

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

February 2023

Issue 87

A man in a blue suit is standing in profile, looking towards the right. He is smiling slightly. In the background, there are industrial structures, including a large crane or conveyor system, and a statue on a pedestal. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is professional and forward-looking.

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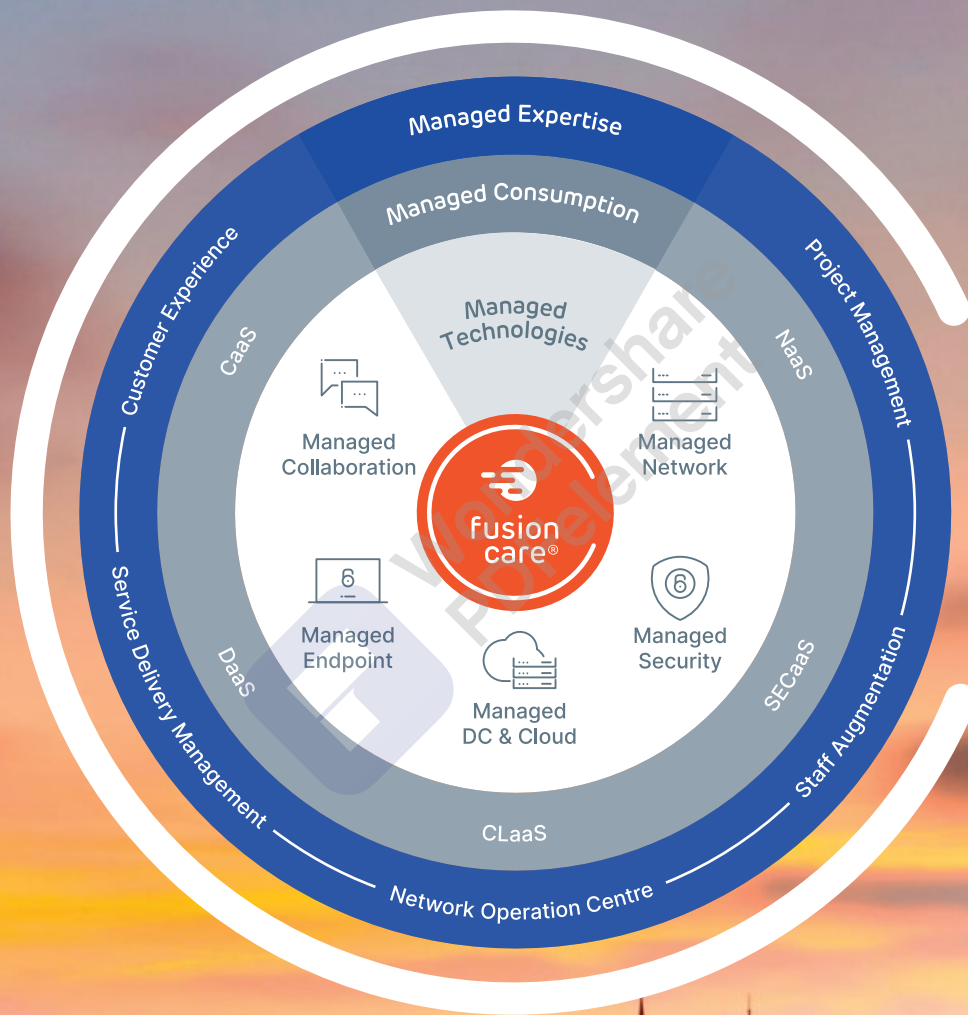
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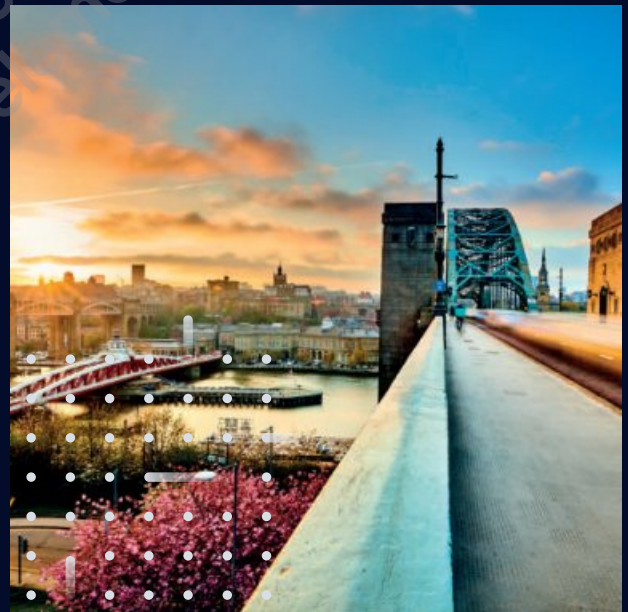
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Foreword

Welcome to the February edition of Northern Insight.

After an extended Christmas break it is wonderful to enter our 8th year with another vibrant magazine.

