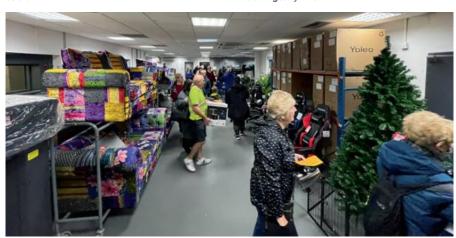
Lee told us: "To say we're delighted with how we've been welcomed to this new site is an understatement. We are pleased that we have been able to help so many of our customers with their shopping, especially in the lead up to Christmas and hope to keep welcoming them back."

The Bargain Clearance Centre hired nine members of staff to look after the customers at the site and are now looking for another four to keep up with demand.

The company, which prides itself in supplying quality products and bargain prices is open from 9-5, Monday to Friday and 10-4 Saturday.

Lee concluded: "It's really humbling to have so many people visit us and we're already seeing regular faces. As stock comes in daily, it hasn't taken people long to realise that they can bag themselves a bargain or two by visiting more often."

Bargain Clearance Centre, Windlass Lane, Washington, NE37 1BD.





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NET ZERO NORTH EAST ENGLAND: ACCELERATING THE REGIONAL RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY



Net Zero North East England has launched to accelerate the region's contribution to a greener economy and inspire action to decarbonise the economy from business, communities and institutions across the region.

The new collaboration between local government, business, education, the public sector and civil society is designed to provide a joined-up and immediate regional response to the climate emergency.

Its work will use the region's significant green knowledge and assets to encourage changes that will enable the North East to not only reach but surpass net zero targets and be used as an exemplar on a national and sectoral stage.

The ambition of Net Zero North East England is to create a greener, cleaner, fairer and more resilient region through:

- Decarbonisation and the delivery of the North East's contribution to national and global net zero targets
- Clean and innovative growth leading to more and better jobs
- Environmental protection, restoration and improvement
- A just and inclusive transition that leads to improvements in quality of life and growth in opportunity for all.

Heidi Mottram, Chair of Net Zero North East England said: "It's a privilege to be leading a collaborative response from regional leaders all deeply committed to addressing the climate emergency.

"The region is already home to significant, sector-leading decarbonisation activity such as in water innovation and green energy for growth, and we should rightly promote and celebrate this. By bringing these approaches and the areas in which we excel together, we can showcase best practice and find new partnership solutions to the challenges that remain"

Elected Metro Mayor for the North of Tyne, Jamie Driscoll, said: "The climate emergency is no longer a thing of the future. It's upon us. It's now. And it is too serious and too urgent for us to wait on world leaders. That's why we're taking action ourselves – here, in the North East. I'm pleased to be part of this coalition. Working together, we can achieve so much more, so much faster than we can by acting alone."

Chair of the North East Combined Authority, Graeme Miller, said: "Net Zero North East England is a powerful, shared vehicle for meeting our decarbonisation goals and leading the way in sustainable energy.

"In the months ahead we will be establishing, adopting and publishing clear and ambitious targets that can be monitored and evaluated, as well as aligning key regional strategies and programmes in support of our vision.

"Thanks to its natural geography and existing clean energy strengths the North East is extremely well placed for use as a test bed for pioneering new approaches, attracting funding and placing the region at the forefront of the UK's much-needed decarbonisation journey. We look forward to engaging with government to make this happen."

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

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OUR VISION

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OUR MISSION

"To bring together credible enterprise support and service delivery partners with the single goal of providing the right support, at the right time, for the right price for all SMEs to grow."

Wishing you a very SMErry Christmas!

Reach out to see how we can help you in 2023

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INNOVATION NATION

According to historians the wheel was invented over 6,000 years ago in Lower Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq), where the Sumerian people inserted rotating axles into solid discs of wood. However, the wheel invention has been innovated ever since leading on to the agricultural revolution that changed man (and women) kind.

There are many interpretations and explanations for innovations, for me it is simply fixing things or making them better or more relevantly adding value. Which is exactly what I have had a passion for, for as long as I can remember.

Take the internet, it was developed for the military as a communication tool. Now it is at the core of our lives for nearly every personal and professional action and interaction in our lives. All of us feel included and inspired through this innovation. Leading to further positive transformative change.

Starting as a temp in the call centre and progressing my way up, to lead on innovation through IT Service Delivery nationally, my applied innovation skills were fully tested and developed during my decade long career at Telewest.

In addition to my technical roles, I also led on staff engagement through publishing an in-house magazine. **Aptly named** "Combopolitan", as we delivered two services at the time. Having recently moved home, and being a hoarder, I came across lots of memorabilia including these magazines.

One of the articles I had written in 1995 was about the Internet and how Telewest was leading on its own Cable Internet service. Rather than the dial up service provided by a third party for BT Customers. Telewest went onto to lead the commercialisation of broadband nationally, which I was delighted to play a small part.

From an innovation perspective the Internet is arguably one of the greatest inventions and innovations ever. Forming the backbone for pretty much everything we do. However, innovation is far more than simply making things better, it drives inclusion and inspiration. Which is something I have become distinctly more aware of for the past 30 years or so.

An invention tends to be specifically focused towards an exclusive individual, or group of individuals, rather than everyone that may use the product or service. Whereas innovation takes the product or service and opens it up to everyone. **Encouraging, enabling**

and empowering others to make constant improvements so that more people can benefit.

For the past three years I have been incredibly fortunate to work with the Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) for the North East and North Cumbria (NENC). The foremost innovation led organisation that is part of the NHS and responsible for supporting innovation in and out of our Health Service.

Working in partnership with hundreds of organisations, I have seen first-hand how the AHSN NENC has managed to engage and influence all communities to help bring innovation to life, through inclusion, literally saving lives and improving livelihoods.

Leading to more clinical entrepreneurs being inspired to have a bigger and better impact on us all. Which is what I would love to see us all doing more of.

Just like the wheel was innovated to lead onto one of my favourite quiz shows, the Wheel of Fortune, let's create an innovation revolution that positively influences inclusion and inspires others to do the same.

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas and a positive, innovative led New Year.

God Bless, Ammar.

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







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Jackie Marston talks to...

GURSH KAHLON AND RANJ GILL

Directors at Clearwater Developments.

Based in Seaham, on Durham's heritage coast, Clearwater Developments Ltd, started trading in 2011 and has been responsible for some remarkable developments and conversions since it opened its doors.

Tell me how Clearwater Developments came about?

Ranj - Our very first project was in 2011 where we were lucky enough to have the opportunity to convert a former care home on Seaham's seafront. With a £1M development which took 12 months to complete the building was transformed into five commercial units and 12 luxury apartments. We were proud to be one of the first developers to invest on Seaham's seafront. The development now houses a bar/restaurant, an estate agent, a coffee shop, a hair salon, and a street café, as well as a number of holiday let apartments.

What came next?

Gursh – We've renovated a former surgery in the centre of Seaham and converted the building into 5000 square foot of office space. We also took possession of a former Co-op in Seaham and converted the building into five separate town houses. One of our larger projects in 2019 was the purchase of Sunderland Church High School in Ashbrooke, where two buildings were renovated with a £2M investment to make 24 luxury apartments, close to the city centre in Sunderland.

You seem to be concentrating your efforts in Seaham and Sunderland, why is that?

Ranj – In many towns and cities in the UK there are heritage buildings that have been abandoned and in need of regeneration. It is rewarding seeing something that was once tired and dilapidated restored and brought back to life. Regeneration in Seaham helps tourism, it helps the businesses, and the more people that visit and work / live in the area, the better it is for all.

Gursh – These areas have had significant private and public investment over the last decade along with increasing demand for high spec commercial and residential space, so it's been an obvious choice for us to invest here. We are both Seaham residents and it's great to see your hometown thriving following positive investments.

What's in the future for Clearwater Developments?

Ranj – We have a £1M, two-year project in Ashbrooke, which is due for completion in November 23. This was a former charity building, which is being restored into four, four-storey town houses. We've also acquired a building in Spectrum Business Park, a 40,000 square foot building which is due for completion by July 2023. This will make space for a high spec gym and luxury sea-front offices, again bringing muchneeded employment, visitors, and business to the region.

Gursh – As a growing company, we continue to look for new opportunities in our local areas, as we feel very strongly about the regeneration and transformation of it.

Clearwater Developments Limited, Unit 3, 21 North Terrace, Seaham SR7 7EU www.clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk info@clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk

A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

PETER MOORE

Director, T3 Security.

Formed in 2008 T3 Security have grown to become one of the UK's leading security companies. They provide security services to clients both locally and nationally and their growing portfolio is evidence of their ongoing success

What did you set out to achieve this year?

After the horrors and associated business changes of the pandemic we have made a great effort to scale the business and break into new sectors.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Despite many challenges I am very proud of the progress the business has made this year. We successfully tendered to handle security on the Trinity Square development in Gateshead and as a result of this we have established an excellent ongoing relationship with Savills, one of the worlds leading property experts. We have also successfully won a contract to provide security for a number of sites for Durham County Council. In addition we have grown our licensed premises work via pub groups Stonegate, Mitchells & Butlers and Wetherspoons. All immensely satisfying.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

Security is one of those services that is always needed throughout boom and bust times but we have strived to adapt and improve whilst continuing to grow.

What are you most proud of this year?

I suppose the ongoing work with Trinity Square which is something we worked towards for a long time. As a multi purpose site it is a complex security assignment with regular challenges and a testimony to our teams hard work that it is going so well.



What is the best piece of business advice you have received this year?

An unhappy customer can be your greatest source of learning

What have you learned about yourself?

That I have a much better ability to adapt and be more flexible in my approach than I thought I ever could be. I have also enjoyed embracing technology and learning to work smarter.

What is the most enjoyable business event you have been to this year?

Difficult to pinpoint one but it has been wonderful to see some semblance of normality

returning. A financial planning seminar with Lowes stands out and the Entrepreneurs Forum gatherings are always terrific value. I've probably played more corporate golf than ever before also which has been very enjoyable.

Describe 2022 in thee words?

Tough but rewarding

What are your aims for 2023?

To continue to grow the business, scale our management team, expand our geographical reach and of course reduce my golf handicap!

For further information on T3 Security visit the website www.t3security.co.uk









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It's a metaphor based on a minute precision skill but, make no mistake, Harlyn's work is on a vast scale. It specialises in moving complex and unique cargo. So, if your business is subsea pipelines and you want to arrange for a 250-tonne plough to be delivered halfway around the world - you call Harlyn.



But back to that TV cliche, Hamish explains: "I assume it happens in real life but we all know it from TV dramas. You know when the surgeon doesn't move a muscle but calls out 'scalpel' or 'swab' and it's handed to them - well that's like us responding. Our clients need to be 100% focused on a project and they need tools, machines or just solutions that enable them to continue what they're doing without breaking concentration.

"Whatever their job is - our job is making their life easier. The challenges they face are removed and replaced with solutions. They already have plenty to worry.

Or as the Harlyn Solutions website puts it - "Give us a call. We'll give you a solution. Go back to changing the world."

One such solution was the time during the pandemic, when a client wanted to repurpose an old oil dormitory in the Port of Tyne for use as a hospital in Peru. The cargo was lifted onto a barge and off it went. Planning, marine mitigation, mobilisation support, mooring plans. All sorted by Harlyn.

"Businesses and individuals only have a certain amount of capacity and thinking space to problem solve," says Hamish. "We want them to be free to think about the next challenge, knowing that solutions meeting the industry's highest standards are in place."

Increasingly ongoing and future challenges for Harlyn revolve around energy. From geopolitical pressures to the climate change clamour for net zero. The world is suddenly very aware of the need for secure green power.

When a client wanted 49 pieces of previously demobilised equipment to be located, catalogued, checked and delivered to help lay and repair cable from offshore wind farms, they trusted Harlyn with the challenge.



"Some of the equipment had been in storage for years. It needed to be re-certified, fixed, and re-packed in order to be transported. It was a logistical nightmare - that could have eaten away at their time and budget. Things like this can quickly derail projects if you don't have a turnkey solution

"The work they do is enabling a greener, better world. It's exciting and inspiring to be a part of, but ultimately - someone has to gather, load, and move all the parts and equipment necessary to ensure it happens at all."

Despite Britain entering the early stages of a recession, Hamish remains confident that Harlyn can continue to go from strength to strength

"Our customers continue to report massive increases in workload and general sense of busyness. The fear of the recession is there and obviously cuts in public spend can impact hugely but the need for energy and energy solutions, in particular, isn't going to change."

Harlyn's future and the service it offers will also be shaped by how it reacts to challenges, and the strength of its ever-developing team.

That includes investment in tech, like the the purchase of a lidar drone which allows Harlyn to scan clients' cargo from the air. If clients don't have a complete cargo inventory, a 3D cargo model can be produced which helps to locate each item.

But, while Harlyn continues to seek out tech-led solutions, its most important investment will always be its people.

"At Harlyn we have a culture whereby first and foremost you're a Harlyn Engineer. You're not a mechanical engineer, you're not a naval architect or whatever - you work for Harlyn and we do the job that we do and no one else does it the way we do.

"We do a lot of training courses and we're always learning but we also learn by seeing and doing at all levels. So, when I was recently in Spain to oversee a project for a nuclear power station - a graduate engineer came with us.

"He didn't have to be here and there was certainly no additional cost to the client - but that is how our development works."

Finally, although both the work and the challenges are global -Harlyn remains firmly rooted in the North East, which is increasingly acknowledged as Britain's biggest green energy hub.

"The biggest constituent of the North East green investment is offshore wind and there's so much activity around our ports serving these projects. Beyond that, we work quite extensively with a number of people burying and installing subsea cables. That specialism lives in the North East of England.

"We work across the world but we're very proud to be a young company, based in Blyth," says Hamish.

Get in touch. Get a solution. +44 (0)191 691 8780 hello@harlynsolutions.com • harlynsolutions.com



ONYX HEALTH EXPANDS WITH TWO NEW APPOINTMENTS

Creative healthcare marketing communications agency Onyx Health has strengthened its account management and medical writing teams with two new appointments; Rosie Thompson as an Account Manager and Modupe Ayeni as a Medical Writer.

The new appointments mark the latest phase of Onyx Health's expansion, which has seen the agency almost triple its headcount over the last two years from twelve to thirty-five.

North East native Rosie Thompson joins the team at Onyx Health from Newcastle-based agency Curtis Gabriel, where she worked as an Account Strategist across various accounts and sectors. Prior to this, she worked for the leading national bakery chain Greggs,

as a Retail Marketing Coordinator. Rosie is a graduate of Northumbria University with a BA in Journalism and English and a Master's in Mass Communication Management.

Modupe Ayeni was born in Nigeria, has PhD in Cardiovascular Science from The University of Leicester, where she also studied Physiology with Pharmacology at an undergraduate level. Before making the move into agency life. Modupe worked as a PhD researcher at The University of Leicester and later taught

science in Middlesbrough, within the Outwood Academy Trust. She brings a wealth of specialist knowledge and expertise to her new role.

Commenting on the latest additions to the team, Onyx Health's Managing Director Trevor Pill said: "It's been another amazing year at Onyx Health, where we've continued to grow and expand as a business. Our new team members will not only enhance our scientific and medical expertise across a range of disease areas and clinical specialisms but bolster the account management and client liaison services that we offer as an agency.

"We have exciting plans for global growth over the next few years, driven by the development of integrated omnichannel communication campaigns. As a North East based agency, we are privileged to have such a hotbed of creative and scientific talent on our doorstep. Harnessing the power of these assets will be crucial to driving our future expansion plans."

onyxhealth.com

THE NEW STANDARD FOR SUSTAINABILITY DISCLOSURES AND HOW IT AFFECTS YOUR BUSINESS

In October 2022, The International Sustainability Standards Board (ISSB) has unanimously confirmed to require companies to disclose scope 1, scope 2, and now scope 3 greenhouse gas emissions. This decision was made to provide investors with high quality, transparent, reliable, and comparable data on climate-related risks and opportunities.

The new reporting requirements will come into effect for fiscal years beginning on or after January 1st, 2025.

There are two primary reasons for this change. First, there is an increasing need for businesses to disclose their climate-related risks and opportunities to make informed strategic decisions. Second, the demand for high-quality, transparent data has never been higher. The need to provide this type of information is growing increasingly more important as investors seek out reliable and comparable sources they can trust to find opportunities that will benefit them financially.

For businesses to comply with the new standards, they must improve how they track their scopes 1, 2, and 3 carbon emissions. This will require making significant changes to their operations or purchasing decisions. It is important to start planning for these changes now so that you can make the necessary adjustments in time.

The first step to addressing the challenges associated with compliant scopes 1, 2, and 3 emissions reporting is having accurate, real-time data. Cuttingedge energy and carbon management platforms are invaluable tools for businesses that need to minutely calculate and report their carbon footprint. Such platforms dramatically lessen the workload and complications associated with emissions reporting.

And as awareness of the climate crisis grows, investors and consumers are increasingly demanding that businesses disclose their carbon emissions and energy usage. For many businesses, this presents an opportunity to benchmark their performance against their peers and identify opportunities for improvement. In some cases, disclosing energy data can also be a key step towards achieving climate-related goals such as energy efficiency or net zero emissions. By doing so, businesses can signal their commitment to



climate action and build trust with stakeholders. Ultimately, public disclosure of energy and carbon data can help businesses to improve their climate-related planning and strategies.

Data platforms that streamline energy and carbon reporting and monitoring of reduction targets through the accurate measuring of a business' energy and carbon intensity exist. This kind of technology puts businesses in control of how they not only disclose their carbon emissions, but also reach optimal energy performance, reduce energy expenditures, and reduce your impact on the environment.

Visit clearvue.business to discover technology and consultancy solutions that will help your business report and reduce its scopes 1, 2, and 3 carbon emissions.

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Avoiding an Udder Disaster

A North East business and technology consultancy is helping firms learn to avoid an Udder Disaster with the creation of its own board game.

Information security and business resilience experts Sarah Cunningham, and Craig Archdeacon from Waterstons Ltd, which is headquartered in Durham and has offices in London and Glasgow, plus Sydney, Australia, developed the farmyard themed game to help replicate real life events in a fun and interactive

Craig, Head of Cyber Assurance at Waterstons said: "It can be difficult to articulate the importance of balancing business objectives with good risk management, cyber security and a well-thought-out strategy, so we created this game to close the gap between innovation, growth and the reality of building a business.

"Although an important subject matter, it was vital for us to make sure it was understood, so making it fun and engaging was a given as that way players don't even realise they are gaining a greater understanding of why protections are in place to enable effective operation, opportunity creation and taking well-informed,

In the game, which takes common business scenarios and applies them to the context of a dairy farm, players need to successfully navigate the challenges of running a business, considering key components and strategies to protect, adapt, optimise and innovate.

Craig continued: "One of the biggest cyber security weaknesses for businesses is lack of knowledge amongst staff, so Udder Disaster can be used as a training tool for teams, business leaders, operational managers and budding entrepreneurs to understand vulnerabilities, risks and budgets outside of the context of their own business."

Initially developed during the first Covid-19 lockdown, the game is now available to play both virtually and in-person, meaning it can be accessed by firms all over the world.



Tech Equal teams up with Spark Tees Valley to offer training sessions

Tech Equal, a charity backed by Teesside entrepreneur Dean Benson, has launched to stamp out digital inequality in schools by providing every child with an iPad.

The organisation which is currently working with 15 primary schools in Middlesbrough, has also teamed up with Spark Tees Valley to deliver training to teachers and school aides to ensure they are also fully equipped to be able to teach from a digital device.

Office of National Statistics data shows 1.7 million children don't have access to a computer or device at home, leaving them reliant on schools to fill the void. Education settings, meanwhile, are also struggling to ensure they can supply devices on a one-to-

Dean Benson, founder of Tech Equal, said: "Giving every single child in Middlesbrough an equal opportunity to be immersed in a digital world and have the tools needed is vital to make sure we fully unlock the potential of our next generation.

"It's simple, it's the right thing to do and we're already making huge steps towards this goal."

From entry level to director and over 1243% growth in a decade

A key member of staff at a leading managed service provider is celebrating ten years with the business, and a journey that has seen the company grow from 10 to over 140 staff, creating job opportunities across the region.

Mark Wilkinson joined razorblue in September 2012 in a technical projects role, being promoted to management and to a director, before his current position as Group Commercial Director. During this time the business has grown exponentially, completed two acquisitions, and shows no sign of slowing down!

Mark said: "Looking back at what razorblue has achieved in just 10 years, I am so proud to have contributed to that with the help of our CEO, Dan Kitchen's leadership. We have an excellent team and exciting client base, meaning I've been able to work with phenomenal people.

"During my time here, razorblue has supported me through my PRINCE qualification (project management) as well as many technical certifications, and I've also been able to help my own team develop and progress in their roles, which is



something I am proud of.

Following recent investment and a move of its Stockton office to accommodate continued growth, razorblue has big plans for the future – including creating a raft of new jobs in the area.

Dan Kitchen, CEO said: "Mark's contribution to the business over the last 10 years has been instrumental to getting us to where we are today. Our entire ethos is built on being a strategic partner, and doing the right, fair thing for our clients – Mark has embraced that from day one and I'm looking forward to enjoying our continued success together."

With a client base of over 500 companies across the UK and boasting seven offices, razorblue specialises in managed IT, security services, super-fast connectivity, cloud and hosting and business software solutions across a broad range of industries.



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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

SARAH HOWELL

Director of Finance, Howell Technology Group (HTG).

What did you set out to achieve this year?

The last couple of years have taught us that while forward planning is vital, you also need to be able to react quickly to changes over which you have no control. Although we achieved our plan to build on our growth, open up some new sectors where we have a lot of expertise, and increase our profile, we also knew we needed to be flexible in our approach to achieving our goals.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Any business owner would say things don't always go to plan, but that's how life goes for everyone, it would be very boring if everything always ran smoothly.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

The last few years have seen everyone – including ourselves - re-evaluate where and how their people do their best work. We specialise in creating cloud-based modern workplaces and at the start of the pandemic we helped lots of organisations quickly adapt to hybrid working. As cloud specialists it's been very rewarding to help other businesses accelerate their cloud journey.

What are you most proud of this year?

We are incredibly proud to have been awarded multiple Microsoft Advanced Specialisms. These recognise our excellence with Microsoft technologies and are a testament to our team's hard work and dedication.

We also moved into our new headquarters, doubling floor space to support more new jobs. Managing the move was a team effort, and we've created a great working environment, including a gym and shower facilities. It's really good to see everyone back in the office.

Making the Ward Hadaway Fastest 50 listings and being included in a group of the region's fastest growing businesses was a proud moment too.

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

2022 has reinforced my view that a healthy business culture is vital. Our new Head of People and Culture Louise Roughley is helping us develop policies on recruitment, development and welfare to maintain a healthy culture where people feel valued and looked after. Richard Branson said: "Create the kind of workplace and company culture that will attract great talent," and that's our aim.

How has your team changed?

We've changed our structure to better support growth, adding to our senior leadership team by creating new roles such as Sales Director, Ops Director, Head of Security, and Head of People and Culture, to add different skills and experience that strengthen the business. We are also about to appoint a very well respected business figure to our team, to support us with strategic advice.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That I have strengths in areas other than finance. I enjoy helping to set the strategy and I have value to add. I realised I have endless reserves of patience and a flair for serious multitasking, looking after the financial and cultural health of the business, and simultaneously overseeing a big office move.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

The Entrepreneurs' Forum Entrepreneurial Awards. Listening to founders Sir Peter Vardy and Lorna Moran talk about their motivation for establishing the Forum and hearing them speak about the loneliness of running business resonated with me, especially coming off the back of Covid. We are responsible not just for the business but for all our team and their families too. I came away thinking that actually it's OK to celebrate what we have achieved, and give ourselves a bit more credit.

Describe 2022 in three words...

Challenging, enjoyable, and satisfying.

What are your aims for 2023?

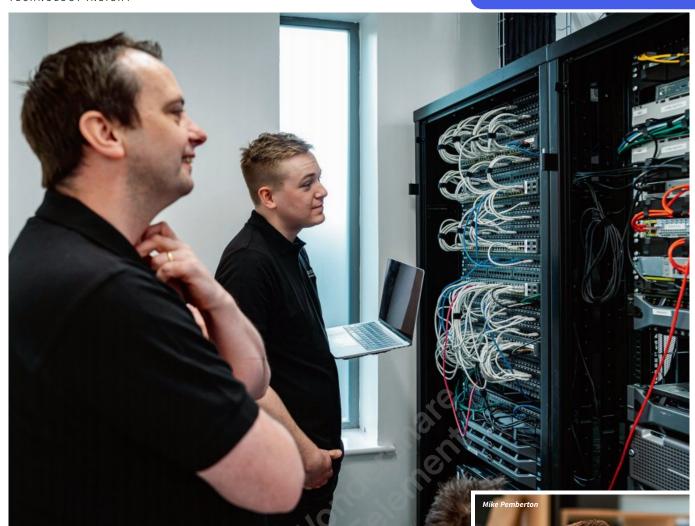
To continue to be loved by our clients, valued by our partners and admired by our competitors.

We are developing policies to create a level playing field and encourage more women into tech careers, as we continue to grow our team and support a range of good causes.

It's all about showing other organisations how to use tech tools to create a modern workplace that will achieve the business outcomes they are looking for.

www.htg.co.uk





IS YOUR BUSINESS PREPARED FOR A BLACKOUT?

There's been plenty of rumours surrounding potential blackouts since the start of the energy crisis, but have you considered what power outages could mean for - and do to - your business?

We rely on electricity for almost everything, from communicating to manufacturing, making payments to opening doors, but we're fortunate to live in a world where it is readily available and protected. Right?

The main narrative surrounding blackouts at the moment is largely around the Government conducting – and practicing for – planned outages if the country is unable to import enough gas and/or electricity from continental Europe in the wake of the war in Ukraine.

While planned outages are unlikely, the National Grid will be running close to maximum capacity and an incident that otherwise would be minor, could cause significant overloads, and unplanned outages.

Preparing for a blackout

There are two angles to your preparations – operations and IT. Many consider the former but neglect the latter, assuming generators will kick in or that uninterruptable power supplies will hold, and IT hardware will continue to operate without interruption.

There are lots of things to ask yourselves and consider as leaders, including:

- **1. Check your uninterruptable power supplies** Have they been tested recently? How much run time do they have? How old are the batteries?
- 2. What's the plan for the servers? How are they being shut down? How are they being secured? Who is assigned the task and who's the backup?
- **3. Temperature check.** How will you keep vital equipment hot/cool to maintain your operation and remove risk of damaging hardware?
- **4. How up to speed are your staff?** Do they know the business continuity plan? Is it accessible offline? Do they know where hardware and literal buttons are if needed?

Regardless of length, a blackout can have a catastrophic impact on your business, and therefore your brand, revenue and team. Don't be caught out.

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TALKING TECH AND DIGITAL

In the latest of these popular series of features, Michael Grahamslaw talks to...

CHRISTOPHER SCOTT ELLSAESSER

Technical Director, Adept Communications and Technology Ltd.

Did you always envisage a career in Technology?

Not at all and I initially thought about becoming an architect. At school I studied aerospace engineering and medicine through an accelerated magnet program. It was only when I moved to the UK at the age of 14 that I gravitated towards business and economics. Following University, I moved into Telecommunications with the family business as a full time member of staff. I spent three years in a KTP programme through Sunderland University in research and development. This helped me to become more skilled and rounded. My completed project was to build a voice bridge from a mobile to a VoIP Telephony Solution.

What attracted you to your current role?

My father is a systems engineer for a large hospital group, a role he has always enjoyed! Having a similar mind set to my dad's, I thought it would be good to mirror that. I naturally love to see things being developed and built, I absorb information and learn about things quickly at a deeper level. IT is a perfect field for me as that is exactly what is needed to understand, grow and change with technology.

Tell us about the business.

We founded Way 2 Communicate in 2010 which grew substantially and lead us to purchase a long established IT company. We merged the two companies and Adept Communications and Technology Ltd. was born. We offer a full suite of IT managed services including business broadband, VoIP Telephony, Cyber Essentials, Cyber Essentials Plus and IT support. I test and curate every product and service we offer, always aiming for the best in class and in pricing. We are ably supported by five technical engineers who are customer focused and eager to delight our customers with their knowledge and service.

What tips would you give someone starting a career in the IT industry?

It is a big field so find something specific to attract your interest and use that as a starting point.

What are you currently working on?

We are helping customers work in a safer way through educating them as well as doing a number of cyber security assessments, remediating their processes and hardware as necessary. In addition we are further developing our website, developing a customer portal where they can access news, offers, and a number of DIY/ self-help videos.

What is your fondest career memory?

At the outset of Covid, we got a call from the NHS asking for a Covid call centre to be set up. We set up this call centre and had it installed and running successfully within two weeks. The NHS used this call centre as an integral part of its Covid vaccination rollout programme. That was immensely satisfying.

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

Keep it simple! You don't need to get fancy and complicated to have an excellent fit for purpose and secure network.

What technology gadget can you not live without?

My Samsung S21 mobile phone which does everything. I can literally run my life from it.

Who are your heroes and mentors?

For a spell I was the number one in the UK for men's trampolining although sadly my competitive days are over. From that field my heroes were Dong Dong and Jason Burnett who took gold and silver medals at the 2012 Olympics where one of our club members, Katherine Driscoll, also participated.

I am also a huge Buddy Rich fan, one of the most influential drummers of all time.

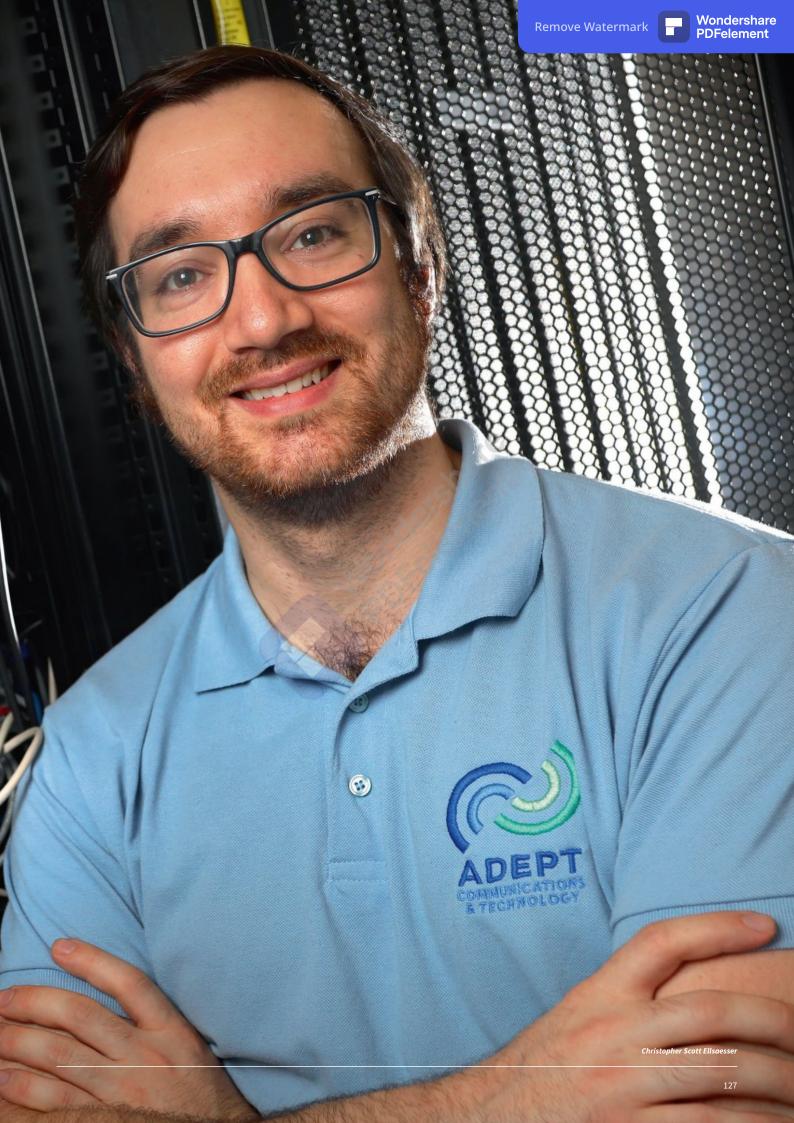
How do you like to relax?

Coaching trampolining and walking my dogs in Chopwell woods.

What does the future hold?

Continued growth for Adept, developing a good reputation through competency within the cybersecurity space. 2023 will be the year of Customer Journey as it relates to Adept. We want to make it the best it can be!

adeptcts.co.uk





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As a result of this, we build strong, long-lasting relationships with our partners, a key one being Synergi, with whom we have been in partnership for over five years. Synergi, like ourselves, is based in Gateshead, they are a cloud technology and digital solutions specialist. Throughout our partnership, we have worked together on several big projects including UK Banks and large private and public-sector organisations.

Eclipse and Synergi have recently continued our great work together to provide a WAN Solution for The NEAT Academy Trust. The NEAT Academy Trust is a collaborative partnership of six primary and secondary schools, and an early year's centre across the North East of England, working together to provide a first-class education for all their learners. Shaun Dillon (Head of Digital Resources and Delivery) is leading the IT transformation at NEAT. During this project, we have overcome several challenges including Openreach strikes, Virgin Media delivery issues, blocked ducts, and council delays. However, with the team's resilience and hard work we ensured minimal disruption. We created solutions by utilising our full suite of products which meant we could quickly provision alternate fast reliable internet as an interim, which enabled the schools to have no loss of service when moving away from local councils.

Our Head of Sales, Matthew Begg commented 'This was a challenging project to deliver due to unforeseen issues, however, I am incredibly happy with the team for going the extra mile to make sure this was as smooth as possible for NEAT.'

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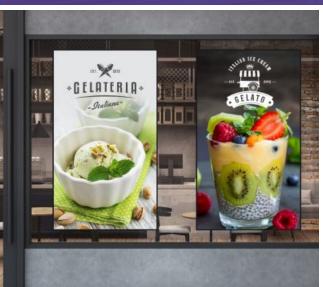
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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

IAN MUSGRAVE

Chief Technology Officer, Forfusion.

What did Forfusion set out to achieve this year?

The main focus was on consolidation and building back from a couple of tough years managing the fallout from Covid and its impact on our customers and supply chains.

Has everything gone according to plan?

More or less, we've engaged with more new customers than ever before, and the pipeline is the strongest it's ever been. We're still being impacted by the significant backlogs and delays on the hardware side. Network equipment manufacturing is still suffering from shortages on the chip front; these will take some time yet to dissipate entirely. But the company is agile enough to adapt; for example, we've added new managed service offerings that have brought new revenue streams to the business.

How has the business bounced back from the Coronavirus crisis?

Really well, we're a very adaptable organisation. We're agile enough to shift focus quite quickly when we hit challenges like those described above. So, the coming six months should see us exceed expectations if we can deliver against the pipeline we've built.

What are you most proud of this year?

Our workforce has shown remarkable resilience and flexibility through what has been a tough period. I'm very proud of all of them.

What's the best business advice you've received this year?

Don't panic! - the confidence I have in our outstanding workforce means we're able to adapt and ride out challenges which others are not so <u>capable of doing.</u>

How has your team evolved?

I think we've learned a lot about ourselves as a company this past year, and on top of everything thrown at us, we've managed to mature significantly as a business in quite a short period of time. Some tough decisions have had to be made coming out of the pandemic. Where in the past, we may have been slow to make critical decisions, that is no longer the case.

Describe 2022 in three words

Busy, surprising, resilient.

What does the remainder of the year hold?

Hopefully a little bit of a break to spend some time with family and friends, reset and get ready for 2023 - it looks like it's going to be quite a year at Forfusion.

What are Forfusion's goals for 2023?

To set some records and leave the last couple of years well behind us.

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BLUEOCTO NAMED AMONG UK'S TOP ECOMMERCE AGENCIES

A boutique North East web development and design agency has been named among the best in the UK.

Sunderland-based Blueocto was ranked 19th in the 'Top 100 UK Shopify Developers' list for 2022, beating some of the biggest names in the industry and being crowned the best in the North East.

Compiled by The Manifest and Clutch, the annual table considers a range of factors, from client reviews to the quality and quantity of services offered and projects delivered.

Founded in 2015 by web development specialist, Caroline Hagan, Blueocto was set up to design and deliver websites for SMEs across

the North East. Since then, the company has grown to secure contracts across the region for clients big and small from an array of sectors.

This includes recent projects for AddictionsUK, Mental Health Concern and North East Homeless, all of which were highlighted by the authors of the report as stand out, exemplar projects.

Caroline Hagan, founder and director of Blueocto, said: "We were absolutely blown away when we received the email to say we'd been ranked among Shopify's top UK developers.

"When we heard the news, we were delighted just to be in the top 100, but when we heard we were 19th, we were absolutely gobsmacked.

"They compile the table from independent reviews and research they undertake themselves, so it's not like we even had to submit an application, which goes to show just how hard the team have worked to achieve this.

"I can't thank them enough for their help over the last few years to get the business where we are today."

Caroline has grown Blueocto organically since launching the business in 2015 but is now eyeing further growth after relocating to a new office at the North East BIC.

Having previously worked from the centre's co-working space, the new office will allow the team to work more collaboratively on client projects and – following the recruitment of software development apprentice, Ben Carson,

from Baltic Apprenticeships in July – will provide the company with the space required to continue growing its headcount.

"We took on our latest apprentice in July following our previous positive dealings with Baltic and he has really hit the ground running so far," Caroline added. "I started out as a junior developer in the industry myself and have worked my way up to where I am today, so providing opportunities to more young people is something we're really passionate about as a company.

"Having our own office at the BIC will also give us ample opportunity to continue growing our team as we plan for the future, especially as we begin to look at expanding our presence outside of the North East and increasing our specialisms as a company.

"Since launching, we've gone from designing and developing websites and platforms for small businesses to an agency able to offer a real full-service digital offering to companies, be it design and development, digital marketing, migration, SEO or accessibility audits.

"We've really gone from strength-to-strength and are excited to see what the future holds as we continue investing in our team and expanding our offering."

For more information on Blueocto Ltd, visit: blueocto.co.uk or follow @blueocto on Twitter.



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A YEAR IN THE LIFE AT...



HOW DO YOU MEASURE A YEAR IN THE LIFE AT WATERSTONS?

Michael Stirrup, CEO of Waterstons.

After two years of pandemic, an uncertain and unstable economy, the breakout of war in Ukraine and an ever-evolving energy crisis, 2022 feels like a year of doom and gloom. But at Waterstons, we focus on the positives and in tough times, always lean on our values to see us through.



Trust, collaboration, innovation and putting people first are just some of the pillars of our business and, by leaning on each, we have had a fantastic year. Here's how we measured that.

- Almost 15% increase in people to 280 across our UK and Australia operations.
- Welcomed over 50 new clients.
- Added several new services.
- Listed in the GP Bullhound Top 100 Fastest Growing Northern Tech Companies.
- Launched our own board game to help business leaders understand business resilience.
- Celebrated the first anniversary of our 24/7 Security Operations Centre.
- Named Best Cyber Security Company over 150 staff at the Cyber Security Awards.
- Developed and launched a campaign for university students in honour of our former Head of Bespoke Software who we sadly lost in January.
- Grew beards, Marched into March and carved pumpkins to raise money for charity.
- Announced over 15 internal promotions due to hard work and proven expertise.
- Won Best Use of Data and People's Choice at the Dynamo Awards.
- Increased our diversity, plus launched our own podcast; DEI: Naked Conversations with consultant Janet Houlis.
- Stepped into the Metaverse for ourselves and clients for meetings and collaboration.
- Supported DurHack, CyberFest, UCISA, EmPowerCyber North East and many more events throughout the UK for professionals and students alike.

"We have an ambitious strategy to take us to 2025, and we're well on the way to achieving that. Above all, we've promised ourselves and our team that we will be ambitious and bold; that we will take risks, have fun and achieve amazing things together.

"As my first full year as CEO after being appointed into the role in June 2021, this year has been one of immense change but also huge excitement. The new board, directors and leadership team are taking the business into its next phase and have an incredible team of excellent, knowledgeable passionate people to transport us there.

"We have no doubt that the coming years will be challenging, but we will continue to form trusted partnerships with our clients to solve business problems through our understanding of people industry and technology – none of which would be possible without our skilled, diverse and empowered teams.

"Bring on 2023 and beyond!"

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NEW CEO AT THE HELM FOR TECH SPECIALISTS ITPS

IT specialist ITPS has unveiled new appointments to its board and senior leadership team, to support its next phase of growth.

The Chester le Street-based business delivers intelligent technology solutions across cloud, network services, cyber security, managed services, professional services, and data and analytics.

Respected industry figure Simon Newton joins as the new CEO, bringing a 25-year background in senior management roles, having played pivotal roles in the growth of businesses spanning the IT, financial, and clean energy sectors.

Joining him is head of product management Dr Dave Reed, who has 30 years' experience working across the world in the leadership of technical product development and cyber security. His new role will see him oversee product development and delivery across the business as ITPS extends its range of services, with an emphasis on cyber security, cost optimisation, and data and analytics.

Commenting on his new role, Dr Reed said: "Joining ITPS was an easy decision. Being part of a new management team and driving the evolution of our products and services is exciting and challenging in equal measures."

Rachel Potter steps into the newly created role of head of marketing, where she will use her multi-national experience in leading marketing



strategies, implementing new brands and delivering high-impact communications in the digital, software and publishing industries.

"It's exciting to have joined ITPS at such a pivotal point, and I am looking forward to working with the team on immediate priorities, including a brand refresh and new website, as we position for further growth next year," said Rachel.

Simon Newton added: "This is a new era for ITPS, as the business emerges from the pandemic years leaner and fitter, supported by new owners and a strengthened management team.

"It is tremendously exciting to join a team with

such an impressive reputation for the provision of complex IT services, and to be leading the business as we deliver an ambitious business plan.

"We will continue to build the team and to grow our business, building on a great reputation for technical excellence. We grow by helping our customers to grow, deploying secure and flexible IT solutions that drive their productivity.

"A very promising future lies ahead for ITPS and its customers."

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REASONS TO REPLATFORM

By Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead, Leighton.

Replatforming is the process of migrating from one software platform or application to another and means moving data, assets, content, modules, templates and integrations to a new solution. Whilst replatforming can be complex, it does provide the chance to implement a cloud-based strategy whilst improving (or preserving) existing functionality.

When it comes to replatforming, most businesses decide to do so once they run into a challenge with their current technology, and often, when they're thinking about replatforming it's already too late. This is largely because most commercial, off-the-shelf software from the last decade was not designed for the cloud and therefore has limitations in terms of cost, scale and availability. Typically, as platforms age, their limitations start to show

The more business-critical or large scale the app, the more value cloud native architecture can add, but ultimately the decision to replatform must be based on specific business needs. In this article, Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead at leading software development business, Leighton shares some of the most common reasons to replatform.

1. Scalability

One of the most common challenges with legacy software is scalability, or lack thereof. As your business grows, your current technology might not be able to keep up with an influx of visitors or users or perhaps functionality can't keep up with the needs of your business - especially if you are using a closed system and you can't influence the product roadmap or technology decisions are reliant on the vendor's decisions. Likewise, your business may be forced to shrink based on market conditions, so your software capabilities need to expand or decrease with you. Replatforming empowers businesses to scale with more control.

2. Costs

Increasing operating costs are another common reason for ditching legacy systems in favour of replatforming. By transitioning from on-premise to cloud-based services, you can switch from buying licenses or software outright to pay-as-you-go or subscription-based models, meaning you are only charged for the resources you consume. With these models, typically there are no upfront fees, minimum commitments, or long-term contracts required. Replatforming can also help increase automation, improving staff productivity and minimising human error, which ultimately impacts the bottom line.

3. Availability

This one goes hand in hand with price and scale, but the availability of your existing application might be a factor when it comes to replatforming. For example, your current platform might not be performative during peaks, or you may be having issues with downtime, meaning your software just isn't available when you or your users need it. Alternatively, you might be trading in different regions or operating at a global scale and your technology might not be available in specific countries or regions.

Unfortunately, there is no 'right time' to replatform once your legacy software becomes outdated. But putting off replatforming can put your business-critical application at risk of becoming obsolete and unusable. So, if you're thinking about replatforming, it's probably too late... Start now by working with your technology partner to assess your business' needs and find the right solution. Think about your business' goals. What features do you need to add or remove to get there? What functionality in your current platform is hindering your growth? Answer those questions and you've already started the process of replatforming.

leighton.com

66

...putting off replatforming can put your business-critical application at risk...



CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE -**RAZORBLUE**

IT is the backbone of every company, no matter its size, industry or aspirations. But to keep the business operating smoothly, protected from threats and able to grow, it needs a strategic partner to take care of that function.

razorblue was established in 2006 and has since grown exponentially - with a headcount of over 160, seven offices, more than 500 clients across the UK a well-respected an ISP with its own core network, razorblue is the managed service provider of choice for businesses across all industries, and offers business applications too.

Dan Kitchen, CEO of razorblue explains: "We believe that the traditional model of IT support is outdated – it focuses on selling a service rather than becoming a true partner, and this is what razorblue has focused on being, enabling us to offer unrivalled support, service and growth potential to our clients.

"From managed IT support and superfast connectivity which ensure that employees can do their day-to-day tasks, to sophisticated cyber security solutions, and ongoing strategic growth planning - we become part of our customer's team rather than just selling an off-the-shelf

The company has near 100 per cent client retention and a consistently high Net Promoter Score, so businesses can trust razorblue with their systems from day one.

razorblue provides a wide range of services including managed IT support, connectivity, cloud solutions and software development. The company's target market is UK-based SMEs, typically with 50 or more users.

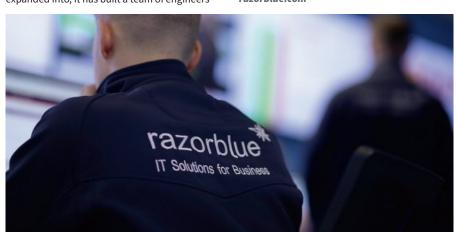
To continue its growth plans, razorblue maintains partnerships with industry-leading technology vendors such as Microsoft, HP, Sophos and Mimecast and is driving expansion through a strategy of locally-focused operations; in each new region that the business has expanded into, it has built a team of engineers

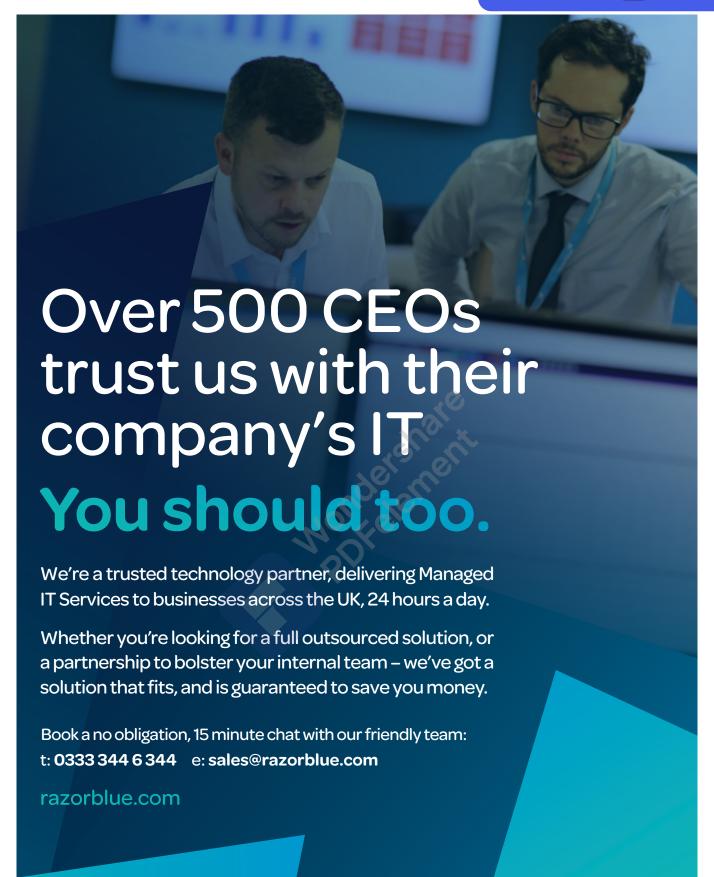
and account managers 'on the ground', making the company accessible and relevant to customers in that area while maintaining the overall ethos of razorblue.

The business is already well-established in the North East and North West, with the latter office's team growing by 170 per cent since 2018 and being the 2021 winner of the GMCC Entrepreneurial Success award. But while growth in these two regions remains a focus, so does growth in Scotland following the 2021 acquisition in Stirling.

In October 2022, CEO Dan Kitchen was announced as 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

razorblue.com















New holiday cottages to boost staycation in Northumberland

A new development of holiday accommodation with hot tubs has been given the green light, enhancing Northumberland's staycation offering in time for the 2023 staycation season.

Due to growing demand, North Farm Cottages in Embleton has invested around £1m to add six new stone cottages to its accommodation offering, each with unbeatable views of the Northumberland coast. Construction is underway with the first holidaymakers expected to stay in early summer.

Property specialist George F. White advised North Farm Cottages on the venture and led the planning process. With the addition of the six new units, the popular holiday site will be home to 20 holiday let cottages.

Craig Ross, Partner at George F. White, said: "We've been fortunate to support North Farm Cottages from the beginning when they founded their holiday business. They saw an opportunity to create an amazing staycation destination in Northumberland, which has expanded over the years in response to growing demand from



holidaymakers attracted to the county. It's brilliant to see them growing again with these new cottages, which we were pleased to secure planning permission for."

The cottages have been carefully designed to complement their rural setting by the coast, with a traditional and cosy feel, using stone brick and exposed beams. Each cottage will sleep up to four guests and have a spacious lounge area

with a log burner, fully equipped kitchen, two bedrooms, family bathroom, private garden and outdoor hot tub.

Use of existing on-site facilities will be available to guests, including an indoor swimming pool. Holidaymakers can also access the nearby beach and village of Newton by the Sea via private walking tracks.



New affordable homes welcome first residents

A fantastic development of high-quality affordable homes has been officially opened in Northumberland.

The 27 new homes at Adlam Court, Blyth, have been developed specifically for local people.

The Castles & Coasts Housing Association (CCHA) project, in the Newsham area of the town, consists of eight bungalows, six three-bed houses and 13 two-bed houses – which are all now let at an affordable rent.

Homes England helped fund the near-£4m project, with construction work carried out by Imperator Developments. The scheme was delivered on time and within budget, despite the challenges presented by Covid-19 and material shortages, which affected all parts of the construction sector during the build period.

Work started on the scheme in February 2021, and has transformed an area of abandoned land, turning it into a small modern community of much-needed homes for local families and older people.