Our cover star is Howie White Resourcing who look to the future whilst maintaining the core values and processes that has made them such a success over the past 24 years.

Elsewhere we hope you enjoy the return of our popular Solicitor of the Month, Meet the GM and Rising Star features as well as our overview of the stunning Hexham Golf Club.

Look out also for some eyecatching social event coverage including the annual Lord Taverners Christmas lunch which raised an amazing £67,000 for this fabulous charity.

On our travels we look at Super Bowl Sunday whilst closer to home make a welcome return to the stunning Hotel du Vin in Newcastle.

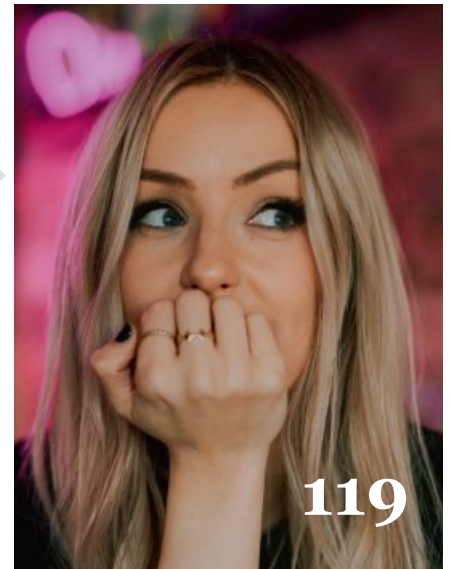
A very comprehensive 87th issue. We hope you enjoy it.

M.J. Grahamslaw

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



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R Thornton & Co Expand

A Northumberland haulage business that started almost a century ago with just four cattle trucks has been acquired with the new owners pledging to keep its hard-earned tradition of quality and reliability ongoing into the 21st century.

Emmex Freight Services in Morpeth is run by husband-and-wife team Raymond and Sandra Hare.

Raymond's passion for everything connected with lorries and his dedicated 12 staff have helped him build the business up to a £2.5 million per annum turnover but he has now decided to retire to spend more time with Sandra.

Nearby contract services and skip hire company R Thornton & Co from Linton recognised the opportunity to increase their business provision and have now bought the company adding the

Emmex Freight Services brand to their portfolio.

Formed in 1957, the company is part of the M J Hickey Plant Hire and Contracts Ltd group of companies and specialises in major groundwork projects, demolition, site clearance, recycled aggregates, plant and skip hire.

Directors of Thornton & Co, Nick Heads and Anthony Hickey are both delighted with the acquisition of Emmex Freight Services.

"We recognise the value in adding Emmex to our family. We are now able to provide a one stop shop including the clearance of sites and groundwork projects moving on to the transportation of goods across the country and beyond. It's a good fit for our business model and can only help us grow even more," said Anthony.

"Emmex has a very proud heritage and is an important part of Northumberland's transport history. We are keeping the Emmex brand alive and looking forward to taking Raymond's legacy on the road ahead," said Nick.

Record Breaking Year for Amazing Jane

Sunderland based Amazing Jane is a brand transforming the fitness industry with their ethos dedicated to empowering women to lead healthy, active lifestyles through the power of clothing.

The company caused quite a stir in the fitness and mainstream news in late 2022 when their new TrackHer range of activewear leggings hit the market, with high profile features in Women's Fitness, Trail Running and Top Sante'.

The innovative leggings which made a splash with the fitness industry contain a concealed 'TrackHer' pocket, designed to be the size for a GPS personal tracker and were launched in response to recent headlines around violence against women and their safety when out exercising.

Amazing Jane is a brand, creating activewear for women's changing bodies, and a strong relaunch saw their innovative Autumn/Winter season designs taking centre stage alongside a 226% sales increase, 160.5% website traffic

increase and 170% increase in monthly new customers.

Amazing Jane's innovative women's activewear collection has helped thousands of women to gain confidence when working out. Following a strong Autumn/Winter campaign the team are hitting 2023 with their 'Real Women of Amazing Jane' campaign which embodies the ethos of the brand. The campaign launches alongside the announcement of an exciting new collaboration with Smart Works Newcastle to create a bespoke pair of leggings ahead of International Women's Day 2023.



Lighthouse Club is a beacon of good practice

An ex-director of one of Newcastle's most iconic firms has set up a new business venture using another of the north east's iconic landmarks as his inspiration.

Jon Malton is a former managing director of Ringtons Tea having worked his way from the shop floor to the boardroom. After leaving the organisation, Jon set up his own consultancy Malton and Co to give other business owners the benefit of his experience and business acumen to help them succeed in today's difficult market place.

Now, he has created the Lighthouse Business Club, a powerful community of business owners and senior executives who share their ideas, challenges, and opportunities with each other to help them grow their businesses.

The name of the club came from St Mary's lighthouse which Jon sees every day from his house in Whitley Bay, a building that has always inspired him.