My Property Box strengthens its position in the North East

Estate agency group My Property Box has further strengthened its presence in Tyneside, Wearside, and Northumberland, with the acquisitions of Acorn Properties Ltd and KIS Lettings.

Newcastle-based estate agent Acorn Properties is a significant player in the lettings market and advertises more than 800 properties, including houses of multiple occupation, a year. All 14 staff are to be retained, together with its office in Jesmond, which serves an area from Durham City to Northumberland.

The sale of Acorn Properties, which was owned by John and Margaret Henderson and Louise Greetham, operates from the area of Alnwick in the North, Durham to the South and Hexham to the West. Louise will remain to manage Acorn Properties.

My Property Box, which operates throughout the North East and North Yorkshire, has also acquired KIS Lettings. Its 130-strong portfolio of properties across an area including South Shields, North Shields, Newcastle, and



Sunderland, has been transferred to My Property Box's sister company, Groves Residential, which is based in Jesmond.

KIS Lettings, which previously operated branches in Sunderland, North Shields and Welwyn Garden City, was founded by entrepreneur and UK property guru Ajay Jagota, who sold the business to launch a new venture offering a specialist tenancy compliance service. Its remaining office in South Shields has now closed.

My Property Box, currently celebrating its 10th anniversary, has now completed nine acquisitions within the last four years, including South Shields-based Westoe Lettings and Groves Residential in 2021, which serves an area from Berwick upon Tweed to south of the Tyne.



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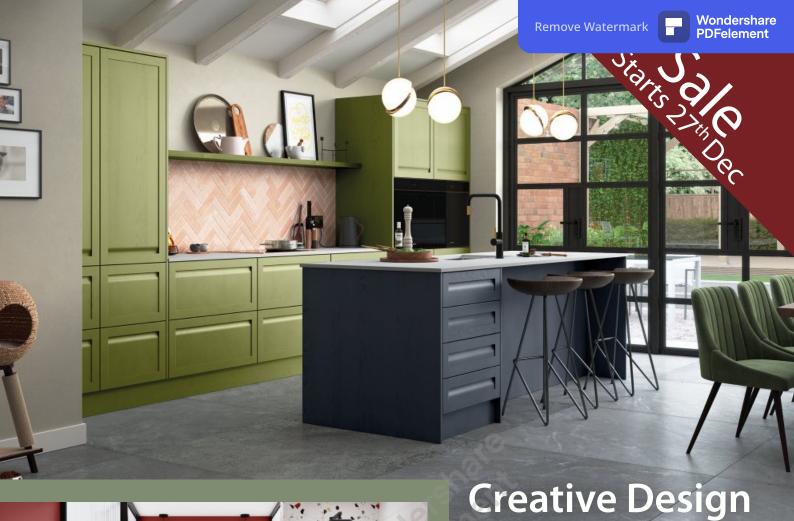




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Durham offices purchase for UMi

At a time when commercial property for sale is in short supply, JK Property Consultants LLP, has advised ambitious business support services provider, UMi, on the purchase of Allergate House, Belmont Business Park, Durham.

Employing over 100 staff, UMi will relocate from Spectrum Business Park, Seaham, to the 10,500 sq ft building, which provides the capacity for the company to continue to grow. Allergate House is a standalone, two-storey office pavilion structure, located 1.8 miles from Durham city centre, with ready access to the A1(M).

JK Property Consultants LLP, which has extensive experience in areas such as investment, acquisitions, development, negotiation agreement, viability and funding and dispute resolution, negotiated the purchase.

Kevan Carrick, JK Property Consultants LLP said: "We received instructions from UMi to identify a property to purchase that would give our client an attractive facility with opportunities for adaption to help them on the path to Net Zero.

"Initially, this building was on the market to let but following an off-market negotiation, we gained vacant possession and completed the sale. The property offers many advantages to UMi, including the space to configure an office environment that meets the needs of staff in the post-pandemic world.

"While there is a healthy supply of commercial property to let, it is not often that good quality property comes up for sale. JK Property Consultants LLP is in the fortunate position of having developed a vast network of influential contacts within the North East property market and we were able to call upon this resource to identify, at an early stage, that Allergate House could be made available for sale as opposed to lease.

"We are delighted for UMi that we have made this possible for the business and that it can modify and personalise the building so as to meet its existing and future needs."



IAMPROPERTY's partner network grows to over 5,000 estate agents

lamproperty has grown its Partner Agent network by 25 per cent in the last six months, now working with over 5,000 UK Estate Agency branches to help them accelerate their success and bring muchneeded speed and security to the moving process.

The milestone is thanks to rapid growth, supported by the recent acquisition of SDL Auctions' portfolio of Estate Agents who used its online Modern Method of Auction (MMoA)

service, who have joined iamproperty's network and are benefitting from its market-leading iamsold auction service.

Auction sales are continuing to increase each month as it's proving a strong support for agents in a difficult market when transactions are slowing or even falling through due to uncertainty in the mortgage market, protecting transactions and pushing them through quickly is more important than ever. Currently, MMoA offers a completion rate of 95% compared to the 70% rate of Private Treaty.

Agents seeking out streamlined tech solutions that help to solve market problems has also boosted iamproperty's network, with more branches using its iamproperty movebutler platform to digitise key parts of the moving process. iamproperty expects this to rise further before the end of the year with new launches including a Surveys module on the way.

Ben Ridgway, Managing Director of iamproperty, said: "We're continuously innovating and working with agents to develop solutions that they really need, freeing them up to focus on what they do best. Our digitised solutions, designed to save them time, deliver incremental revenue and get clients move ready faster, allow them to do more of the parts of the job they love and know that the rest is covered."



North East property expert leads network into new era

A North East property expert is at the forefront of a new era as he presides over the rebirth of a leading national business network.

Fergus Laird, partner at North East-based commercial property consultancy Naylors Gavin Black, is president of the Commercial Property Network (CPN), which has relaunched with renewed vigour, having previously been known as Property Agents Independent.

The CPN is a collective of 29 privately-owned, highly experienced firms spanning the UK, and acts as a leading voice for the sector.

For more than 50 years it has enabled members to provide a highly personalised approach to clients by offering unrivalled local expertise, nationally, across a wide spectrum of specialisms including commercial investment, building consultancy, property management, capital allowances and environmental surveying.

To mark the launch of the CPN, a reception, presided over by Fergus Laird, was held at RIBA headquarters in central London, which was attended by more than 200 commercial real estate agents and clients.

Commercial Rent Reviews and Lease Renewals Schedules of Dilapidation and Condition Rating Challenges

Tax Valuations



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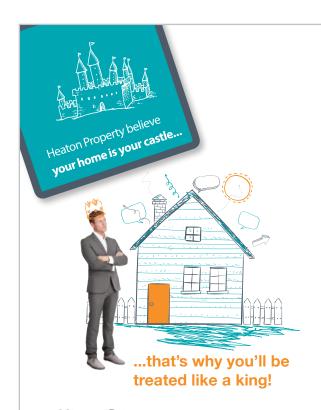
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EXCEPTIONAL THROUGHOUT

Northumbria's Premier Housebuilder

With the north east property market predicted to increase in value by 25% over the next five years, house hunters will be pleased to hear that award-winning housebuilder Ascent Homes has no shortage of luxury properties for those looking to invest in the area.

oasting an ever-growing team of experienced professionals that thrives on pairing would-be purchasers with their dream properties and a diverse workforce typified by Ascent Homes first female site manager Gemma Bruce, Ascent Homes is part of the housebuilding arm of Advance Northumberland Developments LTD.

Currently boasting five developments across the northeast, at sites in soughtafter locations including the historic market town of Alnwick, the popular waterfront at Blyth and the coastal village of Ellington, and with additional sites scheduled to begin in the new year including Berwick & Bellingham, the team at Ascent isn't expecting demand for its properties to slow down any time soon - and with good reason.

Recent data published by real estate company

HOUSE PRICES TO PREDICTED TO RISE IN VALUE BY

23.2%

OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Savills reported that the northeast mainstream property market is predicted to rise in value by 23.2%

over the next five years, making it the region with the third highest expected growth in the UK, with an average growth that is almost 6% higher than the national average.

In the short term, values across the UK are expected to stay static in 2023. Despite this, however, the northeast still performs well, posting the smallest predicted downturn of any region, before

rallying again with a predicted rise of 2.5% in 2024 - 1.5% higher than the national average.

Looking further ahead, properties in the northeast are expected to increase in value by 4.5% in 2025 and by a remarkable 7.5% in 2026, representing the joint highest increase of any region in the UK over that period.

The knowledge that any property purchased in the northeast today is predicted to increase in value by almost 25% in just five years should be extremely reassuring to anyone looking for investment opportunities in the region and to consider any purchase as a longer term investment. And it's not only the buoyancy of the local housing market that's putting a smile on the Ascent team's face.

ith interest in its diverse portfolio of properties coming from as far south as Devon and as far north as northern Scotland, its developments are among the most desirable in all of Northumberland, itself one of the UK's most popular destinations thanks to its areas of outstanding beauty, stunning coastline, excellent transport links and fast-growing economy.

One of the reasons for their popularity is the fact that they are all designed to be as energy efficient as possible. By using energy efficient designs and materials, Ascent ensures its properties use fewer resources and have lower running costs than older houses, producing fewer emissions and ensuring a minimal carbon footprint while also saving customers an average of £2,000 per year on their energy bills.

Every Ascent property is also exquisitely styled inside and out with high end specification and finishings, top-of-the-range modern appliances and a balanced use of space. All this, combined with its developments' beautiful rural

locations, make them the perfect properties for those looking for the best of both worlds - a contemporary home in a peaceful setting within easy reach of essential amenities and just a short journey from the world-famous city of Newcastle upon Tyne.

For more information about Ascent Homes' properties and developments, visit www.ascent-homes.co.uk



youngsRPS' COMMERCIAL PROPERTY TEAM CARE FOR A DIVERSE RANGE OF PROPERTY



Based on Grey Street in
Newcastle City centre, we
operate nationally offering the
very best service for our valued
clients. Headed by Director
Michael Blake, the team assist
landlords and investors in
managing their assets. We
caught up with Michael to
learn more.

What type of portfolios do you look after?

We cover a very wide range of property types, predominantly in the north east, but also in other parts of the UK. We act for some large investors with significant property portfolios but also for single asset investors. We pride ourselves on delivering the same high level of service to all. Most of the managed properties are in the retail sector. We look after small shopping centres and have dealings on a day-to-day basis with national multiple retailers. We also deal with properties comprising a single shop let to a local independent trader.

What does a typical day look like for the Commercial Team?

A typical day tends to be when the unexpected happens! Through planned maintenance and close liaison with tenants however, we try to be as proactive as possible, but property management often brings with it sudden surprises. Apart from the day-to-day management of our clients' properties, we are always looking for opportunities to add value to the asset. This may be by restructuring a lease, or opportunities to extend or redevelop a property, or even dispose of a property in a declining location or in an unpopular sector and reinvesting in a property which will provide the return the client requires. This work will inevitably involve a lot of property inspections, meetings, and sometimes negotiations, as well as liaising with other professionals such as client's solicitors.

How do you secure the right tenants for your clients?

As well as the usual mix of stringent tenant referencing, we also need to have a strong emphasis on the clients' requirements.

Some clients have specific needs in terms of lease structures and tenant profile, and understanding their needs is crucial to delivering the right tenant. For instance, in shopping centre management, it is imperative

to establish and maintain a strong and varied mix of tenants to ensure the continuing trading success of the centre.

What are the biggest changes you're seeing in the commercial property sector?

The pandemic is well documented as having intensified the structural change which was already happening in the retail and office sectors. However, the changes to the Energy Performance Certificate rules from April 2023 will mean that buildings with a rating of E or F can no longer continue to be let, and there are proposals for the rules to tighten still further in the years to come, which could impact significantly on landlords. We need to act now to improve the Energy Performance of some properties falling into this category.

What other services does the Commercial arm offer?

We handle all facets of commercial real estate, including management, leasing, sales, development, investment, appraisals, rent reviews, and lease extensions. We would be happy to discuss any aspects of commercial property work.

Contact the commercial team on 0191 2610300.

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"We laugh together, we comfort one another.

It's absolutely amazing." A resident at Eothen Whitley Bay

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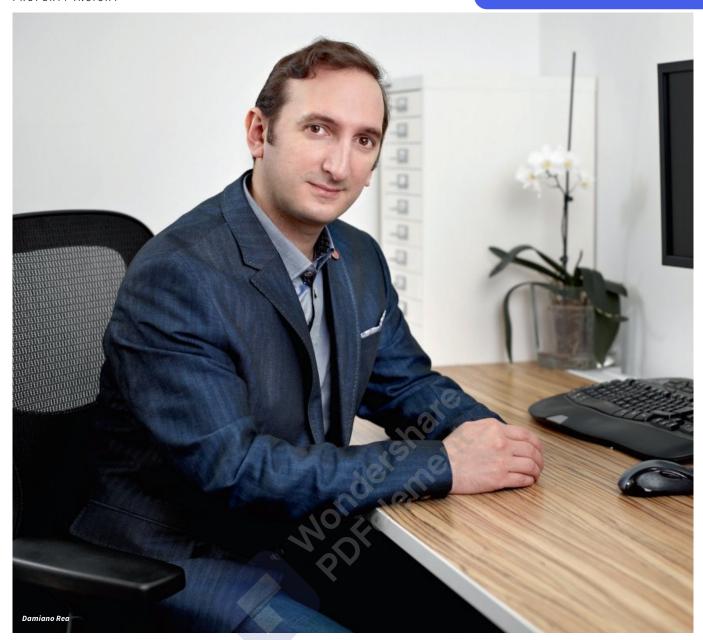
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WHERE DID THE TIME GO?

Since December is now upon us it is okay to talk about Christmas, although restaurants have had their 'Book Now' posters up since August!

Coming from an Italian family, Christmas for me means time spent around the table; eating, drinking, catching up with family and friends. And when an Italian says 'at the table' he means all day at the table.

After the meal it is time to reflect upon the year gone and talk about our hopes for the year to come. On a personal level, the year gone consists of "Where did it go?" As for the future, I keep it simple. Good health and a degree of happiness for friends and family. In

terms of our business I feel we met the many challenges of 2022 and are in good shape to face those presented in 2023. Just as well since challenges there will be!

All day at the table is the fun bit. But there is a serious side to Christmas since we are responsible for the comfort and safety of hundreds of tenants. While my family and I are attacking a day long feast our maintenance staff will have packed a thermos of coffee and a box of turkey sandwiches into the vans. Experience shows that at least one poor soul will find their boiler or cooker on the blink on Christmas morning.

By now our maintenance inspections ought to have prepared the managed property portfolio for the worst of a North East winter, so a bit of friendly advice to tenants does not go amiss. Some will be spending their first Christmas away from home or be returning to their families for the holiday. So advice that may seem obvious, like ensuring all appliances are turned off and the thermostat left set low before leaving the house for a week is worth giving.

Do not go away leaving brightly coloured packaging for electronic equipment or games sticking out of the waste bins since this may attract the attention of entirely the wrong sort of people. Set the alarms, put lights on a timer and maybe leave a radio tuned to a talk station. We all want to enjoy a relaxed Christmas and a call from the police to say there has been a break in or worse is about as far from relaxing as it is possible to get.

That is my recipe for a happy Christmas in a nutshell. A little Italian 'gioia di vivere' tempered by a little British common sense. So, before I break into my rendition of 'O Sole Mio', may I take this opportunity to wish you Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo... In 2023 I promise to write to you mostly in English!

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Heaton Property is an award winning full-service estate agency from the North East set up in 2005. In September 2021 the company won gold in the 2021/2022 Best Estate Agent Guide.





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GREEN OFFICE DESIGN

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield.

I always try to write these articles with reference to current affairs that affect the North East, the country and wider issues. We can't escape the ever-increasing problem of energy use. This can be in terms of the costs, its wider political importance, its generation source or how to minimise its use.

Howarth Litchfield has always pursued a green agenda through its 40 years in business. During this period, we have seen our role gradually evolve in creating a revised sustainability strategy both for the practice and in terms of our ability to advise, guide and inform clients, contractors, and the wider community on the topic of developing buildings with a reduced carbon footprint.

I prefer to use the term sustainability strategy than carbon zero, as everyone seems to have a different definition of carbon zero – so adding to the confusion.

As architects we are in a unique and powerful position to influence future (and current) energy use. Sounds obvious doesn't it – that as designers of buildings and creators of new structures we would naturally all be looking to change our ways.

It's vital that all companies and especially those

in the building industry lead by example in looking inwardly at their own business as well as guiding other businesses in their creation of new buildings.

We looked around at what standards and targets were being put forward; many were too easy to achieve or were better suited to the description of green washing (the facility to offset, so in fact not saving energy); while others were so ambitious, that when challenged, acknowledged that targets were not achievable.

At Howarth Litchfield we have written a plan, which is now in place with achievable targets and expenditure. For example, we have been investing in PV panels for the roof to reduce our electric consumption by a third. They will allow us to power electric cars with our existing car charging points at the office and the next step will be an alternative boiler powered by the panels.

In parallel, we have looked at the wellbeing and health of the office, increasing natural ventilation, natural light and how we can change the landscaping to the (already) lovely gardens at the office.

So how does each company, organisation and individuals look to create a sustainability agenda? My tip for all companies is:

- Where are you now? You can't reduce unless you know what you are using now, so calculate your usage for the building, production, business and travel.
- Alternatives What is available now to help carbon reduction and what are upcoming companies/technologies that could take you forward?
- People Can we change mindsets and how does that happen? Changing the mindset of energy use is key. Sustainability has to be easy and cost-effective. Finding your green champions within your business to support the green agenda is vital.
- Legislation What we can do as organisations to adapt and what support do we need from the government? Planning and building



regulations are pushing forward higher standards but are they going far enough, and fast enough?

- Remote working and sustainability What will happen to buildings if we all work from home? If we all work from home does the energy use go up for a company (or individual) or is hybrid working the pattern of the future?
- Value of being Green If you don't commit, will you be left behind in a competitive market? We can all say we are doing X and Y, but can you prove it against your competitors? We can at HL and believe this gives us an advantage in knowledge and guidance.

All of the above require thought, investment and a level of commitment. Don't be cynical. Embrace the changes and you might just find your organisation takes a good fresh look at itself.

If you need someone to assist, give us a call and we can point you in the right direction.

Neil Turner, Director, can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email nturner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com







WELCOME TO WILLOW & MAINE

We are Willow & Maine interior design and styling consultancy. Over the last four years we have had the pleasure of working with clients transforming their homes, all sizes of project. From residential clients to Airbnb's, and smaller commercial projects, from Bamburgh down to Wynyard.

In the run up to Christmas we see a big increase in demand for new interior projects continuing into the new year. If you like interiors, you could be considering updates to your own home. We want to share with you some ideas that could bring your interior up to date without spending lots of money.

Inside these four wall-Feature Wall

A relatively easy and inexpensive way to change up a room. A feature wall could be a painted or wallpaper wall or it could also be a gallery wall. With the large paint companies such as Farrow & Ball etc bringing out new colours, it's a way to add a pop of colour or new wallpaper without redecorating the whole room. Wallpaper continues to be a favourite, floral prints are becoming popular with Laura Ashley bringing out bold Victorian style floral prints. Geometric designs are continuing to adorn walls with the 60s and 70s style. Murals are becoming very popular, and they can really transform a space. We have used a beautiful exotic mural in a master suite and a mountain range up the stairs in a modern townhouse and we are about to start a countryside mural on a reception room in a Victorian rectory. There are lots to choose from and can be extremely reasonable.

A gallery wall is another way to make a feature wall. Whether you go for a wall of prints or your own photos they can really personalise a space. Gallery walls do not necessarily have to be pictures, a collection can be added to a wall, for example plates. More recently baskets have become popular to group together and can look quite striking. There is also the option to mix in prints and decorative items or plants which we particularly like.

It's all in the detail-Accessories

With sustainability being on everyone's minds, one of the things to consider is to 'shop your home' so instead of buying new items look at what's in your other rooms and move pieces around. Changing up accessories in a room can have a big impact. Adding a new lamp, cushions, throws etc or even just moving the furniture around can have an impact.

Bringing the outside in, with rattan and wicker continues to be extremely popular, plants have well and truly staged a comeback. Whether you are a faux or a real plant lover, there is so much

choice out there. If you aren't particularly green fingered, a bit like us, then the options with faux plants have vastly increased. Lots of high street stores have jumped on this trend along with higher end outlets. In most cases you can't tell the real from the fake (faux). If you are green fingered, then the garden centres and nurseries have lots of great houseplants and lots of lovely plant pots and stands.

The High Street is full of great accessories with H&M, Zara and Dunelm offering on trend items for great prices.

One last thing

When working on client projects we like to mix Bigger Brands with more Boutique shops, so a unique look is achieved.

For further information visit the website www.willowandmaine.co.uk and visit us on Instagram @willowandmaine



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CARROTS, STICKS AND CONGESTION CHARGES

As readers will be only too aware, in January next year Newcastle is introducing a congestion charge within the City Centre. And this has caused some consternation for both residents and business people who fear it will damage the City Centre economy irreparably.

Many are blaming the City Council themselves, although in fact it is national government policy that pollution in city centres should be reduced - although the net effect is still going to be the same.

Using my LinkedIn profile, I undertook a small survey recently and although only 39 people voted, it is some vague barometer of public opinion on the matter. To the question, "is a congestion charge for Newcastle City Centre a good idea?", 20 people (51%) said no there shouldn't be a charge, 26% (10 people) said there should be charges for all high emission vehicles, 18% (seven people) said high emission cars, and 5% (two people) said it should apply to all vehicles. I said in my conclusion to the poll that a lot of the solution lies in improving

public transport and that the real solution lies in a carrot to use this rather than a stick not to use a car

Some responses were also interesting. An Edinburgh resident said "a congestion charge is a short-term measure. In order for people to ditch their cars there has to be sufficient public transport measures in place. I do agree with the charge but living in a small city makes it a bit easier for me to travel about by bus (providing it turns up on time!)", a Newcastle resident said "if there were to be a charge then parking should be free everywhere within a congestion charge zone. Are you wanting people to buy items that they have to see or hear, try on, are bulky to transport home or actually meet a service to provider face to face? I fail to see how this will invigorate a City Centre that is clearly in need of it.'

Another response was we need to remind ourselves what our purpose is and what the city is and should become, a place for all and not a place to extort."

Finally, a comment was, "on seeing the signs that have been erected already ready for January, "I saw these signs for the first time last weekend and was horrified. I already put off coming into Newcastle due to the constantly changing bus lanes and no entry lanes. I do use the Metro where possible but I think this will finish off the City Centre as a destination for work, retail and leisure."

It's certainly a hot potato and that is going to need careful handling. From a personal point of view, I live on the east side of the city and my partner lives in County Durham. For us to commute between the two houses necessarily means going through the City Centre (or a crazily long diversion either through the Tyne Tunnel or using the Western Bypass) but we are not actually using the City Centre. Would it be possible – and this is a question for Nick Kemp





as leader of the City Council and his transport and traffic advisers – for the Central Motorway at least to be congestion charge free, or we risk clogging up these two already busy routes.

We need the City Centre to be vibrant because it affects so much of the whole economy for the region. I think it is fair to say that changes will have to be made, and obviously one of the hopes is that the new trains due at the end of next year or beginning of 2024 will improve the quality of the services on the Metro lines. That would be a help – but what more can the City Council, Nexus and National Government do?

That's it for 2022. Can I take this opportunity to wish all readers of my column and the magazine in general a very happy Christmas and a positive 2023

If you disagree, tell me! If you agree, tell me! I also write on my LinkedIn profile every Wednesday morning at about 8.30 – follow me at linkedin.com/in/philipbowe. www.bivbowes.co.uk Tel: 0191 462 6 264









Situated on the River Coquet, Warkworth, Northumberland comes with fishing rights, your own private stretch of river, private jetty and boat moorings.

The property has only come to the market once in 36 years.

Exceptionally private, the property features unrivalled views of the river/estuary viewed through panoramic floor to ceiling windows. Within walking distance is the golf course, beach, marina, Warkworth Castle and the village pub. Herons, seals, salmon jumping, swans and deer are seen almost every day, this property is unique.

Four bedrooms with scope for two more, this property was formerly the village school and now has a large floor to ceiling triple glazed glass extension, offering outstanding private views.

The current owners paddle board and salmon fish as well as mooring a small motorboat on their private river that can be sailed up to the marina and local fish shops and restaurants. Viewing highly recommended.

Listed with Pattinsons Estate Agent in Alnwick, Northumberland. alnwick@pattinsons.co.uk









BUSINESS ETHICS DRIVES NEW BRANDING FOR JK PROPERTY CONSULTANTS

Newcastle-based JK Property Consultants has rebranded and launched a new website to reflect the rapidly changing and complex landscape of the property sector.

The firm, which has advised a vast range of clients in the North East and only recently supported ambitious business services specialist, UMi, on the purchase of its latest offices in Durham, was co-founded by Kevan Carrick and Jennifer Welch.

Kevan Carrick, said: "The property market, through the impact of the economy and government intervention, is being disrupted greatly and going through a period of turbulence and change, which can make investors nervous. Despite the complexities that we are now seeing, there is always a way forward and our aim has always been to advise clients how to manage change within the property market, while standing by our culture and values, which are based on responsible and ethical business.

"We thought that this was a particularly important message that we had to reinforce and we believe our new branding and website portrays this very well. More than ever before, clients are identifying responsible businesses with whom to conduct business and that is where we at JK Property Consultants position ourselves."

Kevan Carrick co-founded and chaired the North East Initiative on Business Ethics. He is a director of the North East Business and Innovation Centre (BiC), a non-profit organisation, based in Sunderland, to help start-up and growth of SMEs. He also helped deliver the 140,000 square-foot BiC in the late 1990s

Kevan has been at the forefront of change from the formation of the Tyne & Wear Development Corporation and delivery of development in the mid-1980s. He has worked throughout on strategic economic regeneration and property development. More latterly, helping Mayor Ben Houchen, Tees Valley Combined Authority to purchase Teesside International Airport. JK Property Consultants continues to help investors, developers and occupiers, applying its local market knowledge with a national perspective, whether for development, acquisitions, lease renewals, reviews and resolving issues through dispute resolution.

Jennifer Welch worked for the RICS in the North East and became Director for North and Midlands. She then took on a global role with the RICS and spent time operating in Asia, and latterly as the Director for Sub Saharan Africa, promoting business ethics and international standards.

www.jkpropertyconsultants.com



ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR FOR THE NORTH EAST PROPERTY MARKET!

As 2022 comes to a close, I have had time to reflect on what has been a very interesting and another successful year within the North East property market.

The frenzy of activity that we have been experiencing over the past 18 months does seem to be finally easing, which will offer some comfort for home buyers in that competition levels have reduced. That being said, we are still seeing positive levels of activity within all sectors of the market, however there are some obvious affordability concerns, particularly for those with higher levels of borrowing and we have started to see buyer numbers lessen.

The number of mortgage products available is beginning to recover, after the widespread withdrawal that followed the mini budget which sent waves through the financial markets, and we are now starting to see a reversal in the upward trend, with most drifting downwards as things stabilise.

There are some signs that house prices have begun to settle throughout the region, which is understandable, however it is worth mentioning that we have recently agreed several sales within the last few weeks at excellent levels for a variety of clients at all different price points and we still require more homes to sell.

The prime areas of our beautiful region are still receiving a great deal of interest and we still have several buyers who are focused on moving home within the next 6/12 months.

When it comes to selling your home, the most important and current factor in achieving a positive sale is still pricing strategy. My advice is to price your home realistically to attract the right level of buyers which will allow our expert team to negotiate an offer that will be acceptable.

Should you wish to discuss your own home move or if we can be searching for a new home for you then please don't hesitate to speak to the team on 0191 213 0033.

Greg McCarthy, Regional Valuer, E: Greg.McCarthy@SandersonYoung.co.uk



Ziggy!





Please send me your building queries through facebook @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's
good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight
on mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com

Hi everyone

I cannot believe that Christmas is here – two weeks off toasting my tail in front of the fire with my little sister. Cousin Dexter is coming over when Uncle James goes skiing so we are all going to have a great time. Daddy has promised us a tripe and turkey cake for Christmas Day and who knows what we may get in our stockings!

Have a lovely Christmas everyone, see you next year!

Bill from Longframlington asks:

Q: I am considering having cavity wall insulation and would like your opinion as to the best materials for the job.

A: Cavity walls were first built, in exposed coastal areas, in order to

keep out wind-driven rain. Filling the cavity with insulation will always hold the risk that moisture will be able to find its way across to the inside, whatever the insulation material used.

There is also the possibility that the installation will be less than perfect, leaving unfilled air pockets – these will leave 'cold spots' on the inside walls which attract insulation. Another problem concerns wall-tie corrosion; cavity insulation makes the outer brick leaf colder, and therefore wetter, which can accelerate rusting of the wall ties. And if the ties have to be replaced, there is no satisfactory way of refilling the holes in the insulation, whatever the material.

The cavity insulation industry denies the existence of these problems, but in my experience they are quite common. I do not think cavity wall insulation is a good idea.



New appointments at North East web design specialist Sleeky support growth

A North East web design and development specialist has strengthened its team as it continues to invest to support planned strategic growth and client services.

Chloe Toogood and Katie Woodward join Sleeky as project coordinator and account manager respectively alongside new web developer, Dean Pifar, and graphic designer, Kate

Drawing on her customer services background, Chloe will be responsible for content creation and project delivery while Katie Woodward, who joins from the region's largest ecommerce agency, will work with clients to maximise their website presence and digital marketing activities.

Bringing considerable experience in online development work to the role, Dean's duties will see him lead on website and online platform development. With over 15 years' experience and expertise in the creative and online retailing sector, Kate Gunia will design new websites and branding for customers who include property, leisure and care sector firms, the Malhotra Group, Newcastle University, Newcastle City and Gateshead councils and the Newcastle Upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

Currently employing 14 people and targeting the £2 million turnover mark in 2023, Newcastle-based Sleeky has recruited additional staff to strengthen its team to meet demand for graphic design, ecommerce services and digital marketing from clients investing in improving their digital presence.

Managing director David Chapman, who founded the company in 2011, said hiring experienced and talented people is a key strategy to support ambitious growth plans.

He said: "We continue to see demand from all sectors of the market for high quality digital marketing and website expertise and resources. I am pleased to welcome Katie, Dean, Chloe and Kate and look forward to working closely with them over the coming months as we expand further. They are all experienced and talented people with values that align closely with our business."

New Appointment for Expanding Award **Winning Marketing** Agency

Newcastle based specialist marketing agency, Cal Partners, is growing its team with the appointment of Marketing Executive, Marianne Carey.

Marianne, an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, joins the award-winning agency with over five years' experience in marketing and communications in professional services and the maritime sector. She will work with the wider Cal Partners team, made up of CIM Chartered Marketers, to support its growing nationwide and international client base with marketing strategy, digital marketing, content creation, social media management and events.

Following a first-class Events Management degree, Marianne began her career at a Newcastle-based PR agency before spending three years in the marketing department of commercial law firm, Mincoffs Solicitors. Most recently, Marianne held the position of Marketing



and Communications Executive at the Port of Tyne, coordinating the organisation's overall marketing and communications strategy and managing a number of large-scale campaigns and events in the renewables, logistics and maritime innovation space.

Commenting on her appointment, Marianne said: "It's such an exciting time to be joining the Cal Partners team and I can't wait to hit the ground running. I'm really looking forward to sharing my in-house marketing and communications experience with the agency's incredible portfolio of clients and helping to contribute to the team's ongoing growth and success."



North Yorkshire firm on recruitment drive following award and scoop of client wins

A North Yorkshire marketing agency is recruiting a number of roles following being crowned 'most innovative food & drink marketing agency' and welcoming a host of new clients to its portfolio.

Peachy Digital, based in Northallerton has welcomed a range of new clients including Brymor Ice Cream, UK Development Corporation, and DMP Sharks to its customer base, as well as winning an award in the 2022 Northern Enterprise

Managing Director, Lizzie Turner said: "It

has been a whirlwind few months, with the team working exceptionally hard to achieve all that we have. In less than three years, Peachy has gone from just me working from a badly decorated dining room, to a team of three working on national and even international brands, looking to double our headcount.

"Borne out of redundancy just six weeks before the first Covid-19 lockdown, what was meant to be my dream in ten years' time has come to fruition and I'm so grateful to both the team and our clients for making this happen."

While food and drink is a specialism for the agency, it boasts a wealth of clients from other industries including IT, property, fire safety, a leather lifestyle brand and washroom servicing.



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IT'S A NEW DAWN: HOUSE OF HYPE & CO.

Rise. Shine. Elevate.

It's a new dawn for Hype That PR, the Sunderland based PR agency has seen a great growth trajectory since its launch in the height of lockdown and due to market demand and enhanced services the agency has undergone a successful relaunch to become House of Hype & Co.

The portfolio of businesses which encompass Hype That PR, Hype That Social and Hype That Profile will sit under the newly launched House of Hype & Co with bases in London & Dublin, alongside Sunderland.

The agency helps businesses to develop their brand presence and achieve their goals through PR, social media and building strong personal brand profiles for their founders and owners, in ways that get audiences talking.

Claire Pickersgill, Founder and Managing

Director at House of Hype & Co. said: "It's really exciting to relaunch the agency under House of Hype & Co. The reception to the relaunch has been amazing with great social stats, high website hits and new enquiries in the first week alone. We have a track record of creating campaigns with hype and impact and we look forward to the next exciting stage of the business."

The service and level of support is bespoke to each client, and can range from editorial, to social media campaigns through to supporting with personal branding and profile raising. The agency works with clients to pick and mix the best services from the trio of companies - Hype That PR, Hype That Social and Hype That Profile to maximise results and elevate business growth.

Claire added: "I'm a strong believer that people buy from people and through our innovative and impactful campaigns we shine the light on businesses through the people. The power of personal branding is immense and when done in the right way it can be one of your most powerful assets.

We work with clients from various industries to help elevate their profile. From national and international coverage, to gaining new contracts and collaborations to winning awards - the results have been amazing. It's so rewarding to see our clients elevated in their industry and the wider business community and the opportunities and collaborations that in turn come from this elevation."

With an expansive background in PR and business development the founder Claire is passionate about businesses and is determined to help them showcase their capabilities and successes to support future growth and generate revenue.

Claire's background at the Sunderland Empire theatre saw her manage regional communications campaigns for some of the biggest touring theatre productions from Wicked, The Lion King to Billy Elliot the Musical. She also led the theatre's poignant post-Covid 19 reopening PR campaign which received ground-breaking coverage and social stats. This campaign also saw the theatre pick up the accolade for highest ranking PR reopening coverage across all the UK theatres under the theatre groups portfolio.

Claire added: "I strongly feel every business should have access to good PR and we have a range of options to try and make our services as accessible as possible to businesses subject to their needs.

We've just introduced the Hype Power Hour which is a great option for businesses looking for some inspiration and bespoke PR advice to kickstart their communications strategy through to monthly retained services where we in essence become the inhouse PR function at varying levels."

With a diverse client portfolio from authors, manufacturers, charity, HR to hospitality, the team have great business insight and the knack for seeing the story and potential PR opportunities to help shine the spotlight on businesses.

To find out more visit: www.hypeco.co.uk or email claire@hypeco.co.uk

Expansion of services to meet growing demand

South Tyneside-based, Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations has added videography to its offering having identified a gap in the marketplace for an integrated public relations and video service.

The company, which was established in 1991, works across a broad range of sectors including built environment, manufacturing, tech, procurement, education, financial services, law and recruitment.

Bradley O'Mahoney is offering to the market a more seamless approach to videography and public relations, uniting the two under one roof to garner the highest level of impact and longevity of brand message for those businesses that engage its services.

Its videography service will also be available for businesses wanting a series of videos or, simply, a one-off production.

Having kept a high profile on social media channels during the pandemic, the company has, subsequently, experienced strong growth and its new service has been established to benefit existing and potential clients.

Fully committed to elevating SMEs within the region, Bradley O'Mahoney has offered pro-bono support to Open North Foundation since it was established in 2020, to assist the region's SMEs struggling due to economic instability caused by Covid-19.

Jane O'Mahoney, Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations, said: "It was never our intention to add videography to our services but a series of events over the past couple of years led us to identify a significant opportunity within the marketplace. Our aim is to help disseminate the often, disjointed, integration of video as part of a company's overall PR strategy, to ensure they garner the most traction and interest in their brand.

"We noticed the increasing rate in which our clients have been identifying the need for videography and had, happily, been assisting them to engage the services of videographers within the region. This was fine and we had a number of high-quality videos land in our inbox tray to be passed on to clients. However, we quickly came to understand that an outside resource brought in fleetingly and without real understanding of a business and its



culture, means there is a risk that they do not capture the whole picture or the direction in which the business is heading.

"It is always better to have a strategy that is aligned and in tune with brand vision and, as such, we now offer to the market a well-rounded and logical approach to profile raising for businesses that utilise our services.

"We started as a traditional PR consultancy and we have honed our skills to a tee. We have built a reputation for delivering for clients and making them famous within their sector. Videography is a natural fit and complements our already strong offering and I have total confidence that it will help elevate our clients' profiles even further, thanks to clear and consistent brand strategies we develop on their behalf."



Two is the magic number for The Petite Agency

Two is proving to be a lucky number for Sophia Gowland, owner and director of The Petite Agency, Middlesbrough-based social media experts who specialise in social media management for ambitious brands who want to expand their business, and personal brand management for ambitious entrepreneurs looking to grow their influence.

Petite celebrated its second birthday recently, with the announcement of two new team members, two shortlistings at The Best New Tees Business Awards for Best New Creative Business and Outstanding Achievement and an impressive new website (www.thepetiteagency.co.uk)

Having her own business was always a burning ambition for Teesside University graduate Sophia, who took the plunge during lockdown, leaving a well paid job to begin Petite from her kitchen table.

Embodying the true definition of a true bootstrapped business, Sophia turned down offers of investment to go it alone, using her experience, determination, imagination and passion to succeed.

Based at the Victoria Building in Middlesbrough, with almost 30 retained clients on the books and a turnover which has doubled since inception, Sophia recently took the next step in The Petite Agency's growth plan by hiring her first team members.

Molly Catterall, formerly social media executive at Visualsoft, comes onboard as full time content creator, while freelance journalist and former Tees Business writer Julie Burniston steps in to support as senior copywriter.

"I'm so proud of what Petite Agency has become in these past two years. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I'd be in this position with my own company, a brilliant team and a set of clients who I'll be forever grateful for and who have trusted me to market their brand and business,' says Sophia.

"i'm over the moon to be shortlisted at The Tees Business Awards and to have both Julie and Molly onboard with The Petite Agency. I can't wait to see where we'll be by our third birthday!"



- The Northern Echo's former Chief Football Writer Paul Fraser aims to raise the profiles of clients
- Rephrase's range of services can be on a pay-as-you-go basis or as part of a longer-term package
- We will do all we can to advise and produce the best possible solution for your needs
- We aim to maintain long-term relationships to achieve goals

For further information check out www.rephrasemedia.com or email info@rephrasemedia.com



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...



Owner of Rephrase PR and Media Services.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

The target for the year was always to build on Rephrase's first year of business by maintaining strong relationships with existing clients and growing the client base. It has been an exciting period with projects cropping up nationally and even internationally, and I wouldn't have envisaged the latter 12 months ago.

Has everything went according to plan?

I'm not someone who believes everything needs to go to plan. You always have to be prepared to adapt to different situations. There have been surprises but similarly things have gone smoothly.

I do think you need to be ready for anything and I feel like Rephrase has been so far. If some work has dropped off for one reason or another, then you can't afford to panic. There is plenty other work out there – it's just about focusing on doing things right.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

Having started up Rephrase at the start of the pandemic, I've not actually known anything different. I left The Northern Echo after a period of furlough and in October 2020 the business was launched. Since then there have been regular changes to restrictions, but in the main I have been fortunate enough to help clients from my home office. It has been nice to get out more and see more people face to face too.

What are you most proud of this year?

I would have to say reaching Rephrase's second anniversary. I always believed I could help businesses and individuals when I set the business up after 19 years reporting on football because of my extensive list of contacts, but to have hit that milestone during a period of economic uncertainty fills me with plenty hope for the future.



What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

Even though I always felt networking was going to be a big factor, I don't mind admitting that collaboration has taken me more by surprise. Someone told me I would be surprised by just how many companies want to work together to achieve goals rather than independently - and I couldn't agree more with that approach.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

I can cope with more pressure than I thought. Working for yourself can obviously be hard, particularly when you have a young family, but you have to learn to deal with anything that is thrown at you regardless of whether that is in life or business.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

There have been many this year, so it is hard to choose. I would have to say it was incredible to

see the PFC Trust's (Hartlepool based charity) first gala go off in style at Hartlepool College of Further Education when more than £100,000 was raised

Other fantastic events included Durata's networking event and Alice House Hospice's House Party dinner at Wynyard Hall presented by Orangebox, Rephrase, Property Webmasters and the College. I was also lucky enough to be at Savannah Marshall's world title fight with Claressa Shields at the O2 in October.

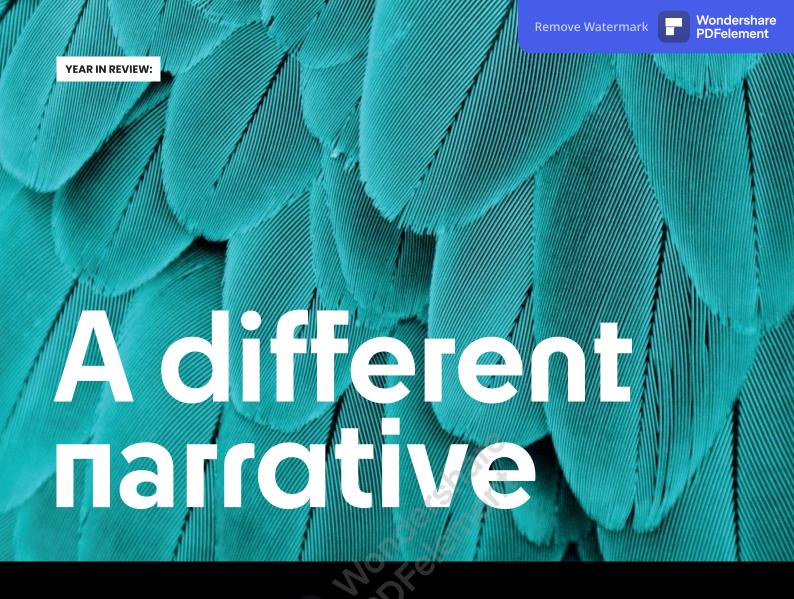
Describe 2022 in three words...

Hectic. Encouraging. Stressful!

What are your aims for 2023?

It would be fantastic to be sat here typing in another year's time thinking I had built on Rephrase's first two years of trading by securing more work to consider expanding in some way. Have a fantastic Christmas and a brilliant 2023.

www.rephrasemedia.com



It's that time of year again, when as well as looking forward to the office party and some festive time off, we also find ourselves looking back at the year that was. For us at Different Narrative it's been quite a year!

Since our two founding agencies merged in 2021 our feet have barely touched the ground. We've relished new wins and the opportunity to offer new and long-standing clients an even broader range of expertise in advertising, marketing, brand identity, media planning and buying, PR, social media, content, and website and app development.

Now the region's largest end-to-end marketing services provider, we're one of only 300 agencies in the UK (just five in the North East) accredited by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, setting the benchmark for excellence in service delivery and continuous professional development. In September we were delighted to be awarded the Advanced Good Work Pledge by the North of Tyne Combined Authority too.

All great news, but how does it translate into results for our clients and the causes we champion? Here's a snapshot of our first year, in case studies and community support.

FORFUSION:

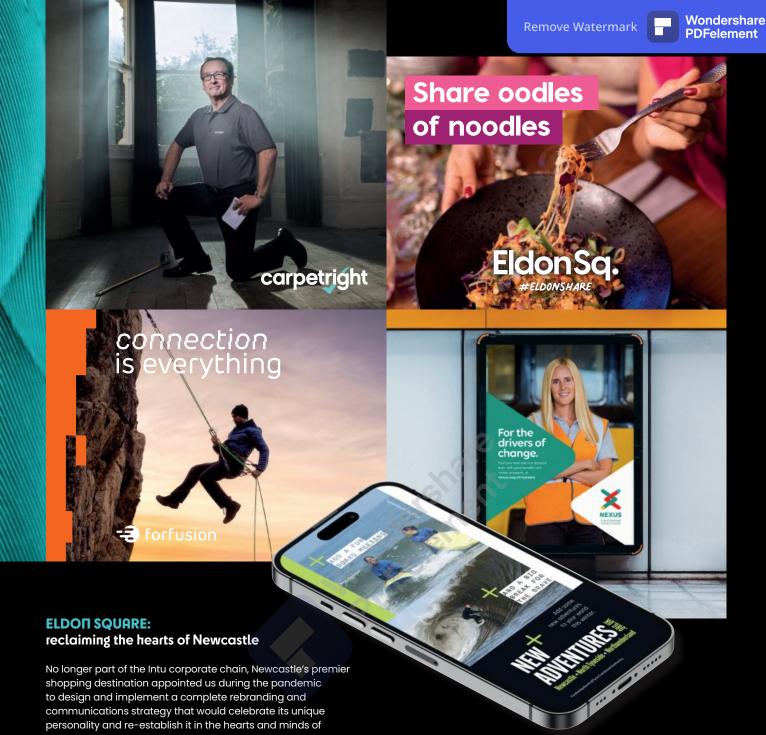
connecting with more customers

Cobalt Exchange-based Forfusion is trusted by large public and private sector companies to design, implement and manage mission-critical networking infrastructure. In turn, the brand trusted us to raise awareness and prime interest in its services. The resulting three-month campaign spanned PR, paid social, web content, online and print advertising, direct mail and email marketing, delivering a strong lead pipeline worth £5m.

NEXUS:

a people brand going places

Nexus initially appointed us to refresh the branding and communications of its people function, strengthening perceptions of the company as a great place to work. For us, consistency is key to a brand's authenticity, and it was important that Nexus didn't have one 'face' for its people and another for its passengers – after all, these two audiences are often one and the same. We suggested a revised logo and tone of voice that would be inclusive and engaging for every audience, along with a new look and feel for people campaigns that would sit comfortably with the overall company branding, positioning Nexus 'for everyone going places'. Delighted, our client expanded the initial ask to include video, radio and a new logo rollout company-wide, and reports show that the change has been extremely well received.



shopping destination appointed us during the pandemic to design and implement a complete rebranding and communications strategy that would celebrate its unique personality and re-establish it in the hearts and minds of North-East shoppers. This year, adding more dimensions to that personality, we've worked with the centre to introduce new purpose-driven initiatives including a sustainability festival and #EldonShare charitable activity. The result? Shoppers continuing to return at a rate well above the average post-lockdown, plus email signups rising by 146% and web visits by 80%.

From travel money to a smart city

In addition to this we've continued as a key marketing partner for Carpetright, delivering advertising, branding and social media, tone of voice work, research testing and tracking. We've employed emotional storytelling to position Hays Travel as the go-to choice for travel money. Our PR team has supported Sunderland Smart City in its ambition to become the most advanced smart city in the UK. We've created the branding and marketing campaign for the North of Tyne Combined Authority's brand-new tourism platform, uniting Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland under the 'New Adventures' umbrella. And our campaigns for this year's NEI Newcastle Restaurant Weeks helped generate a record-breaking spend of £1.5m for the city's economy and a welcome boost for its restaurants after two years of restrictions and uncertainty.

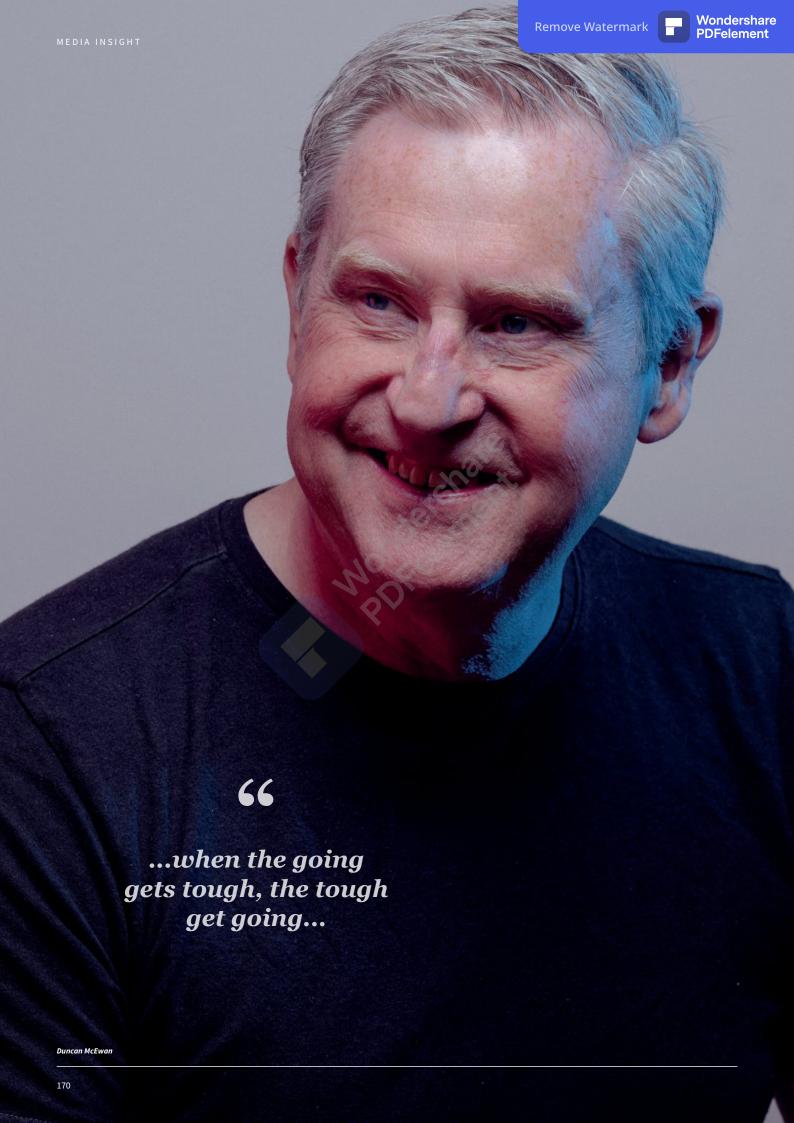
Thinking forward, giving back

Alongside the day jobs, we've been lending our skills to drive change for good in the North East community, reaching out to offer support to Mental Health North-East, the West End Foodbank and The People's Kitchen. We launched Different Narrative Academy (DNA), and ran a summer school to nurture employability skills in local university students and graduates. And we've worked to broaden careers awareness amongst the region's schoolchildren, presenting at the NEI Can event organised by our client Newcastle NEI and also welcoming 15 students from St Benet Biscop Catholic Academy to our agency for a day as part of the IPA's Advertising Unlocked initiative.

As the saying goes, the more you do, the more you find you're capable of. We're already excited about what next year could bring, so if you're hungry for change with a juicy business objective to meet, say hello@differentnarrative.com

www.differentnarrative.com





A HEDLEY MCEWAN YEAR

2022 began with real confidence. We'd bounced back well from lockdown and were looking forward to the year ahead with continued confidence.

The year began with a new member of the team. Rich joined us as a senior creative. Turns out he's a really great creative, really quick and a really nice bloke too. What could be a better start to the year ahead?

As the year unfolded, and we found ourselves, in a challenging business climate, we decided to be positive and proactive. Adopting a strategy of 'attack being the best form of defence'

The resulting new business drive has had some notable success.

Early in the year we pitched for and were successful in winning a re-brand project for Saks hair and beauty apprenticeships

The new brand 'Kleek Apprenticeships' has recently been launched. Part of the project was a glamorous photoshoot in London with top models and stylists.

In line with our plan for continued growth, we redeveloped our website, integral to the refresh was a full day of photography in and around our office at St Peter's Wharf. A fun day for the team and a lot of great shots.

The biggest change for our team this year has been the addition of a Social Media Manager.

We had a very precise idea of the kind of skills that the person would require; the ability to think strategically as well as creatively.

We were lucky enough to find the perfect fit. Nicola is producing really amazing results for clients existing and new. So much so, that we were able to demonstrate the effectiveness of our approach to the national shoe retailer 'Schuh'. We now work with their in-house team to produce Social Media campaigns.

After our client Parkdean Resorts spotted that there was no Emoji for caravans, we helped them run a campaign on Social Media to lobby the public's support to have an official Caravan Emoji introduced.

Other notable client acquisitions were the Cumbrian business 'More Handles' and the community car share brand 'Co Wheels.' Most recently we began working with a new brand in the property management sector, 'Clementine.' Everything from vans to uniforms from websites to online marketing is in the pipeline.

We're also delighted to be working with DeKuyper, the Dutch Royal Distillers to create the brand and packaging for an all-new range of four vegan Liqueurs for worldwide distribution.

Some long-standing clients met some long-term objectives in 2022.

Durham Distillers launched their full range of re-branded spirits, heralding the introduction of their new brand identity. They are also within weeks of opening their stunning new distillery in the heart of Durham City. With that comes the laying down of their inaugural Single Malt Whisky.

A brand we created and launched a few years ago, Kendal Mint Co, came to us to add to their already extensive range with new product lines and packaging designs.

Finally, after five years of working closely with GBB on design, branding, strategy, copy and artwork, they were successfully awarded their full banking licence to become the UK's newest bank; The Great British Bank. Members of the HMc team attended the launch event at the bank's HQ in Middlesbrough in September. It has been a very exciting journey so far.

What am I most proud of this year?

Well, working with a new bank, and taking them to launch has to be up there.

Ruth leading the team to secure the Schuh business with zero input from me made me feel really proud as it bodes well for the future.

But, what makes me proudest of all is the sheer resilience, dedication and talent of the team to get stuck in when times are difficult. As the song goes; 'when the going gets tough, the tough get going.'

www.hedleymcewan.co.uk

... CHRISTMAS CHEER IS HERE...

It's the most wonderful time of the year - Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what their Christmas message to their customers this year is.



"We'd like to wish everyone all the best for this Christmas and for 2023. Enjoy Christmas and here's to a prosperous New Year for us all from the North Tyneside Business Forum.

"From my business, I'd like to thank all my clients, and contacts for their support this year, it's been a privilege and a pleasure to get to know you and your businesses, I've loved helping you get on the right path for your business. Here's to a very Merry Christmas for us all and a prosperous New Year too.

Karen Goldfinch Chair North Tyneside Business Forum and owner Karen Goldfinch - Your Business Pilot www.northtynesidebusinessforum.org.uk www.facebook.com/yourbusinesspilot

For Christmas, I have my fantastic children's books available for all ages; picture books of unicorns, dragons and mermaids for younger children and becoming the GOAT* for teens. In the New Year, I will be re-launching my aspiring author's programme.

If you have ever thought about sharing your expertise, passion or stories with others then pop it on your Christmas list and make sure you join me in the New Year to get your book published in 2023.

Eleanor Baggaley, www.eleanorbaggaley.com





We've got a busy festive period over at Celebrate Difference, The MINT Business Club and The Hub Consett!

We're looking all festive and have the Hub Market Place offering extended hours on Saturdays, and late-night shopping on Thursdays and Fridays throughout December. We're even opening on Christmas Eve for last minute shopping! We have craft workshops, MINTy Networking on Tour, and last but not least... the arrival of The Absolutely MINT Business Toolkit Planner, which is jam packed full of advice and useful pages for Small Business Owner to help keep you on track and plan effectively.

You can check all the dates on our Socials, and our websites @MintBusinessClub • @CelebrateDifference • @TheHubConsett

Nicola Jayne Little, www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk

Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers.
To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact keith@highlightspr.co.uk or
call Keith on 07814 397951

...TIS THE SEASON...

Christmas is a busy time for everyone, and Keith Newman of Highlights PR is no exception.

Here Keith tells us about some of the clients his company helps at Christmas time.



Dr Rebecca Dinsdale's latest book will make a fantastic Christmas present. The Life Joy Journal is an adventure in hope, harmony and happiness. The book is written to help you discover the things that matter to you as in these demanding times we all need more wisdom, courage and joy.

www.drrebecca.org.uk

Christmas can be a hard time of the year for many people. The People's Kitchen in Newcastle help vulnerable people by providing food and friendship. This year, their "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign will ensure that everyone who needs a hot meal during the winter period is catered for. To help: www.justgiving.com/campaign/PeoplesKitchen-

Feed-A-Friend-For-A-Fiver





Northumberland Theatre Company based in Amble presents *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, adapted by Louis Roberts. Touring until the 15th of January 2023.

"Beyond the Wild Wood comes the Wide World!"

In this classic tale we follow Mole, who ventures forth from the comfort of his underground home to explore the outside world. This version has plenty of live music, songs, laughs and uplifting and joyous moments.

Tickets from: www.northumberlandtheatre.co.uk

Christmas at the Cathedral is a festive night of carols, popular music and sketches all delivered in the wonderful setting of Newcastle Cathedral. Performed in front of a sell-out audience, the event raises much needed funds for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. This year's event is on Thursday 15th December.

 ${\it Tickets from www.theatreroyal.co.uk/whats-on/christ mas-at-the-cathed rall}$





I'm also working on a brand-new campaign with charity Cure Usher to raise awareness of Usher Syndrome and fund research to help find a cure. People with Usher Syndrome experience combined hearing and sight loss. It's a rare genetic condition that affects everyone differently.

www.cureusher.org

To get your business, organisation or event in the media spotlight, contact Keith@highlightspr.co.uk
www.highlightspr.co.uk 07814 397951

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Veronica Swindale, MD, nesma

It used to be common for children to follow their parents into certain professions, barristers, doctors, dentists, and the media. For a while, I thought bricklaying and the construction industry was the only way to go (guess what my dad did!).

Young people receive varying levels of career advice at school. But unless they choose specific apprenticeships or career paths often find themselves doing safe degrees like English or History, which act as a good foundation but don't necessarily point to a distinctive career path.

I recently spoke with a 24-year-old graduate from the region who had secured her first job (and flat) and had gained work experience in different agencies but now finds herself in a role that she doesn't enjoy and 'wants to get into marketing'. My advice to her was to think about what her strengths and passions are - music, art, sport, animals, science etc. and then find all the companies that work in those areas that might be hiring. That way, you can look at the jobs they are posting (and there are many) and identify whether you have a skills gap - what new training or qualifications you might need to get a job there successfully.

Another mentee of ours had tried his hand at working in the family business but felt that he would be more inspired working for a larger organisation. My advice to him was that even though he would find himself in a very different culture working for a larger organisation, the learning and experience he would acquire would set him up very well for when he stepped back into the family business. I have seen this happen a couple of times, and it is a strong family that can let their younger members go and learn outside the firm before returning to drive the firm.

Another young graduate from a local university - also 24 recently had his first professional interview and had to do a presentation. Having no experience in the world of work, he prepared the presentation and then we spent an hour or so working on what was important to him, how to manage the information and how to present it verbally. The interview was online. The additional help did the trick! He didn't get the first position but was offered another 'better' position in the company based on the interview, presentation and skills analysis. He has just finished his first month and loves it!

Mentoring can come in many shapes and forms. Senior managers value the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns (confidentially, of course) where there may be resistance in or out of the boardroom. Having an experienced sounding board can often help you gain control of your convictions and find ways of presenting your ideas that are palatable to those you need to influence (including yourself!). So, it works at a strategic and personal level too.

A recent Head of Strategy, Marketing and Communications commented: "I can say wholeheartedly that I have thoroughly enjoyed our discussions, and I have always left with actionable ideas and clarity. Veronica's style and gentle challenges have helped me to better understand my own thoughts and to unravel complex issues. This means solutions or gaps in knowledge are found from within, and they are therefore absolutely applicable to our activities. We have covered broad-ranging personal, strategic, and tactical areas such as gaining board buy-in, developing competitor understanding and the role of marketing in implementing sustainable practices. I have always felt better equipped to make real changes after our discussions."

My next mentee was apologising for not getting her coursework done something that occurs from time to time and usually the problem is what's going on in life or at work that gets in the way, not the course itself. Our discussion took us down the path of 'stop' trying to do the course, and let's unravel your work brain; I am looking forward to this one!

If you would like to chat about whether this approach might work for you in the new year, don't hesitate to get in touch with Veronica directly at veronica.swindale@nesma.co.uk

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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

SAMUEL MARRIOTT-DOWDING

Founder and CEO, Marriott Communications.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

Marriott Communications' goals for this year were undoubtedly to grow our client roster nationally and also to become more disciplined in implementing an internal structure within the business.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Yes and kind of? We were fortunately able to further grow the business through securing several new clients across EMEA which we were incredibly happy with, although business planning and business structure development sometimes took a back seat in favour of nurturing these new relationships and partnerships.

There is a difference between working in your business, and working on your business, and moving forward I have to find a more disciplined approach in balancing these two aspects.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

To be totally honest, we did not ever have to. As we are a digital business delivering services digitally, the business began already adapted to this pandemic world.

Where the actual business itself was not affected by the shift in emphasis placed upon the need to go digital, this shift did ultimately allow us to market ourselves to bricks and mortar businesses and organisations as digital transformation and adaptation experts - something which was responsible for a great deal of our positive financial growth.

What are you most proud of this year?

Besides growing the business nationally and increasing our client roster, I have been so proud to receive industry commendations! I am really proud to share that Marriott Communications has officially won Integrated Communications Agency of the Year, and I have also been shortlisted twice for Entrepreneur of the Year and once for Marketer of the Year.

I did not start this business to receive praise or win accolades, so for this to happen organically, where our work is being recognised and our success as a growing creative agency is being acknowledged - it really validates for me that my company and I are on the right path.



What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

"Keep going." My dad, who also happens to be a successful businessman which is a massive advantage when advice is needed, always tells me that, regardless if I need advice on something positive or negative.

For me, this rings true in life in general, not just in business. The only direction we can move in is forward, and sometimes we have to take the good with the bad to experience the growth that comes from uncertainty and challenges.

How has your team changed?

For the most part the team has remained the same, however, we have also started to rely on outsourcing more as we have grown - especially for translation services.

Building a high-quality network of specialists and consultants has really been key in the way that we have been able to successfully manage our growth throughout the year.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That I have more resilience than I would have thought possible.

Owning and growing a business is never an easy task, and I have been faced with challenges this year that I would not have expected. Through sheer grit and determination (and a couple of existential crises!) I was able to overcome them, and having learnt from these challenges, I also

learnt how resilient I could be in the face of uncertainty.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

The North East Chamber of Commerce events are always great, and it is always a good time meeting fellow local businesses and entrepreneurs. However, the Prolific North Marketing Awards have got to be the most memorable of the year putting hundreds of marketers and advertisers in a room (with a flowing bar!), you can't not have a good time! There are some stories here probably best saved for another time.

Describe 2022 in three words...

Growth. Resilience. Purpose.

What are your aims for 2023?

As a business owner an incredibly important goal for me is to sustain our current growth trajectory, and to make sure that our growth is managed effectively. As an agency we will be continuing to scale the business and continuing our work within the EMEA, and we will also be identifying growth opportunities within the Americas too.

By the end of 2023 I am also aiming to grow the Marriott Communications team - specifically Communications Officer and Business Development roles.

www.marriottcommunications.com



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Sophie continues

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THE POWER OF OMNICHANNEL MARKETING AS TOLD BY REVENUE GROWTH SPECIALISTS

Revolution is a Gateshead-based revenue growth agency that helps clients revolutionise the way they do business. Here's their take on omnichannel marketing.

As a full-stack agency, Revolution offers a range of services, including demand generation, customer conversion, customer retention, and digital transformation. The award-winning agency has had great success this year, securing 25 new contracts and averaging 32% revenue growth for its clients. One of the ways they do this is through the deployment of omnichannel marketing strategies.

Omnichannel growth strategies create a seamless customer experience across all platforms. This holistic approach allows you to understand how people interact with your brand at different touch points and provides them with consistent messaging across all platforms, channels, and devices. Your customers will receive relevant content, regardless of their position in the sales funnel.

An omnichannel growth strategy puts your customers first, giving them a personalised experience every time. Aligning your sales and marketing teams will enable you to avoid disconnected messaging. By integrating your workflows, you can provide consistent customer service throughout the buyer's journey.

With omnichannel growth, you should aim to obtain a variety of consumer insights by distributing your brand/ product message over many channels. This data-driven approach provides rich information about your customers, their behaviour, problems, and preferences - allowing you to categorise these users into differentiated persona profiles. Using these profiles will help you understand your customers' purchasing behaviours and pain points. The data can be used to personalise the buyer's journey and provide a customised message to the appropriate audience through the correct

High-growth businesses use omnichannel marketing to get to know their clients better while targeting their messaging efficiently. Knowing your buyer personas will allow you to make data-driven decisions on what content to create next. Companies that successfully implement an omnichannel strategy will be well-positioned to attract new customers and nurture existing ones.

Alongside optimising your customer experience, an omnichannel growth strategy can help your business reduce overhead and boost revenue. As your business becomes more accessible across platforms, it becomes easier for your customers to make purchases. Personalisation is proven to raise the average customer lifetime value (CLV), so by creating content specific to your customers, you're likely to influence their spending. Customers who leave satisfied are more

inclined to return to make future purchases and to share the word online and with friends. Instilling this personalised and harmonious experience will increase customer retention and loyalty, ultimately improving their lifetime value.

Perennially, many businesses operate using a multichannel approach, managing each channel independently without streamlining their messaging; often leading to duplication of time or waste of budget. The difference between multichannel and omnichannel growth is the focal point. Multichannel growth focuses the marketing strategy on your brand, whereas omnichannel growth puts the customer at the centre. Multichannel growth messaging often remains static; however, omnichannel growth messaging adapts to customer behaviour, resulting in a seamless customer experience. As more companies lean towards catering to the consumer, omnichannel growth is quickly becoming their strategy of choice.

As a HubSpot Platinum Solutions Partner, Revolution uses HubSpot as a vehicle to deliver omnichannel campaigns for multiple clients throughout the UK, Europe, and North America.

Revolution's Chief Strategy Officer, Chris Glancey, has been at the forefront of delivering omnichannel campaigns with HubSpot for the past five years. Chris said, "As a leading marketing, sales, and customer service platform, HubSpot is a best-in-class system that we utilise to help businesses create meaningful relationships with their customers. By using and implementing HubSpot through various businesses, we have seen our clients exceed their revenue targets and significantly increase customer lifetime value. Our team are experts in executing omnichannel strategies that help companies unify their marketing, sales, and customer service activities, as well as facilitating growth."

Take, for example, the world-famous coffee giant Starbucks. While well-known for its coffee, Starbucks has also earned the prestige of being one of the top players in the omnichannel game. Starbucks Coffee members can reload their cards or make purchases through various channels, such as eCommerce apps, websites, and in-store, all while receiving a consistent message tailored to that individual customer.

If you're a business that continues to rely on traditional marketing methods, consider delving into the innovative approach of omnichannel growth. Get in touch with Revolution to hear more about how they can help you modernise your business.

Contact: start@revolutiongrowth.co.uk

A UNIQUE INTERVIEW...



MARK BRYCE

Sales Director at Agilico.

How did you get into sales?

After leaving further education back in the late 80s, I was approached by someone I knew who asked me if I fancied a job selling satellite systems door-to-door for SKY TV. I thought I'd give it a go as I was a confident enough young man with nothing to lose. Back then a lot of jobs in sales were commission only with no basic salary, so you were essentially self-employed. This separated the men from the boys, so to speak, as your wage was directly proportional to the work you put in. I was paid £20 per sale and in one quarter averaged 70 sales a week and was awarded top salesperson in the UK. From that moment I knew sales were for me because I enjoyed the competitiveness, meeting people, and having no ceiling on my earnings.

Who or what inspires you?

I am inspired by great entrepreneurs and people who have achieved remarkable individual things or goals in life, ones that go over and above what other humans would usually do or accomplish. This would range from local entrepreneurs to global magnates that have changed the world we live in, Olympic athletes, and people who have given their lives to charity work and caring for others. I look for inspiration in different places and don't see inspiration as moneydriven, it is more respect for what people have achieved or what they can achieve that inspires me.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into sales?

The world of sales is a great place to be if you are good at it and a lonely place to be if you are not. Universities now recognise sales as a science, and it is a respected position nowadays which can come with very high rewards for the right individuals. There are some exceptional salespeople in the NE earning six figures, earnings that usually belong to high-ranking professionals such as doctors, pilots, and barristers. If you have an outgoing personality, are competitive, enthusiastic, and look the part (smart and trustworthy) then that's half the battle. The rest is down to work rate, ability, application, and being in the right business.

What is your favourite part of your job?

There isn't one part of the job that's my favourite but mentoring other individuals throughout their careers and making a difference to them brings me great satisfaction, especially when they go on to achieve things.

When you're in sales you should still enjoy the 'buzz' you get from closing a large opportunity or winning one that you've worked hard on to get over the line. I guess the job differs every day and that's what makes it so enjoyable, no scenario is the same. As a consequence, you do get highs and lows and that's why it takes a certain breed of



individual to maintain it. You are only as good as your last month they say. Eat, Sleep, Sell, Repeat!

What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

That's a hard question, how do I sum up a moment in nearly three decades of being in business?

There are a few that stick out. One was an approach by a large global player (a Fortune 500 US business) to buy us, for an amount that we could only dream of when we started. They wanted to buy what was once a small North East business based in Gateshead.

Arguably a proud moment to think that they would want to acquire us but as it transpired my business partners and I didn't go ahead with the deal and instead went on the journey with Horizon Capital. As of last month, we are now the largest independent in our space in the UK with 17 locations – a milestone in itself. But there have been many others too!

What are your favourite magazines?

Magazines that I read from time to time would include Men's Health, Top Gear, and a few local business publications so I can keep my ear to the ground.

What does the future hold for Mark Bryce?

At the moment I still enjoy my role as Sales Director at Agilico.

We are on an incredible journey, cross-selling Telecoms and Invoice Processing software businesses into our existing Managed Print customer base and growing this organically.

Am I the type to retire early? No, I need to be actively involved in the business world that I still enjoy being part of. I also want to maintain a good work-life balance and live life to the fullest!

www.agilico.co.uk www.uniquemagazines.co.uk



A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...



LIZZIE TURNER

Managing Director, Peachy Digital.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

2022 was always going to be about growth – personally for our team, but also as a business and of course, to help our clients achieve their own growth goals.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Absolutely not! We have all seen how topsy turvy 2022 has been, and it's been quite a year on a personal level, too. But as a team, we've smashed it. Clients winning awards, some amazing PR coverage, lots of happy customers and while we've definitely had to make some quick changes in line with changes in the wider world, we achieved what we wanted to.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

We haven't needed to change much in honesty, since our model has always been very flexible and people-friendly. I think the main thing is how much we have enjoyed being able to get out and see people in person again – we have maintained many virtual meetings but it's great to sit down with a client and have a coffee and a chat, and usually food!

What are you most proud of this year?

We won the social media contract with Pal International, which was amazing, but are now looking at their wider marketing activity too. And we were awarded Most Innovative Food & Drink Marketing Agency in the Northern Enterprise Awards which was a huge coup for the team.

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

Work with suppliers you can trust! The old adage of not mixing business with pleasure is somewhat outdated, but I think sometimes we can let things slide because of the relationship behind it. I learned a few lessons about that this year, but it's all good!

How has your team changed?

The team has been working harder than ever, and we're currently recruiting – we need more awesome Peaches! But they have been incredible and I can't thank them enough for all their hard work, dedication and also the genuine passion they have for their work.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That I am more kicka** than I thought! Lots of changes personally this year but with my amazing team behind me, we've won dreamy

contracts, worked on some exciting projects and we're growing rapidly.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

The BNI awards gala! BNI plays a big part in our growth and the people I have met are friends as well as business contacts – the event was amazing and not least because I won 'member of the year' for my chapter.

Describe 2022 in three words...

Wild, exciting, teachable.

What does the remainder of the year hold?

We're working on 2023 content plans for clients and also planning our next moves as a business, but we also have some awesome social events in the diary. And wine. Lots of wine!

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A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

ELLEN HEDLEY

Director, Vida Creative.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

After a high growth year with lots of change last year, we set out to develop our team and service offering. It was important to us as a management team to get Vida's values and our specific ways of working truly engrained into everything we do. The aim being to support everyone to do their best work – and of course get the best results for clients. We also set out to work on projects with more of our 'ideal clients' – enjoying the work we do is absolutely at the centre of our company ethos so we didn't want to lose that.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Full disclosure, not everything has gone to plan. Does it ever all go to plan in business!? But we are approaching the end of the year with a great team, a list of brilliant projects under our belt and an excitement for what next year will bring.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

We're a lot more flexible with home working. Beforehand we'd only really work from home if there was a particular reason for it but now it's just part of the way we work. Most people still choose to come into the office most days – we're very lucky in the fact that we all get on really well as a team so it's nice to be in the office together.

What are you most proud of this year?

The projects that our team have worked on with clients this year. For a small agency in the North East we get to do some very cool things. We're super proud to have worked with Soccer Aid for UNICEF for the last three years on the campaign look and feel, and this year, the event raised over £15.5m (a record amount!). To play a small part in that is something we can be proud of!

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

I took a leadership course and one of the things that stuck with me was to 'be good at what you're good at', and help others to be better than you at what you're not. I think business leaders have a lot of pressure to have all the



answers, but if we can empower our teams to excel in their own areas of expertise then that's the key to long term business success. In my opinion anyway!

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

I'm way more resilient than I thought! I think every business owner will tell you that running a business is very tough at times. I absolutely love what I do, and it's just as well because with everything that's happened in the world this year I did sometimes want to hibernate! I've practiced looking at every challenge that's comes my way this year as a learning experience. This has definitely helped me to think about things in a more positive way and tackle things head on.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

Oooh difficult one! Can I say one of our own team's socials!? We did escape rooms and it was a great laugh. In terms of more business-related ones, I enjoyed the Entrepreneurs' Forum 20th birthday event, and we also set up our own alternative networking event this year which was really enjoyable. It's called Notworking and we're hoping to do more of these casual networking events next year (we've banned business cards and sales pitches!). Everyone is welcome so please do look it up!

Describe 2022 in three words....

Exciting. Challenging. Evolution.

What are your aims for 2023?

For me personally, to continue working on my abilities to be a great leader of my business. Whether I like it or not, I have the power to affect how every person in my team feels about coming to work every day. It's my responsibility to ensure that this feeling is a positive one. We have a brilliant team who all get on really well and produce quality work, and I want to keep it that way by continuing to make Vida a great place to work.

vidacreative.co.uk



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Visit us and experience our wonderful school at first hand. Call 01642 782095 or email admissions@teessidehigh.co.uk to arrange a tour appointment today.





Northumbria University named University of the Year 2022

Northumbria University has been named University of the Year 2022 in the Times Higher Education (THE) Awards.

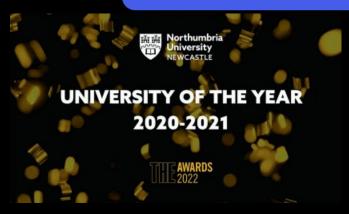
The THE Awards are recognised as the 'Oscars of higher education'. The win highlights Northumbria's remarkable transformation to become the UK's first research-intensive modern university. Quality research is at the centre of everything the University does, alongside a clear social mobility mission, alignment to business and the demands of the regional and local economy.

In the Research Excellence Framework (REF), Northumbria recorded the biggest rise in research power of any UK university for the second time in 2021, moving up 27 places to 23rd.

Professor Andy Long, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University explained: "Winning this award shows that the education we give our students is enriched by research, but I believe what sets us apart from others is that 40 per cent of these students are from traditionally low-participation backgrounds.

"It's thanks to everyone's dedication at the University that we can celebrate this phenomenal success."

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Chancellor of Northumbria University, added: "It's amazing to be part of an institution where the vision has



become a reality and I congratulate everyone at the University."

This year Newcastle University was shortlisted alongside Northumbria for the award, offering further evidence of the combined strength of the city's universities.

Leader of Newcastle City Council, Cllr Nick Kemp said: "We are proud that both universities made the shortlist. They are integral to this city's success and together play a significant role, economically, socially and culturally, helping to make Newcastle a fair and inclusive place to live and raising our profile on the global stage."



North Tyneside Business of the Year comes Out of the Blue

A team of mental health specialists has won a major accolade for its pioneering work with schools.

The annual North Tyneside Business awards, which are organised by North Tyneside Business Forum, celebrate the huge contribution that businesses make to the local economy and how they make North Tyneside a great place to live, work and visit.

Winners of the New Business category and overall Business of the Year award were...North Shields based Blue Mental Health Education & Training, a team of mental health practitioners who specialise in helping children and young people by delivering mental health training for schools.

Director Jonny Morton said: "We are delighted to have won this award. I knew what we had was special but because mental health has always been the poor relation in healthcare in the UK, I'd never imagined for a minute that the local community would see it in such a great light. It tells us the tide is turning and we're at the front of the turn."

Karen Goldfinch, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, said: "This business formed in June 2021, but already the positive impact they have made to young people's mental health through their work in schools is immense."



Prestigious sporting recognition for international rugby player

Twenty years after representing her country in Rugby League, Donna Rodgers, Organisational Development and Learning Manager at Teesside University, celebrated her achievements as she received her

Donna was part of the Great Britain Women's Rugby League team that toured Australia in 2002, playing three test matches and all of the friendlies.

At this month's Pride of the Lionesses event, which honoured the women who had made 'outstanding contributions' to Rugby League, she finally received her cap in recognition of her sporting achievements.

Donna, from Redcar, said: "I feel immensely proud to have played for Great Britain and had the opportunity to tour Australia. It was such an amazing and fulfilling experience, and the Pride of the Lionesses project has been amazing in bringing all that back for me.

"I remember being disappointed back then that I had no trophy or medal to show I had played at international level. To finally be receiving a cap and heritage number that recognises my achievement and that of my fellow players over the years is just brilliant.

"It felt fantastic to be part of history at this event and to catch up with so many female players as we celebrated together. The crowd was amazing and certainly made us all feel special."



Royal Grammar School Newcastle

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Boys' School:

Saturday 21st January

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on 0191 275 0608. **f in**



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building the future

RATED EXCELLENT BY THE INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE



Governor of Bank of England Faces question time with A-Level students

The Governor of the Bank of England faced some tough questions from A-Level students at a South Shields school, during a visit to the North East.

Students at St Wilfrid's RC College, part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, questioned Andrew Bailey on the bank's recent decisions on interest rate rises - and what they meant for their families now, as well as their prospects in the future.

The VIP visitor also gave an inspiring presentation on his role and the UK's economy to students studying Maths and Business Studies, who may look to develop their careers in economics. The Governor had also visited Port of Tyne Logistics as part of a regional visit to the North East.



Fran Craik, executive headteacher of the college, said she was delighted to welcome Mr Bailey, who became only the second person to receive the school's special "full school colours" tie for outstanding achievement.

The tie was presented to the Governor by Shreya Bhardwaj, a Lord Glenamara prize-winner for outstanding academic achievement, who was the first student ever to receive the tie.

"It was something quite special for Shreya to

present the tie to Mr Bailey, as he became only the second person to receive the honour after her." said Mrs Craik.

"For a young female to be presenting him with an award that she was the first recipient of is an amazing achievement.

"We hope this will be the start of a tradition for other exceptional people who visit the school in the future and that we create an ambitious culture that our pupils aspire to be part of."

Gateshead College announces new women's and elite football coach

A highly regarded North East football coach has joined Gateshead College as the new women's and men's scholarship academy coach.

Ian Skinner who has vast experience in the sport and previously coached at clubs including Blyth AFC, Whitley Bay 'A' and Bedlington Terriers, will now lead the women's team at Gateshead College as well as the Under 19s scholarship academy team in partnership with Gateshead Football Club.

He'll coach the two teams alongside his other current position as the manager of Ashington FC.

A qualified UEFA A level coach, Ian previously spent 6 years working on behalf of the County FA to develop both women's and girl's football in the North East region.

Ian takes over as coach of women's team following an incredibly successful season which saw them win the treble.

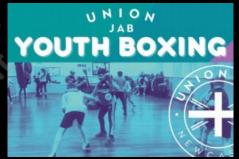
In men's football, the Under 19s scholarship academy team were crowned North Division champions in the National League Under 19 Youth Alliance and League Cup winners for the first time.

Gateshead College is renowned for its footballing success for both men and women. Former Lioness, Jill Scott studied at the college before returning in 2008 to



coach and mentor the Women's Football Academy players on a part-time basis around her commitments with Everton Ladies and international duties.

More details about Gateshead College and the football courses on offer, visit: www. gateshead.ac.uk/academy-for-sport/



Union Jabs Youth Boxing sessions build confidence

So many young people come home from school and go straight to their bedrooms, turn on the computer/ Play Station and thats it for the night. Their health and wellbeing are on the line- quite literally.

Union Jab was set up by Charlie Cooke, as a kid he was overweight and had a diagnoses of Autism... he found life pretty hard. Charlie didnt want other young people to have the experience he had so using his expertise, qualifications and passion he started Union Jab.

Offering classes for all, especially those who don't like going into a packed, pumping gym- where you think everyone is looking at you!

Union Jab runs Youth Boxing in Wylam and Greenside - with more classes coming in other areas in 2023. The sessions are a perfect for 7-14 year olds, they are non competitive, they improve fitness and help build friendships. They're more than just throwing a punch, they use boxing to teach self respect, respect for others and improve self confidence.

Small class sizes Inspirational teaching Outstanding pastoral care Excellent co-curricular activities

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PREP | SENIOR | SIXTH FORM

Whole School Open Morning

Saturday 4th March 2023





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FELIZ NAVIDAD

As I write this, the shops are beginning to bulge with varieties of Pigs in Blankets, Vanilla Latte Bailey's- no, me neither- and, up and down the land, Christmas plays are being dusted down, revamped and repackaged for the 2022 primary cohorts.

My school is no different, and I was honoured the other day to be privy to the unveiling of Year 4's Christmas Play-Christmas Around the World- which was accompanied by an enthusiastic rendition of 'Feliz Navidad'. Our resident Year 4 polyglot, a ten-year-old who speaks no fewer than four languages, told us very solemnly how to pronounce the z in feliz, having grown up in Argentina and knowing that, as the song was written by the Puerto Rican Jose Feliciano, the Southern American pronunciation is different from mainland Spain. That definitely put me in my place...

Although the seemingly ubiquitous 'Feliz Navidad' can act like an earworm, I find it far less irritating that other festive tunes I could mention, including the utterly objectionable 'Do They Know It's Christmas?', which should be consigned to the dustbin of 20th century cultural faux pas. I am certainly no curmudgeon or a female Scrooge, but I do have a sense of dread once all the Christmas commercialism begins. I adore the Nativities, Carol Services, reminiscing about the 1970s listening to Steeleye Span's 'Gaudette' and ingesting the scent of the cinnamon room spray. However, I do find the hype around the season difficult to stomach, especially the Christmas ads. Therefore, I expected this year to be no different: I don't much care about the fate of Aldi's Kevin the Carrot, and the M&S ads normally make me want to reach for the Gaviscon because of the culinary cornucopia depicted. Equally, I have never been all that taken by the John Lewis adverts, although they are considered the industry's best.

Consequently, when I heard a discussion on a news programme about the new John Lewis ad, I was immediately cynical enough to think that that John Lewis was exploiting the issue of young people in care merely for its own capitalist ends and I was prepared to be Outraged of Durham on their marginalised behalf. However, how wrong I was: within fifteen seconds, I was gripped by the valiant attempts of the middle-aged man trying to master the skateboard because a skateboarding-loving

By the time the young girl turned up at the doorstep, skateboard in hand and a look of trepidation on her wan face, I was unashamedly sobbing. I cried again the following morning when the poet and advocate for looked-

foster child was coming to stay for Christmas.



after children, Lemn Sissay, praised the advertisement, having been a product of the care system himself. He was commenting the need for more foster carers, particularly during the festive season, said that this advert was crucial in highlighting this issue and complimented John Lewis for its financial commitment to this cause. John Lewis, I

This then made me think about other charities such as Feeding Families, a North-East charity that my school will be supporting this academic year. In these straitened times, the Christmas hampers that Feeding Families make up from donations could mean the difference for some people between eating well at Christmas, or not eating very much at all. We were particularly asked to make up cones of wrapped sweets, so that some children in this area who don't get many presents- if at all- will at least have something to open on Christmas Day. A sobering thought indeed in 2022.

Próspero año y Felicidad!

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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PRE-PREP AND PREP OPEN DAY

SATURDAY 28 JANUARY 2023 10.00AM - 12.30PM

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THE SUM OF THE PARTS

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, RGS Newcastle.

The numbers on the opposite page are a triumphant adding together of what took place last academic year at the Royal Grammar School Newcastle. The best thing about numbers? They are infinite. As an ambitious body, we keep on striving to improve on the sums, adding other factors into our calculations. But what of the parts themselves? Think now about the day-to-day energy and the warmth of our community: from mud and rucksacks to the buzz of inter-school Partnerships work and the click and chatter of projects. It is the impact we make on individual lives both within and beyond the school gates, as well as the final outcome, which is a true reflection of the success at RGS.

As a school, we believe in inspiring young people and equipping them to make a positive contribution to society. We aim to do this by promoting excellence and being committed to raising aspiration and attainment across the North East. That goes far beyond merely helping pupils to get grades. While grades may serve as stepping-stones to opportunities, they should be the consequence of a good education, not its purpose.

If young people are truly going to be able to thrive in their future careers and make a difference in the world, they also need to grow in character, with personal values and a genuine sense of purpose. Major developments in a young person's character can be inspired at least as much from what goes on outside the classroom as from what happens in lessons.

Amongst the many activities that go on at the RGS, the vehicles of service and charity are embedded in the programme and are excellent ways for students to develop as people, allowing them to learn entrepreneurial skills in a social enterprise context. Some activities are very explicitly linked to service; for example, many of our students

regularly set up charity fundraising activities or volunteer in local primary schools. Similarly, a contingent of our cadet force recently assisted the veterans in wheelchairs who were attending the Festival of Remembrance at the Royal Albert Hall in London before joining many thousands of veterans to march past the Cenotaph the following morning. Service opportunities which happen day in, and day out, include senior pupils leading by example and supporting younger pupils as peer mentors, form prefects, subject prefects and assisting with coaching sport. All these voluntary activities make a positive difference to the life of others. However, they are important not only for the impact that students can have but also for the lessons that our young leaders learn from them.

This is an important message to convey, not least through our recent Virtual Information Evening for prospective RGS families and our whole school Open Day. Those exploring whether the school is right for their children need to understand not only the rich variety of all the activities that go on as well as the outcomes which are easy to measure but also - crucially - the value of what we provide

They need to appreciate how we aim to instil life lessons from serving others which include teamwork, leadership and working alongside others; learning from the failures as much as the successes; embracing the discomfort of stretching challenges; and the satisfaction that comes from dedication to a worthwhile cause. These invisible yet important lessons will take people far further in life than exam results or the university they attend.

As is always the case at Open Day, our pupils who speak to prospective families about their own experience and host them as they go round the school are by far the best advocates, passing on their pride and enjoyment of being part of the very special RGS community. All of this does not happen by accident. Unseen and often unsung. teachers quietly work at coaching and supporting students to be the best version of themselves. They create opportunities and they help students to reflect and grow as people. The true test of whether we have succeeded as a school is not the excellent exam results or the range of other accolades that our students achieve; it is the positive impact that our young people have when they go out into the world.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



Year in the Life at RGS^{*} 2021-22

1356 STUDENTS 44% GIRLS 56% BOYS (**)





GCSE 21 SUBJECTS 1201 GCSES AWARDED

86.4% OF GRADES ACHIEVED WERE 9-7/A*-A

19 OF 137 STUDENTS ACHIEVED ALL GRADE 9s

A LEVEL 26 SUBJECTS 518 A LEVELS AWARDED

90.3% OF GRADES ACHIEVED WERE A*-B

72% OF GRADES ACHIEVED WERE A*-A



NEARLY 70% GRADE A* A

64 NUMBER OF EPO QUALIFICATIONS ACHIEVED



82 STUDENTS BURSARIES

ATTENDED RGS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL MEANS-TESTED BURSARIES

PARTNERSHIPS



INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN LOCAL STATE SCHOOLS **7300** BENEFITED FROM RGS PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

4000 HOURS WERE DELIVERED BY RGS STUDENTS

RGS PARTNERSHIP PROJECTS TAKEN PLACE



150 CCF CADETS 297 DOFE STUDENT



261 TEACHING & SUPPORT STAFF BODY



282,656 HOT LUNCHES SERVED



NETWORK OF 8455 OLD NOVOCASTRIANS



259 CO-CURRICULAR CLUBS









THE KEY HR CHALLENGES FOR 2023



HR professionals and senior leaders alike have faced some unique people challenges in recent years. As 2022 draws to a close, organisations continue to grapple with a range of issues, from skills shortages and recruitment challenges to hybrid working models and the current cost of living crisis.

At Northumbria University, we've gathered expert input from business leaders, policy experts and academics to help tackle some of the key HR challenges for 2023...

1. Competition for people and skills

Nicola Inge, Employment & Skills Director at Business in the Community, said: "Vacancies remain at a record high and the number of unemployed people remains low – 1.2 million people (ONS, 2022). This is a real challenge, but it is also an opportunity to reach a diverse, untapped talent pool. However, to reach those who face disadvantage in the labour market, businesses need to change the way they recruit."

Tips for attracting and retaining staff include, focusing on organisational culture; highlighting the total rewards package; going beyond the salary to include other perks like flexible working, volunteering opportunities or childcare vouchers; and finally, bringing attention to training opportunities. There needs to be a paradigm

shift towards visible career development and progression routes as the benefits in staff retention will far outweigh the additional costs.

2. Cost of living

Marianne O'Sullivan, Policy Manager, North East England Chamber of Commerce, said: "With many businesses currently looking at how they can help staff to cope with rising inflation, some businesses are offering cost of living payments and others are looking at general pay rises which, as well as easing current pressures, can help to support retention."

As well as financial concerns, managers and HR practitioners need to take account of the resultant mental health ramifications. Anxious and stressed employees are not as productive – recent figures suggest that 36% of millennials find their performance is impacted by money worries (CMI, 2022), so there is certainly a business case for offering financial advice and support.

3. Wellbeing

Josh Jackman, Operations Director, ART Health Solutions, commented: "Quality of life and wellbeing have become the top priorities for office workers, even above salary, which is now in third place. To attract and retain top talent, businesses must be seen as somewhere that supports employee health and wellbeing."

Don't be tempted to look at competitors and try to mirror their wellbeing policy, instead tailor policies and practices to the unique needs and characteristics of your organisation and people. Additionally, a robust internal communications strategy, that helps establish trust in challenging times, will increase the likelihood of staff seeking help when needed.

4. Hybrid working

Dr Emma Thirkell, Senior Lecturer in Leadership and Human Resource Management at Northumbria University, said: "The pandemic saw a seismic shift in how organisations view and implement hybrid working, given that only around 5% of the workforce worked from home pre-Covid-19 (CIPD, 2022). For hybrid working to be truly effective, there must be a significant cultural shift, with organisations establishing appropriate policies and practices."

To ensure that hybrid working is mutually beneficial, parameters should be clearly defined, managers need to be trained to enable them to support and share feedback on hybrid models, and organisations must be dynamic enough to respond to associated challenges, such as advancements in technology. Maintaining social relationships and cohesion is also key.

Supporting your HR and People teams to tackle these challenges

Northumbria University has developed its innovative Senior People Professional Higher Apprenticeship Course to support HR professionals with the knowledge and skills to tackle current workplace challenges such as these.

Find out more at: www.northumbria.ac.uk/senior-people

NEWCASTLE SCHOOL FOR BOYS IS HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN PUPILS



Pupils and staff at Newcastle School for Boys are celebrating after being highly commended by judges for the outstanding character development education they offer to pupils across all years.

The boys-only school based in Gosforth offers education to boys throughout their school life, from aged 3 to 18. With two core aims, the School focuses on challenging and supporting each boy to achieve the highest levels of individual academic progress as well as developing boys and young men of excellent character. It is their efforts and success, particularly in achieving this second aim that has been recognised by the judges.

The Independent School of the Year awards recognise the very best independent schools in the UK and internationally.

'It was an honour to be within such company and a fantastic recognition of how far the School has come thanks to the dedication and skill of our staff team.' said Head of Newcastle School for Boys, Mr David Tickner.

The School emphasises the importance of character in all of its pupils with this aim embedded in the School's common language of its Character Compass. These virtues focus on Community, Integrity, Resilience, Courage, Leadership and Empathy. Developed by, widely-referenced and embodied by the pupils of all ages at Newcastle School for Boys, the Character Compass traits focus on desired virtues of a school leaver, but more specifically, a young man.

Newcastle School for Boys are currently taking applications for those wishing to join the School in September 2023 with assessments for Year 3 entry taking place on Friday 13th January 2023 and for Years 7, 9 and Sixth Form on Saturday 14th January. Applications close on Friday 9th December. For more information, please visit www.newcastleschool. co.uk. To register or for any admissions enquiries, please contact the School on 0191 255 9303 or admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk



HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL TALENT POOL

North East-based educational charity and leader in vocational and technical learning, NCFE, is always looking to add talented people to its workforce of over 700 employees.

With a head office at Quorum Park in Newcastle, but operating nationwide, NCFE continuously searches for the very best candidates from both the region and beyond – which is why the organisation recently set up a talent pool project, named the 'NCFE Talent Community'.

We put some questions to NCFE's Talent Acquisition Partner, Katie Newton, to find out how the Talent Community works, the benefits it has brought, and top tips if you're looking to build a similar pool of prospective employees.

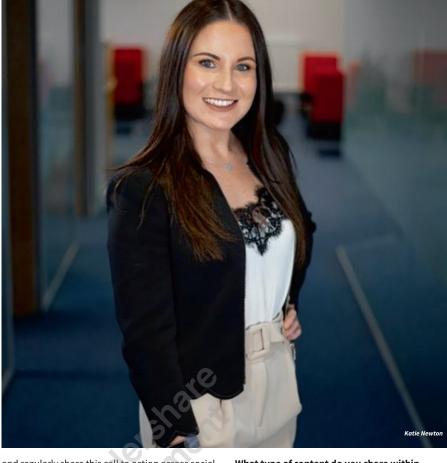
Can you explain what the Talent Community is?

"Our Talent Community is a way for individuals to register their interest in joining us at NCFE – whether they're actively seeking a new opportunity at this moment in time or would like to consider us in the future.

"It's a great way for potential candidates to stay connected and in the know about what we're up to as an organisation, as those registered receive monthly communications featuring our latest vacancies, employee success stories, industry news, employee benefits, and more."

How do you encourage people to sign up?

"We're continually looking at ways to encourage candidates to join our Talent Community. We have the sign-up link featured on our careers page



and regularly share this call to action across social channels. We've promoted it in line with various campaigns for departments and specific roles they're looking to fill.

"We also encourage those who have previously applied for roles with us to sign up, so they're kept up to date with future exciting opportunities."

What are the benefits of the Talent Community?

"We decided to set up the Talent Community, not only as a great way to create a strong pool of candidates and ensure interested prospective employees are the first to hear about new opportunities, but to form an engaged community with whom we're able to build relationships.

"It allows us to share even more about our culture, purpose and our impact on the sector, as it provides a bit more of a peek behind the curtain than what might be seen on our social channels. Through this, our hope is that these individuals will think of NCFE first when they're ready to make a move – and we know that there are so many rewarding career pathways available for people here."

What type of content do you share within your updates?

"Our monthly content varies but we always look to share job opportunities and drive conversions by sharing more about our NCFE culture, exciting organisational news, and employee success stories

"As part of this, we look to mix up the messaging by using a range of methods, including videos, testimonials, text, and photos."

What successes have you seen so far?

"Since we launched in June of this year, we're delighted to say that we've had almost 200 people join our Talent Community. It's been a really fantastic start and we're excited to see the project go from strength to strength.

"I truly believe that the creation of this community is already benefitting both NCFE and those who are joining us, as it provides real insight into what it's like to work for an organisation such as ourselves."

What are your top tips for those looking to set up a similar talent pool?

"Firstly, have a clear and easy-to-use sign-up process so it's super simple for individuals to join your talent pool. Ensure that you have a communication plan, and always ensure that the content you share is relevant and engaging.

"You should provide regular updates about job opportunities, but don't just turn it into a 'jobs newsletter'. Finally, engage various teams, such as hiring, HR and marketing departments, to ensure your communications are as strong as they can be!"

Visit ncfe.org.uk/careers for more information





daughter be the girl she wants to be.



THE FACE OF **NORTH EAST PANTO**

This year marks an incredible twelve years in panto for Tyneside legend Steve Walls, as he gets ready to grace the historical Playhouse Whitley Bay stage and entertain hundreds of families once again as Wishee Washee, in festive favourite Aladdin. We caught up with the man himself to discuss his impressive career.

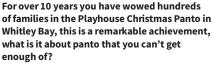
Hi Steve, you are one of the most recognised faces on the North East entertainment circuit, with many flocking to see you every year, tell us where it all started?

I started my career as a Pontins Bluecoat in Blackpool back in 1988! That job really taught me all aspects of entertainment, from being in shows, to hosting them and the technical side of things. It was such a great learning curve. After just one season, I started performing in working men's clubs around the North East. Again, this was a great apprenticeship which toughens you up quite quickly let me tell you!

Your CV reads like a best-selling novel! Tell us about some of your most memorable and favourite gigs?

Tough one as I have lots of favourite gigs for different reasons. I hosted the Champions League Final at Old Trafford in 2003, which was just incredible. For three years I toured as a support comedian for Freddie Starr, when Freddie was in

his prime, again, amazing experience. In recent years, I've done a lot of work with Jane McDonald, which I really enjoy. One aspect of my profession is that I have had the opportunity to work with so many of my hero's like Kevin Keegan, Sir Bobby Robson, Steve Davis, and being a massive Only Fools and Horses fan - working with John Challis all spring to mind. I went on to write material for the Boycie & Marlene tour and John mentioned me in his autobiography which I was so chuffed



For over 10 years you have wowed hundreds





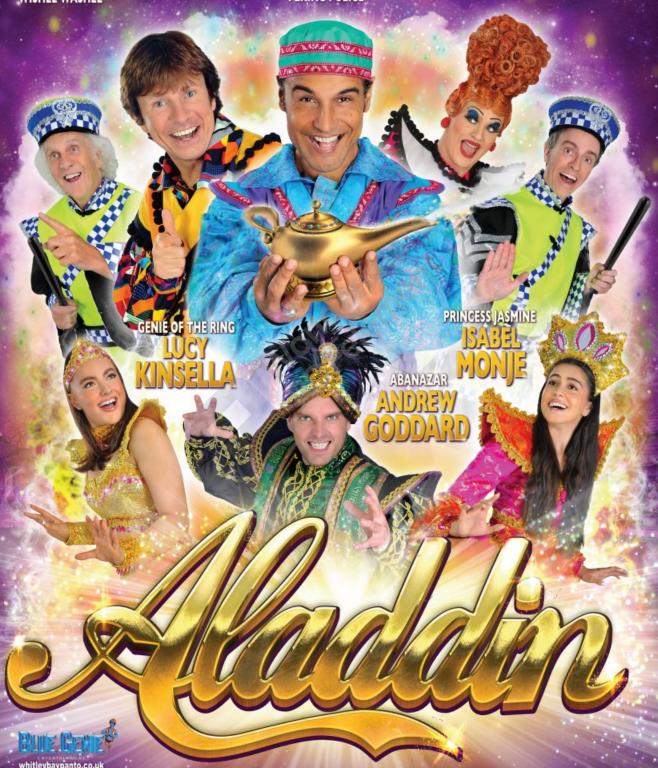
This year sees you performing alongside original X Factor star Chico in Aladdin! How exited are you to be back on stage this Christmas, especially as you and Chico are really good friends?

Yes I've known Chico for over ten years. We've done many shows and events together. He came to Whitley Bay when we did Peter Pan and told me how much he loved the venue and the area so I know it will be a big deal for him. The Playhouse fans are going to absolutely adore Chico! He is such a talented guy. I always love coming home at Christmas and the fact I'll be performing at my favourite theatre, with one of my good mates this year makes it extra special. For the first time, my eight year old daughter is dancing in the show, and my wife is the choreographer and company manager! We can't wait.

www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk

hotos Credit: Paul Clapp, Limelight Studio:

STEVE



PLAYHOUSE

9th Dec 2022 - 7th Jan 2023 heart www.PLAYHOUSEWHITLEYBAY.CO.UK





Panto favourites from this year's Beauty and the Beast – Tyne Theatre & Opera House, Newcastle talk to Evie Bains:

CHARLIE RICHMOND - DAVEED

Having been working in theatre for over 20 years, what is the best part about performing in the pantomime for you?

For me, it has to be entertaining people, making people laugh at Christmas there's honestly no better feeling in the world. If you can make a whole family laugh from the mams and dads to the grandparents and the kids all at the same time its brilliant!

How are you feeling about this year's pantomime production of Beauty and the Beast?

So, with Enchanted Entertainment, they strive to make the production bigger and better each year. We've grown a lot, the cast gets better each year and from the set design to the costumes, so much thought is put into each element to go above and beyond, and Beauty and the Beast is going to be up there as one of the best.

How do you feel about your role as the Daveed - Does the character fit your personality would you say?

Oh definitely! I'm typecast now really; nobody would take me seriously in a serious role, but I wouldn't have it any other way – being the idiot character is unbeatable.

How have you found coming back to acting since the pandemic?

So, it was a tough time, very tough in fact and it

still hasn't really bounced back fully. I'm working full time – I work in a garage up In Ashington which I'm very lucky to be doing, but I've done a lot of jobs this year and hopefully after Christmas it'll return to normal for me.

You've done a few on screen roles over the years, what is different being on screen compared to on stage?

Well, what stands out as different when I'm performing a role on TV or on film, is that you've got to wait a long time for it to be edited and come out. It takes people a little bit longer to recognise you despite being on screen whether it's for an advert or TV role I've been in such as George Gentley or Vera etc. However, with theatre you get an instant response there and then from the audience. With live theatre you get a feeling of being in the moment, and you can't beat that feeling.

You have your own production company 'Quayside Productions' is that something you're passionate about?

Yes, very much so – We use northern actors as well as actors from across the region and my fundamental goal is to produce work in the North East for the North East. We have some exciting things planned for the company in 2023 which I'm really looking forward to.

LEWIS DENNY - DAME BRENDA

(Your make-up is amazing!) The hair and makeup have you done yourself today?

I learnt how to do this makeup in lockdown funnily enough – with nothing else to do – some would've learned an instrument or a new hobby but no, I found out I was doing the socially distanced show in May 2021 and didn't have a choice but to teach myself.

A challenge I had was covering my rather big bushy eyebrows! So, I watched the typical Dragrace, and YouTube tutorials where I learned and mastered the skill!

What's been your favourite role you've played in any theatre production?

Well in the pantomime specifically – the role of the Dame is just iconic! It's memorable and people remember you as the character, and it's so nice when some return year after year to watch the likes of myself playing the Dame and Charlie (Richmond).

How have you found coming back into theatre since the pandemic?

It's been a huge relief and it's great to be back and doing what we do. There was always the fear in the back of my mind of: Will we forget how to do this? Are we going to forget how to make people laugh? I was concerned we were going to lose our craft essentially – but no we're back and it's been fantastic.

How would your friends describe your personality in three words?

Hmm I would have to say; entertaining, obviously as I wouldn't do what I do if I wasn't! Jolly, and lastly positive! Positivity is key!

How do you get into character before the show? Do you get nervous?

Ah I get nervous; I think it'd be wrong if people didn't get nervous – It's so daunting! However, the minute I put the wig on and the face and costume it just comes to me naturally.

Beauty and the Beast - Tyne Theatre & Opera House - 9th December 22 to 8th January 23 www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk



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Sat 10 Jun



Prue Leith – Nothing in Moderation Fri 3 Feb



An Evening with Fran Lebowitz Mon 17 Apr



Test Match Special: The Ashes Fri 21 Apr



FULL LISTINGS





A YEAR IN THE LIFE OF...

THIS IS US

We are Mortal Fools, a theatre company and charity who specialise in co-creating compelling, dynamic, socially relevant and high-quality performance-based work with children, young people and communities. Our work engages, enables and empowers folks enabling them through our creative projects, to grow and evolve whilst existing as an early intervention providing safe spaces to be authentically brave and scaffold towards good mental health.





We have grown a reputation as a regional leader in cocreation practice with children and young people (CYP), supporting CYP to engage in cultural activity in deep, meaningful, and impactful ways, in accessible, placebased settings. Our programmes are co-designed with CYP, artists, partners, and wider audiences, in response to needs and interests.

Throughout our programmes, CYP work alongside professional artists in equitable relationships to co-create original performance-based art using themes and ideas which are relevant to their lives, amplifying their voices and experiences and giving them power and autonomy as cultural consumers and artists in their own right.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

To be bolder and continue to disrupt our sector. Too many cultural organisations who receive public subsidy or donations know what they do but can't articulate why they do it or why anyone should care. For us, this has always felt unethical. The models we see within the cultural sector can be rife with inequity, elitism and self-importance. That simply wasn't something we want to replicate or participate in.

Disrupting and treading your own path takes confidence but rooting in a clear purpose has kept us on the right path. There are an increasing number of other brilliant sector disrupters out there, too. It's our privilege to stand alongside them and work to build a sector that truly is accessible and fully representative.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Of course not! We believe that failure is an important part of learning and innovating and there have been plenty of bumps in the road, and we embrace them. We have faced all the same things other businesses are facing right now in the challenging, constantly changing, and competitive landscape. But we have a wonderfully strong, resilient team at Mortal Fools, so we are able to pivot, adapt, learn and respond to set backs and challenges.

We're a dynamic team, each bringing gifts, attributes, skills, and experiences to the table to support our work. Working well doesn't happen by accident; as a team, we devote time to working hard on cultivating our relationships, working through our challenges, differences, and frustrations so that we can best serve the needs of the rest of the team and the company's work in a healthy and unselfish way.

How has the business adapted following the pandemic?

The pandemic shook up everyone's lives and ways of working; we saw opportunities in that and were determined to step up to support our community and clients. Our creative work brings people together; to share stories, make sense of the world, to speak, to be heard and to be present. But how do you bring people together, when you can't actually be together in the same space? *continued over...*



This led us to explore new ways of working, co-creating original theatre performance, film, audio and digital art in entirely new ways and creating very successful digital programmes of work.

We've grown, we've evolved, we've increased in profile, more people really see the impact and value of our work in the contemporary landscape and the demand for our work is ever increasing. Unfortunately, the pandemic has accelerated the mental health crisis and more parents, schools and organisations big and small, are seeking new ways to creatively approach mental health support alongside wanted to invest in people's wellbeing as a necessary (often neglected) component of enabling folks perform at their best in the workplace, as healthier, happier humans.

What are you most proud of this year?

We have collaborated with cross-sector partners, brilliant artists and talented staff to engage, enable and empower young people to make sense of the complicated world we're all living in and scaffold towards better mental health and bright futures.

We've reached young people (many really struggling in some way) and been able to provide much needed support and essential safe spaces for those young people via creative interventions that have been transformational to their wellbeing and skills development.

It's feedback like the following that are the highlights of 2022.

"Mortal Fools have allowed Max to be himself; they have a real gift for understanding children very quickly and making them feel good about themselves. They are very inclusive, and I can't thank them enough for the way in which they have made Max feel. It's very difficult to find groups that make a child who thinks they are different feel like everyone else. Mortal Fools is unique and brings a great deal of hope to my family for sure and the area. We really appreciate Mortal Fools and their great team." – Mortal Fools Youth Theatre Parent

What's the best piece of business advice you've received this year?

Not really advice – but as a company, we are really influenced by the work of Brene Brown and her thought leadership.

"When we make the choice to dare greatly, we sign up to get our asses kicked. We can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can't have both. Not at the same time." – Brene Brown





When things feel really hard, overwhelming and the fear kicks in trying to entice us into our comfort zone, her work and podcasts are a great reminder that being bold, brave and authentically us is who we are. As a growing business, with big ambitions and in the process of scaling up, Brene has equipped us with some great tools to help us scaffold the ability to be brave in the workplace.

What's been the most enjoyable business social event you have attended?

Our two highlights have been The Bright Ideas Gathering in Durham and TedXNewcastle. Both events presented a host of brilliant speakers from different sectors, lots of thought leadership and they were incredibly inspirational and enjoyable. They were fun, relaxed and we learned a lot – we recommend attending in 2023.

Describe 2022 in three words....

Unforgettable creative chaos! But we wouldn't have it any other way!

What are your aims for 2023?

We want our work to be relevant to and matter in society, for it to make a demonstrable and measurable positive difference to all the people who are involved with our organisation. We work with 1,000s of children and young people every year – we'd love to get that over 10,000 mark.

We have some irons in the fire which, if successful, will lead to a permanent home for Mortal Fools in a new, high-spec cultural building within a community that has been historically starved of this. A new home will give us a secure base from which to continue to grow and will also mean we can bring in other brilliant artists and companies to serve the community and audiences. We'd like our reach to be national and international in the coming years.

Watch this space!

You can find out more about our work via www.mortalfools.org.uk and across your preferred social media channel: @mortalfoolsuk





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MY WEEKEND

STEVE MANN

Sunderland based Steve Mann set up LEAD Education in 2016, creating educational opportunities and quality assurance programmes which make a real difference to the lives of young people.

Here we find out how Steve spends a typical weekend...

Do you ever have to work weekends?

I do, I've never had an issue working weekends with the demands of the business as we've grown over the years.

Are most weekends the same?

I try hard to add variety to my weekends as much as possible. This could be relaxing, taking some time to switch off, going out with friends, mountain walking, sailing or a day/night out on the town.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Over the years developing the business, my mind, I guess has always been on 'high alert', always analysing, processing and problem solving. I genuinely love and feel deeply passionate about thinking of innovative ways to develop opportunities for people whether that's in employment or educational.

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

I love cooking for myself and others! I love making food from scratch, music on, (bottle of wine opened of course) and 'get lost' in the food prep. When I have time over the weekend, I'll make a large batch of food which I can eat and share during the week.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I'd love to say I was up every morning at 6 am, hitting the weights and smashing the cardio. The reality is however, it's incredibly sporadic. For example, if I work late or I'm travelling I'll generally take the morning off from exercise and fit it in before dinner. If I've had an early finish, jobs are done and I have a good sleep, I'm up early and exercising; getting it done before work starts.



Big night out or a night in the house?

Both! Love a night out having drinks, catching up with friends, listening to music. I also love eating out, trying new restaurants and food. I also love being in the house, feet up, good TV show or a game of footy.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I take part in a lot of hill and mountain walking. It feels amazing and 'free' to be walking in the Lakes or taking the boat out sailing. I used to play a little bit of football, however, I'm usually either watching the game these days in St James' Park (Newcastle United fan of course) or watching a few games on the TV.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I'm a huge foodie and love to eat out a lot. I love Asian food, seafood, and Italian food.

How important is the weekend to you?

Very important to me. It gives me a chance to take a breath, re-set and spend quality time with my friends and family. It also allows me

to unwind and take some time for myself which I find hard at times. I'm also currently exploring some simple mediation techniques, mindfulness, and wellbeing activities to support my mental health which I consider vitally important.

What's the best thing about weekends?

Having opportunities and feeling grateful to be able to spend time with friends and family. It's also a great feeling knowing we've got an amazing team behind LEAD who have all put in loads of hard work throughout the week.

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

Up a mountain, watching football, feet up watching TV, spending time with friends (pint in hand), eating great food or watching a show in the theatre.

To find out more about LEAD Education contact Steve Mann on 07944 102606 www.leadeducation.co.uk



AN EXHIBITION AT THE OFFICE

The Seven Stories Collection is right on your doorstep and now you can have it in your workplace too. For the first time ever you can have Horrid Henry in the hallways, Wombles in the warehouse or Mog in your meeting room, thanks to this unique North East asset.

Did you know that Newcastle is home to over one million items from the making of children's literature? **The Seven Stories Collection** contains drafts, paintings, illustrations, neverbefore-seen work from authors such as Nick Sharratt, Enid Blyton, Phillip Pullman and Michael Morpurgo, and North East treasures including Eva Ibbotson, Robert Westall and David Almond.

From one framed item to a whole room full, you choose the author, illustrator and theme* and we'll frame and install the mini exhibition at your

workplace for you and your clients, visitors and beneificiaries to enjoy.

Each item will have its own object label to explain the story behind its creation and link back to our digital Collection site at sevenstories.online for more content and stories to explore.

Your support funds our work making the Collection more accessible to children and adults, and funds our outreach work in communities and with families across the UK. If you prefer, your business can instead sponsor the installation of an exhibition in a community or healthcare setting for children and families to enjoy without the need to visit a museum or gallery space. We can work with you to identify a setting and a theme, and ensure your contribution makes an impact.

To discuss an exhibition in your workplace or corporate support of Seven Stories, please email info@sevenstories.org.uk.

* subject to availability





Plans announced for two Stacks in Co. Durham

Danieli Group, which runs STACK Seaburn in Sunderland and founded STACK Newcastle, has submitted a planning application to convert the former Marks & Spencer store at Silver Street, Durham into a STACK leisure operation.

And at the same time it has also unveiled a project at Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, after being appointed a development partner by Durham County Council.

The aim is for both sites to be transformed into mixed use leisure venues which should provide a major boost to both locations and represents a multi-million pound investment.

STACK Durham will include seven street food outlets, five bars, a coffee shop, stage, communal seating and a roof top terrace.

The plan also includes a games room for competitive socialising which will offer a range of interactive gaming experiences such as shuffleboard and darts, using the latest technology. The venue will create around 185 full and part time jobs.

STACK Bishop Auckland will be a new build over two floors with a retractable roof and will offer the opportunity for a number of street food traders to take up residence alongside three bars which surround a central plaza area with a stage for live music and entertainment. It will also see a jobs boost for the town, creating around 120 employment opportunities



Newcastle restaurant group dishes up 5-star accreditation with award first

A restaurant group in Newcastle has become the first hospitality business in the North East to receive an advanced accreditation for its 'good work' as a business and as an employer.

The Hooked-on Group, which owns Blackfriars and Dobson & Parnell in Newcastle and Hinnies in Whitley Bay, has been awarded with a <u>five-star</u>

accreditation by the Good Work Pledge which was set up by the North of Tyne Combined Authority in 2021 to promote best business practices.

The pledge's five key pillars of good practice are: valuing and rewarding the workforce, promoting health and wellbeing, effective communications, and representation, developing a balanced workforce, and a social responsibility. Applicants must demonstrate that they either meet or are actively progressing towards all the key criteria in at least two of these pillars for a standard award, and five pillars for the advanced.

The Hooked-on Group met each of the five pillars making it the first hospitality business in the area to achieve the advanced accreditation demonstrating its commitment to being a good employer.

Caroline Preston, economy and policy advisor for North of Tyne Combined Authority commented: "By committing to the Good Work Pledge, businesses can help build a thriving workforce and economy. The Hooked-on Group was awarded the advanced accreditation and we were particularly impressed by their commitment to training and development, ensuring all employees have an opportunity to better themselves and develop a career in hospitality".

The Hooked-on Group is owned by Andy and Sam Hook and as well as running the three restaurants, the company also offers consultancy and mentoring services to other hospitality businesses in the area.



Points mean Pints!

Pub-goers can enjoy free drinks, meals and a host of discounts and special offers thanks to a new loyalty scheme being rolled out at four of the region's best loved venues.

Inn Hospitality Group, which owns The Olde Ship, at Seahouses, The Percy Arms, at Chatton ,The Anglers Arms, at Longframlington and The Derwent Arms at Edmundbyers, has introduced its first ever loyalty card.

And its aim is simple – to thank customers for their continued support by giving back to them, at a time when costs and prices are rising.

The card, which can be obtained from and used at any of the four pubs, gives holders one point – worth 10p – for every £1 they spend.

The points can then be redeemed against food or drink at any of the sites.

And membership of the scheme will also give card holders early bird access to a range of food and drink promotions and the chance to take part in members-only events at the four venues throughout the year.

The loyalty card was initially trialled at The Percy Arms, Chatton, during the summer and proved so popular the Group had no hesitation in rolling it out to its other venues.

"Although our pubs are spread out geographically, they are each at the absolute centre of their villages and communities," said Oliver Bennet, who co-founded Inn Hospitality Group with fellow director Matt Daniel.

"And we value our customers, which is why we announced earlier this autumn that each of our pubs would provide warmth, free hot drinks and book sharing libraries throughout the winter, so no one need sit alone and cold in their home.

"This loyalty scheme is another way for us to give back to those who are supporting us – and helping them out a bit at a time when the cost of living is on the rise."



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A TASTE OF FRANCE ON YOUR DOORSTEP

By Michael Grahamslaw.

Over the past five years the French Quarter has established a brilliant reputation for serving great quality French food served in a lovely relaxed setting.

This wonderful restaurant is the brainchild of genial host Cedric Bo-Ho and his wife Catherine who have gifted their knowledge of this beautiful cuisine to the great people of Newcastle.

My wife and I are huge fans of all things French having enjoyed many holidays on the Cote D'Azur and we had looked forward to visiting this local gem for some time.

The venue is located within Newcastle's trendy railway arches and the team have created a stylish space with bare wood, bicycles and splashes of green whilst daily specials and "Wines of the Moment" adorn the walls.

Lisa opted to order from the business lunch menu which at £20.95 for three courses is phenomenal value.

In the interest of research I ordered from the extensive a la carte menu which offers small plate tapas form dishes with a variety of





charcuterie, meat, fish and vegetarian options to be shared across multiple courses.

Lisa kicked off with a sumptuous chicken liver pate which she pronounced as delicious whilst I devoured crushed black olives flavoured with garlic, parsley and chilli. Magnifique!

If the starters were great then the mains were no less so. Lisa enjoyed a hearty chicken supreme, served with mashed potatoes and a tarragon sauce whilst I tackled an old favourite, Ratatouille, as well marinated king prawns served with aioli sauce.

After a suitable comfort break we even found room for dessert, a mouthwatering crème brulee for me and a scintillating chocolate mousse for Lisa.

We washed down all courses with a very agreeable bottle of Chateau Sainte Marguerite before rounding off a great afternoon with a round of coffees and liquers.



The French Quarter comes with the highest of Northern Insight recommendation and a return visit will certainly be one of our New Year resolutions. The perfect experience for those cold afternoons and dark winter nights.

For more information visit the website www.frenchquarternewcastle.co.uk



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2022 TOP 3 HIGHLIGHTS: WL DISTILLERY



It's been a busy couple of years for award-winning WL Distillery with the County Durham based distillery picking up a number of prestigious industry awards including gold at The Gin Masters, making Vogues 'Hot List', GQ's 'Cocktail Club' and listed in the London Spirits Top 100 spirits.

With news recently hitting of their latest expansion plans the distillery whose festive range was stocked in Fenwick, ahead of setting up their own shop at the previous Newcastle STACK site has made one almighty splash on the gin market since inception.

The team behind the award-winning 1st Edition Gin have continued to innovate and the portfolio range has grown increasing to six flavours including limited edition festive and Valentine ranges alongside Wilson's Gin Club 'Watermelon and Liquorice'.

From picking up international awards, to hitting top glossy magazines to being featured at London's world-famous Science Museum, 2022 has been a year to remember at WL Distillery.

Scott Wilson-Laing Founder and Managing Director, WL Distillery said: "We have been on an incredible journey and are delighted with the growth of the company to date. Receiving leading

industry awards in such a short period of time really helped cement the brand as a strong player in the ever-growing gin market, demonstrating that the spirits we are making are the kind that bar managers and mixologists want to stock.

2022 has been great with some amazing opportunities. It's really hard to pick our top three but I'd say being selected to be one of the batonbearers for England as part of The Queen's Baton, our recent nomination for Entrepreneur of the Year at the Business Excellence Awards, and being featured at the Science Museum, are very special moments."

WL Distillery released their award-winning 1st Edition Gin in September 2020, this was shortly after the newly launched distillery halted the production earlier in the year and switched production to sanitiser. Supporting organisations across the North East including foodbanks, Grace House, Sunderland Samaritans, schools and NHS staff at a time when the sanitiser was in short supply.

Their community support during the COVID-19 pandemic saw the Founder and Managing Director Scott Wilson-Laing pick up a Business Hero Award and selected to be one of the 2022 batonbearers for England as part of The Queen's Baton Relay in the summer.

2022 also saw the distillery featured at London's world-famous Science Museum, where a sample of hand sanitiser produced and equipment used by WL Distillery was acquired by the Science Museum Group as part of its COVID-19 Collecting Project. The hand sanitiser joined other historic items in the collection in London to provide insights into the medical and scientific advancements of the last two years. The project will provide a permanent record for future generations of medical, scientific, industrial,



cultural and personal responses to the outbreak and chronicling its impact on society.

Scott added: "The demand for our gin continues to be strong and the further developments and collaborations over the coming months mark another really exciting chapter for the company, we are really looking forward to what 2023 brings for the distillery."

With an explosion of flavours, their inspiration comes from their Northern roots, ensuring a fresh and classic authentic gin experience for customers. Ingredients have always taken centre stage at WL Distillery and each bottle is infused with nature using handpicked and measured botanicals to ensure the freshest, most authentic taste.

Follow for the latest updates at www.wldistillery.com
Socials: @WLDistillery





JESMOND DENE HOUSE

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FESTIVE AFTERNOON TEA

Saturday 3rd December

£40 per adult • £15 per child

Get in the Christmas spirt and start your December with Festive Afternoon Tea in The Great Hall.

Live Music, Glass of Prosecco, Festive Afternoon Tea, Refillable Tea/Coffee

FERN DINING IN DECEMBER

Two Courses: £36 per person • Three Courses: £42 per person

Celebrate with us during the festive season.

We have Champagne cocktails, sparkling decorations, log fires, mince pies, the scent of pine needles and delicious food.

Running alongside our A la Carte Menu for the month of December, we will be offering a Festive Set Menu with all the trimmings.

Dinner is available Wednesday - Saturday from 6pm Thursday 1st of December - Friday 30th December (Excludes 25th, 26th & New Year's Eve Dining)

PRIVATE DINING IN DECEMBER

Lunch: £60 per person • Dinner: £65 per person

The fun of the festive season provides the perfect excuse to invite family, friends, or colleagues for a celebratory meal. Our three private dining rooms seat up to 12, 20 and 30 and are designed to create a relaxed and intimate atmosphere.

Includes: Festive cocktail, three-course meal, coffee and mince pies, Christmas crackers.

CHRISTMAS DAY

Sold Out

BOXING DAY

Sold Out

NEW YEAR'S EVE DINING

Saturday 31st December

£85 per person

Join us in Fern on New Year's Eve for a 7 Course Dinner with a menu designed by Executive Head Chef Danny Parker. The evening starts with a glass of Champagne followed by a 7-course dinner with coffee and petits fours, and a glass of bubbles at midnight to welcome in 2023!

NEW YEAR'S DAY LUNCH

£50 per adult • £25 per child

Start the year with a refreshing stroll through Jesmond Dene followed by a three-course roast in our Fern Dining Room & Bar. Served 1 - 6pm.

ACCOMMODATION IN DECEMBER

Festive Dinner, Bed & Breakfast

Includes a four-course festive dinner in Fern Dining Room & Bar, along with a bottle of Champagne in your room on arrival and an overnight stay with breakfast.

From £290 per room, based on two people sharing a Classic Bedroom.

CHRISTMAS MARKET

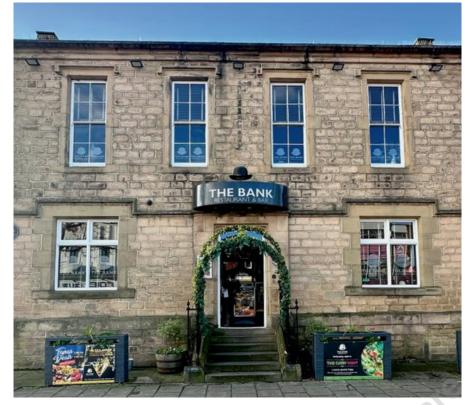
Sunday 11th December 11am - 4pm

£6 per person • Advance booking essential.

Join us in our Great Hall for a festive shopping day at our very own Christmas Market. The stalls will range from food and drink, local craft companies and boutique stores. Receive a glass of mulled wine or mocktail on arrival included in the ticket price.

Tickets will be given in 1 hour time slots commencing from 11am until 4pm.

For more information call 0191 212 3000 | www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk







THE BANK





YOU CAN BANK ON THIS

By Michael Grahamslaw.

Hot on the heels of last month's visit to Rosa 12, we visited its sister venue The Bank. The grade II listed former Lloyds Bank building cuts an imposing figure and lends a semblance of style to Low Fell's bustling high street.

Inside the stone-walled exterior lies a gastrobar of the highest calibre. The Bank offers an upmarket bistro experience with a particular emphasis on Thai food in addition to other international classics.

Our first impressions were good as we noted the interior had been exquisitely refurbished. Shades of chocolate and sage combine to provide a warm allure whilst trendy mock redbrick wallpaper, exposed filament bulbs and leather bound chairs further contribute to the classy yet cosy décor. Far removed from your typical Lloyds TSB then?

Under starter's orders, we first drank in the atmosphere with a couple of pints at the bar before adjourning to our cosy corner table.

The Bank boasts a stylish offering of burgers, steaks, sharing platters, tapas and curries with something sure to be found for everyone.

As is his wont, Jack kicked off with the panko breaded calamari spiked with a garlic aioli dip

singing with fresh lemon. I meanwhile greedily tucked in to the tempura king prawns with Asian slaw and sweet chilli dip – a speciality from the Bank's 'Taste of Thailand' specialities.

A comparable sense of quality was apparent in our main courses too. Jack chose a fresh and aromatic Thai green chicken curry with fresh chunks of butternut squash, spring onions and aubergine, delicately spiced with chilli and coriander.

I meanwhile "just had to" assess The Bank's steak-frying credentials. Sirloin served in a peppercorn sauce is a firm favourite of mine and the 8oz sirloin steak was just right for a lunchtime and did not disappoint. Pangriddled, yet also vivid pink and juicy, the steak was cooked precisely to my liking and was complemented excellently by a silky and seductive Malbec wine.

There's no need to bring your chequebook either with many main plates clocking in at around £12. Certainly great value to be had here especially given the quality of the produce.

This had been a superb meal yet it wasn't over yet. The Caribbean Eton mess had been winking at us all afternoon so we rounded off with a lovely sharing portion embellished with pineapple, mango, passionfruit and coconut shavings.

After a close inspection then, The Bank certainly appears to warrant the hype bringing quality international food against a backdrop of style and sophistication. With ample parking spaces available at the rear of the building it's the ideal venue for a lunchtime/evening repast. Being open Tuesday- Sunday from 11am, it also lends itself nicely to a business rendezvous. You can bank on that.

For more information, visit thebanklowfell.co.uk



CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS AT THE NORTH EAST'S MOST ICONIC VENUE

With Christmas just around the corner, where better for your company to celebrate the festive period than North East's most iconic venue, Spanish City?





Throughout Christmas and New Year, Spanish City comes alive with festive magic. From its 40ft Christmas tree and enchanting decorations, to its calendar full of unmissable events, the multiaward-winning venue is the perfect place to bring together all of your colleagues.

Its line-up includes festive dining at Trenchers restaurant, Festive Afternoon Tea and bespoke Christmas Party nights — all of which are perfect for Christmas get-togethers with your team. Bookings for Spanish City's events are now open. With this festive period set to be Spanish City's biggest yet, and many dates already sold out, be sure to book now to avoid disappointment.



Book now: 0191 691 7090 (lines open 10am — 8pm, 7 days a week)/events@spanishcity.co.uk

TO KEEP-UP-TO-DATE WITH ALL OF SPANISH CITY'S EVENTS AND FUNCTIONS, VISIT OR FOLLOW... www.spanishcity.co.uk | @myspanishcity on Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook



THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR AT STACK SEABURN

Lovers of all things festive are in for a treat this December, as STACK Seaburn – the innovative shipping container hub – gets set to deliver a jam-packed schedule of live entertainment, themed festive events and winter warming treats, to create a merry experience unlike any other.





The popular haunt, famous for its inclusive atmosphere and daily free entertainment, is gearing up to welcome thousands of customers through its doors – December 2021 marked the venue's busiest period since opening in 2020 – with the site becoming the prime spot for large groups, party goers and corporate gatherings to enjoy a Christmas get-together in style.

And this year is set to be bigger and better than the last! We all know STACK Seaburn for its incredible mix of street food delights, and hungry tummies can rest assured that the site will have everything your taste buds could wish for. Tuck into an array of tasty cuisines from across the globe with the mix of 9 independent traders serving everything from Thali Trays and Bao Buns, to Boojie Burgers and traditional Fish & Chips. The latest trader to join STACK – Redhead's Mac n Cheese – will be giving their menu a festive twist, so don't miss out on their seasonal offerings.

Of course STACK is more than just a place to eat, with live daily entertainment and special themed events also taking centre stage this December.

STACK's Christmas Party Nights make their anticipated return, running each weekend (excluding the 10th December) on the lead up to Christmas. Guests can purchase a festive package offer that includes drink, food and bingo vouchers for the ultimate party experience – along with enjoying performances from STACK's house bands and special character appearances. Availability for the remaining dates is selling out fast, so be quick to snap up those remaining bookable benches.

This year also marks the return of the popular children's Mini Elves' Party, which will take place in STACK's main plaza area across: Sunday 4th, 11th, 18th & Friday 23

December from 11am to 1pm. The event is completely free for all to enjoy and customers can enjoy entertainment from children's characters, plenty of party games and a surprise visit from the man in red too!

If all that talk of party nights and Mini Elves has got you feeling excited, then you won't be able to contain yourself for the return of the North East's biggest sing-along event – Kroud Karaoke, on Friday 9 December. Get ready to sing your heart out with friends and family to all the Christmas classics and get right into the party season.

Speaking of party season, did you know that you can also enjoy a pamper or preen ahead of your big night out with STACK's lifestyle traders? Grab a quick trim from traditional barbershop Laing's – or book the full face framing works with Laura of Arch brows for those perfect lash lifts and bespoke brow tints.

STACK's line-up of festive events will also feature incredible performances from some of the region's up and coming acts including: The Emerald Thieves, Boys of Brass and the one and only Jason Isaacs – serenading you with the finest jazz and swing hits.







NEW IDENTITY FOR ICONIC **NORTH** TYNESIDE SITE

Tynemouth landmark will have a new identity when it reopens in 2023, as The Inn Collection Group unveil a brand-new name for their first site in North Tyneside.

Overlooking Longsands beach, The Park Hotel will become The Tynemouth Castle Inn once work is completed on a multi-millionpound refurbishment by the Newcastle-based hospitality company.

Taking its name from the complex that has sat on the headland to the south east of the Inn,

fortifications are believed to have been present at the site since the 11th century until the midpart of the 20th.

With its new moniker and crest in place, the much-loved venue has an instantly recognisable look and feel ready for when it returns to welcoming guests as part of the pub-with-rooms company's portfolio.

Acquired by the group in April 2021, works at the iconic art-deco building are progressing apace with Gateshead-based STP Construction leading on the project and GSS Architecture in place as Lead Designer.

The exciting redevelopment is set to breathe new life into the historic establishment and includes an extensive remodelling of the current bar and dining areas along with the site's existing rooms.

A two-storey extension is to be built in place of a previously underused function and events area will create additional bedroom space for guests, while a further single-storey construction will add a fish and chip takeaway and ice cream parlour.

New external seating areas and terraces will be added, maximising the venue's 180-degree sea views of the famous coastline.

In keeping with The Inn Collection Group's family friendly ethos, the venue will welcome families, be dog and outdoor enthusiasts friendly, embracing Tynemouth's beach and cycling credentials.

It will feature secure bike storage; Sheffield bike stands and lockers as well as multi-use wash down areas.

Louise Stewart, property director said: "Works are now underway at The Tynemouth Castle Inn and the group are eagerly anticipating their completion as much as the local community.

"With the new name in place, we are another step closer to welcoming people back and look forward to sharing further updates as the refurbishment continues to progress."

Zoe Cooper, marketing manager for The Inn Collection Group said: "The Tynemouth Castle Inn is going to be an exciting place for visitors from both Tyneside and further afield and we're very excited to confirm the new identity.

"The new look gives the site its own style whilst embracing its position as part of the wider group and we hope people are going to embrace it once we re-open."

inncollectiongroup.com







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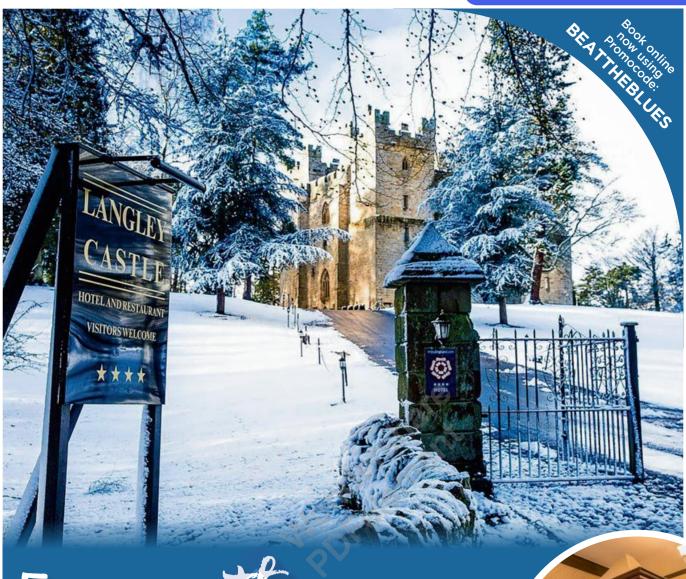


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OUT AND ABOUT - NATIONAL RAIL MAP



As this edition is published, the new 2023 UK National Rail Map will be available for delivery before Christmas. When days are short and the temperatures low, it's a great time to plan ahead for when the weather is more conducive to days out for leisure. One I am looking forward to doing for this column is a visit to Dumfries House – one of our King's most impressive projects - near Auchinleck, East Ayrshire, accessed via Carlisle once a certain freight train which had an accident is out of the way. I hope to write it up for January or February.

The new map features useful websites for travellers, and of these I am particularly looking forward to the new Great Scenic Journeys initiative, promoting the UK's best bus and rail routes. The other websites I recommend on the map are:

roam-everywhere.com • Nationalrail.com • Streetmap.co.uk Seatfrog.com • Bustimes.org

There have been absolutely no changes to operators and brands this year. The franchise system having collapsed at the time of the pandemic, all operators are either state owned already (like LNER and Northern, for example) or are run as management contracts. This gives very little incentive to encourage entrepreneurial revenue development, since all the revenue passes to the government. As I write, many commentators are seeing a deep paralysis in the rail industry, with few operators wanting to start any new initiatives, although LNER for one has shown itself willing to raise its head above the parapet. One of the most obvious changes has been the opening of the family waiting room at King's Cross. On the mainline network there has been but one station opening at Reston in the Scottish Borders.

The hopelessly late and over budget Elizabeth Line, linking Paddington to Liverpool Street, has nevertheless wowed the public with architecturally brilliant stations, wide platforms, air-conditioned trains and impressively reduced journey times. Through running from Reading and Heathrow to Shenfield and Abbey Wood is part way there and nearly complete, and all the new stations are shown on the map, with their three letter codes. The Elizabeth Line was shown first as under construction in our 2009 map so it has taken some time to come to fruition.

One other significant new station is Barking Riverside, which is an extension of the Gospel Oak to Barking London Overground Line. The new station is at the heart of the as yet unbuilt Barking Riverside development, and is an excellent example of public transport being developed before people move to an area instead of long afterwards.

Some of the other stations which we expected to open for the new map are still resolutely under construction and we look forward to the eventual opening of stations like Reading Green Park and Brent Cross West. Our shovel symbol shows all stations reasonably likely to open in a few years, but is subject to change following government policy, e.g. the scrapping of parts of HS2.

Dunfermline in Scotland was created a City in 2022 and therefore the station known as Dunfermline Town has had to be renamed Dunfermline City. This was challenging for many of the legacy systems on the railway, but in terms of the map, the revision was made in a matter of seconds. Our map features nearly 2,700 stations, with all lines, interchanges, platform zeros, restricted services, etc and measures 100cm x 63cm. All operators are shown in their house colour with logo and website.

Just visit railmap.org.uk for our special offers and ordering details.

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THU SUN THU SUN



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"Flavours were outstanding"

★★★★ Google review

Visit **sachins.co.uk** to view our 2022 Festive Menu or scan the QR code

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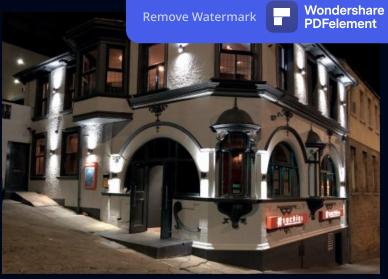


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BECOME A FRIEND OF WAG

North East charities endured a torrid time during the Covid-19 pandemic. We spoke to Diane Morton chair and founder of Wag & Company a regional charity that has adjusted its business model to secure a future to continue to grow.

How does Wag and Co compare pre and post pandemic?

By the end of March 2020, Wag was nearly four years old, we'd got incredible momentum and we'd achieved some important milestones.

Most importantly people loved and needed our unique Wag befrienders and we'd made over 70,000 friend visits, we had 393 volunteers all over our North East communities. Around 90 older friends in their own homes were benefitting from their Wag friends and so were hundreds of care and medical organisations. People and organisations were seeing the benefit of our work and starting to regularly support us financially.

And then, on the 23rd of March we stopped! Or more accurately it paused, whilst we worked out what Wag needed to look like in a Covid lockdown environment. How could we continue to support our friends at this really frightening time but without being able to physically see them and give them the benefit of friends for company and comfort and to see and touch their beloved Friendship Dogs.

During the pandemic all our volunteers supported their older friends in different ways. Contact was maintained. It was a challenging time for our home visitors particularly, as many people they supported were struggling with depression and considerable isolation and begging them to visit.

In March 2021, we launched Emerging from Lockdown...One Paw at a time behind the Government's roll out plan and initially we were single named visitors, visiting in gardens but by the end of May we were going back indoors. We were also able to start physically assessing new four-legged recruits again.

For our work during Covid, we were awarded a Points of Light Award by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in October 2021.

Post pandemic, when visiting started to become possible, it was very sporadic and unpredictable, starting and stopping as new variants and breakouts emerged. Our home visitors had never really left, always supporting their people in different ways remotely.



As a consequence of this and other related factors, along with the fact everyone was getting older including our four-legged friends, our volunteer turnover has been huge this year and we have worked really hard just to stand still.

We believe to really make a difference to lonely isolated older dog lovers across the North East we need over 1000 volunteers and pre pandemic we were steadily working towards that number. Our volunteer numbers at the end of March 2020 were 393 and at the end of October 2022 the numbers are about the same. It can be demoralising for our team, but things are starting to stabilise again

How is the charity trying to rebuild funds lost in the pandemic?

To safely support 500 placements, we need to raise about £200,000 a year and the challenge to raise these funds, without charging the people who need us most, gets harder.

We've used the last two years to implement the digital transformation project funded by The National Lottery to make our operation as efficient and scaleable as possible. At the same time we've introduced a number of new ways for everyone to support us from our website; a lottery, a supporters scheme - Friends of Wag, an online shop, in memory giving, regular giving as well a virtual and physical events.

Our new Friends scheme is starting to develop with individuals and companies getting involved.

We are also starting to see care homes in the region sign up as Community Friends, which takes them to the top of a very long waiting list.

How do people get involved and become a volunteer?

It's really easy to get involved. All people need to do is have a look at our website and if they have any additional queries to just get in touch with our office team.

www.wagandcompany.co.uk/volunteer

How do businesses become a Friend of Wag?

There are lots of different ways organisations can get involved with us, so they should just have a look at our information and get in touch with me and our team and we'll make sure they get what they need from a relationship with us.

www.wagandcompany.co.uk/friends wagandcompany.co.uk/wp-content/ uploads/2022/09/Corporate-Friends-Guide_A5_ September-2022-Edition_v4_06.09.22.pdf

Where do you see the charity in 12 monthstime?

Growing our volunteer numbers again and also officially broadening out to cover at least North Yorkshire where we already unofficially have a small number of placements.

For more details: www.wagandcompany.co.uk





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THE NEED FOR KINDNESS

Where to begin? With gratitude! There aren't enough thank you's in the world to express my heartfelt gratitude for what happened at our Kind Christmas Market.





Kind Currency is a vision of what I want the world to be; a kind and grateful community helping one another to live a kind life, a community that protects people and the planet.

Our Kind Christmas Market was a pivotal opportunity in our start-up journey. It would deliver that all important 'Proof of Concept.'

Gosh, we were nervous. What if we failed?

What if the need we had identified wasn't important to others? What if all our market research had been interpreted with rose tinted understanding?

What if people didn't care?

What if this solution didn't work?

You pour your heart, soul, every essence of your being into a purpose-led start-up. It's personal.

Kind Currency isn't just an idea I came up with. It was the accumulation of years of being a chronically ill person, a small business owner and a volunteer and charity worker. It was an idea that was born from seeing the problem on a daily basis year after year. It is about everything I believe in and everything we all need to do to protect the future.

What if, the proof of concept, proved there was no concept, there was no need for Kind Currency!

I'm not going to lie, on Friday 18th November, the day before the event, all my fears got to much and I broke. Then initial figures came in, and I set about a task which was a primary purpose of what Kind Currency is about.

It was Children in Need Day and our 'pay kindness forward' Mrs Claus experience, our first proof of concept element, had delivered and I had the absolute joy of gifting the experience to families who were facing adversity. I worked with Safeguarding family support officers to deliver the magic of kindness to children who really did need it. People had taken the opportunity to use their privilege and be kind and support another family with a magical experience.

Saturday 19th arrived. Everything was set to go. We had over 40 charities, businesses, local initiatives, and causes invested in our concept, each and every one needed this to work. Even with the figures that had continued to grow overnight, fear was the overriding sensation.

Trying to stop the tears from coming, I put my faith in kindness. $\,$

My gosh. Kindness. Delivered!

Because of all of you wonderful kind people.

A community of kindness.

Hundreds came to make a difference.

To support the charities.

To support the small and kind businesses.

To support our purpose.

To support themselves.

To enjoy and feel the benefit of kindness.

To pay kindness forward.

And it's continued since that day. It has begun!

Kindness knows no end. Kindness is the solution.

A huge thank you to our sponsors Cascade Cash Management and Sweeney Miller Law.

Thank you to Lee Sterry Sports Coaching, Alnwick Gardens, Sage Gateshead, Beamish Museum, House of Kiki, and Margaret Rose Events for supporting and donating to the event

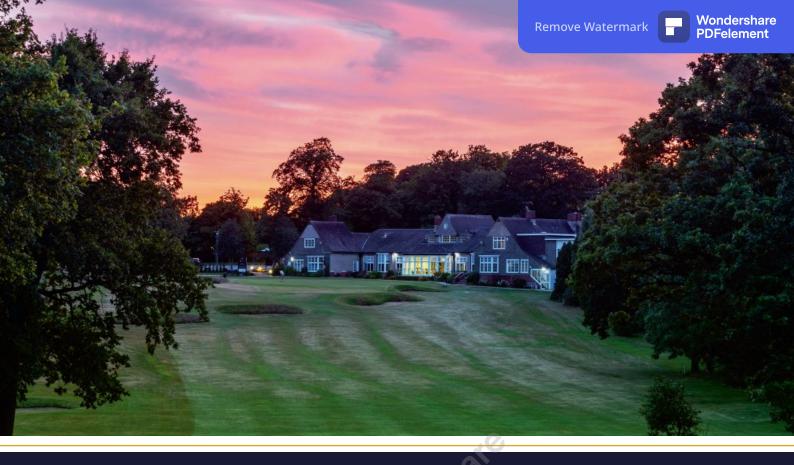
Thank you to the businesses, the charities, local initiatives, and good causes that we are blessed to have in our community and for believing and trusting in Kind Currency and putting your faith in mo

Thank you to Gina Buckle, my partner in kindness and our beautiful volunteers, you are incredible.

And thank you to you, the community who came out in the hundreds to be kind and shop kind.

I wish you all a Christmas and a New Year that sparkles bright with kindness.

www.kindcurrency.co.uk



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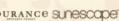






























HO HO OH NO!

The festive season and over indulgence seem to go hand in hand. If you are looking to step back slightly and be more aware of what you are eating and drinking, here are some stats to make you think...

Even a small Christmas pudding requires nearly two hours of running to burn off the eye-watering 1,280 calories, while it would take 21 minutes of jogging to shift just one mince pie or five Roses chocolates.

A brisk 35 minute walk would be needed to shed one slice of Christmas cake, or a 12 minute stroll for a single Ferrero Rocher.

The ultimate shocker is a full turkey dinner with all the trimmings contains around 5,200 calories which means it would take a run of over 45 miles to burn it off.

Of course you can be sensible without taking away any of the enjoyment of Xmas, here are a few tips to curb your calorie count:

Pick and choose: Choose the days you are potentially going to eat more and pull back on the days between.

A sensible breakfast: Skip the croissants and sugar rich cereals at breakfast, instead look to have a protein based breakfast such as eggs with smoked salmon.

Water: Keep your water levels up as this will keep you feeling fuller and help to avoid overeating.

Nibbles: Stay away from nibbles. It's too easy to sit and eat your way through a large amount of snacks without even registering how much you have eaten.

Cut down on carbs: Avoid overloading on starchy carbs by replacing roast spuds with parsnips or sweet potatoes

Avoid grazing: Once you've selected your food from the buffet, step away. When food is within easy reach you will be prone to grazing and take in calories you didn't need.

Avoid skipping meals: If you're going to a party straight after work, don't ditch lunch for fear of overdoing your daily calorie intake, you will end up extremely hungry and eat way more than you would normally later on.

Clear the table: Dinner with family and friends often means spending longer sitting around the table. The longer you linger the more likely you are to keep eating even though you have had enough. Clear the table therefore avoiding any further temptations.

Factor in the drinks: Alcohol is packed with empty calories. Research shows alcohol not only increases your appetite but can weaken your willpower, meaning you are even more likely to overindulge on festive nibbles. Adding ice to alcoholic drinks will dilute them. Choosing lower-alcohol drinks such as spritzers and slimline mixers will also cut the calorie count.

Be mindful: Don't lose touch with your appetite regulators, listen to your body and give it a chance to feel hungry before you eat. Try to eat slowly and savour your food.

Treat sweets as treats: If you have a box of chocolates, avoid eating the whole lot at once. Put a small handful in a bowl and the rest out of sight, making it an occasional treat means you'll enjoy it more.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

If you are concerned about adding those excess pounds over the festive period, just a few changes will allow you to fully enjoy yourself while also looking after your waistline



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THE LAST WORD



Self-confidence and refusal to change one's mind, can be praiseworthy virtues. Margaret Thatcher was admired by many for her declaration that 'the lady's not for turning'. (Not a candidate for 'Strictly'). However her refusal to make a U-turn only worked when she was right - trade union reform and battling inflation - but not when she was wrong - the poll tax.

Recent proliferation of u-turns is categorised by the media as showing uncertainty and poor judgement.

These included Christmas during the pandemic, ignorance as to re-appointment of Pincher, return of Suella Braverman and Gavin Williamson or most significantly the sacking of Kwasi Kwarteng and the resignation of PM Liz Truss. Some words always have a required epithet - 'diabolical liberty' or 'absolute travesty'. In journalism u-turns are always headlined as 'embarrassing' or 'humiliating'.

In Liz Truss's case her self-confident certainty and determination to cling to her original ideas regardless of counter-argument, consequences and circumstances, showed how dangerous this can be.

However, there should be greater acceptance of politicians willing to change their minds and being amenable to argument and sensible reconsideration - in Rishi Sunak's case the eventual determination not to fear criticism of a

political u-turn by deciding to attend Cop 27.

Speculation as to the outcome of the 2022
Football World Cup was obscured by a plethora of

Football World Cup was obscured by a plethora of other World Cups - women's Rugby League, Rugby Union, T20 Cricket, wheelchair Rugby League. Only two days before the first game in Qatar, there

Only two days before the first game in Qatar, ther was the major u-turn by FIFA in response to an order from Sheikh Jasmin bin Khalifa al-Thani, brother of Qatar's ruler. No beer to be served in any of the football stadia (Latin education) but only in hospitality areas, a major blow to Budweiser which pays £63m as a sponsor. Marketing of the World Cup stated Qatar would indeed allow alcohol in each stadium.

Quite why the ban was imposed so late is unclear. It could be a late reminder that Qatar won the vote, has spent handsomely to hold the competition and remains confident about its values and way of life; and regards criticism outside the Middle East as hypocrisy. Qatar is locked into the West in terms of economic and security infrastructure. For months Qatar has been pouring liquefied natural gas into tankers to keep us all warm over Christmas. Distaste for Russia did not stop us enjoying its World Cup just after the first invasion of Ukraine and the killing of people on British soil.

For the first time there will be some women referees officiating in the World Cup finals! We are reminded that when the World Cup Finals were last played in England in 1966, homosexuality was still illegal. Who determines the moral high ground? David Beckham?

Just Stop Oil is conducting a war of attrition against the 'criminal government and their genocidal death project'. The pressure groups think the media may tire of stunts such as stopping traffic, closures of the M25, blockading newspaper print works, throwing soup at historic works of art in public galleries and spraying government buildings with orange paint and therefore they now aim to be even more disruptive.

Their campaign and tactics are factually wrong. Currently the world relies on fossil fuels for 80% of its energy needs, and has done so for the last 50 years. Activists ignore the costs of moving to environmental sustainability. Wind and solar power are subject to intermittency of weather. With the reduction in fossil fuel, richer economies' security of energy relies on gas. This is been rendered short-sighted by relying on supply from Russia.

Achieving net zero emissions is expensive and will cost jobs during a long transition, during which we must aim to avoid importing carbon-intensive goods.

Taxpayers will need to make sacrifices not shared by apparently well-heeled activists and intellectuals blocking roads and bridges and wasting soup. Just Stop Oil should not be treated with the type of exaggerated deference it does not deserve. Naive extremism and self martyrdom are dangerous.



A tip for an Oscar is Bill Nighy in the excellent British film 'Living'. The screenplay is written by Kazuo Ishiguro (author of Remains of the Day) and adapted from the 1952 Japanese film Ikiru. 'Living' is set in 1953 and depicts a bureaucrat played by Nighy facing a terminal illness. Nighy has never received an Oscar nomination but this may be his time. The atmosphere of 1953 Britain is well captured. In the USA they may think it shows the UK of today.

The John Lewis Christmas advert marks a change from recent years featuring Lily Allen, Tom Odell and Vaults aimed at encouraging a sales boost. This year's offering entitled 'The Beginner' shows a middle-aged man repeatedly trying and failing to learn how to skate-board. The reason - that he is about to become a foster parent to a teenage girl who is a keen skate-boarder. The message is that over 108,000 children in the UK in the care system.

Surely as compassionate as last year's lonely old man stuck on the moon. To the background of a Blink 182 ballad this Christmas message is about care for the disadvantaged. Consistent with the Jeremy Hunt message to protect the vulnerable, preserve funding for the NHS, education and defence as well as the pensions triple lock. Low taxes are an aspiration for the future but for this Christmas we feel as stable as a middle-aged skate-boarder.

Good luck to Stuart and Sue Young with their new venture, *Lovage* in the former premises of Salle Pepe in St George's Terrace, Jesmond. Superb food and ambiance.

Merry Christmas to you all.

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