"Lighthouses are amazing structures, they guide people to safety, keep them away from danger and stand up to all the rigours that nature sends. Business is sometimes like a rough sea and my role leading the club is to help navigate members and their organisations into calmer waters, and towards their goals"

Jon's groups will meet every six weeks at different venues across the region and as well as networking they will receive the benefit of listening to a high calibre speaker on topical business matters. Each meeting will end with a social event such as axe throwing, river trips or simply a nice meal out.



Launch of County Durham awards for women

A group of businesses have come together with County Durham & Darlington NHS Foundation Trust (CDDFT) Charity, to create the inaugural 'Celebrating Women in Business' awards taking place at Hallgarth Hotel & Golf Club on May 4th, 2023.

The event will be compered by local voiceover artist Emma Hignett, the voice of London's buses and the brand new Elizabeth Line. Pat Chambers, charity development manager at CDDFT Charity

said: "We are lucky to be supported by so many businesses across Darlington and County Durham and, after speaking with them we realized that there was a gap in the market for an awards event celebrating women in our area.

"This year is the 75th birthday of the NHS, so we're particularly grateful to be working with Darlington Business Club and their local business connections, who are helping to bring the awards to life. All proceeds are being donated to CDDFT Charity, to help enhance patient and community care across the Trust's extensive geographical area."

The event is being held at Hallgarth Hotel & Golf Club with arrival drink and canapes, a two course meal, fashion show, key note speakers and of course – the awards themselves! On arrival, attendees will be able to peruse stalls from local independent businesses, all being coordinated by Amber Kotrri.

Award entries and nominations are free, via the Darlington Business Club website, where sponsorship opportunities can also be found. Categories include: Rising star, Newcomer of the year, Impact in the community, Inspirational female leader, Innovation in sustainability, Future leader, and Hidden hero.

Entry closes 10th March 5pm, judged by an independent panel, with the shortlist announced 24th March.



North East entrepreneur named in New Years Honours list

A North East entrepreneur has been named in the New Year Honours List. Sophie Milliken, founder and CEO of Moja Group and North East Entrepreneur of the Year 2020, has been awarded an MBE.

Sophie, who has been recognised for her services to business and education, was the co-founder and Managing Director of SRS Recruitment and Employability Experts, which became the leading provider of assessment centre simulations for universities, preparing over 30,000 students for graduate jobs.

She sold the company in 2019, exiting in January 2022 and setting up Moja the same month, working with entrepreneurs and senior executives to amplify their personal profiles and become known authorities in their industries.

Sophie is heavily involved in the wider business community as Chair of Smart Works Newcastle, which supports women into employment through interview clothing and coaching. In addition to this, she runs several business networking events and supports start-ups and scale-ups as an investor and Non-Executive Director.

Sophie said: "I am absolutely thrilled to be included in such a prestigious list. I was shocked and delighted when I found out I had been awarded an MBE - I consider myself very lucky to work with so many amazing people across the region and beyond. The North East is a hotbed of talent and philanthropy, and I hope that this award will help raise the profile of the great opportunities and initiatives in this region."

A year of success at The Bridges

New retailers, charity fund raising and a host of successful events have all contributed to a positive year at Sunderland's the Bridges.

The shopping centre has seen a number of new arrivals in 2022, including outdoor clothing shop, Trespass, computer and gaming retailer, Be More Geek and clothing store, Leading Labels.

The Bridges also welcomed aesthetics experts, Laser Clinic, offering a range of treatments and enhancements which proved a huge hit from day one.

Training organisation, Uplift, which helps people with personal development, training and employment made the centre its new home, allowing it to be instantly accessed by people visiting the city.

At the same time long-time traders Clintons, HMV and Starbucks have cemented their commitment to the centre with investments in their units covering everything from refitting their shops to taking on more staff.

The ever-popular student raid returned this autumn, with thousands of students from the city's colleges and university taking advantage of a discounts, offers and a night of entertainment.

The Bridges also joined the rest of the country in celebrating the Queen's jubilee with live music,

a Britannia themed selfie booth and slices of cake for shoppers, with special events also held to celebrate key dates in the calendar including Valentine's Day and Halloween.

The centre has continued to support local charities, notably the Red Sky Foundation and gave space to a musical wishing well in aid of the charity, which plays music when a donation is made.

Other highlights include joining the citywide gift card scheme, allowing shoppers who buy the cards to spend them in outlets across the whole of Sunderland as well as at the Bridges.

Karen Eve, Centre Director at the Bridges, said the year had been a busy one and was looking forward to further good news in 2023.



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Cover Story

Howie White Resourcing – Building for the future

When a recruitment company needs to recruit, the pressure is on. Can they practice what they preach and put their money where their mouth is?

In 2013, Fred Howie, Owner of Howie White decided he needed a hand. He had been in the recruitment game long enough to spot a winner. And so he appointed David Taylor.

Fast forward to 2022, retirement (and the golf course!) beckoned and David took over ownership of Howie White.

David was keen from the outset to ensure that Howie White maintained its core values and processes that had made it a success for the past twenty four years. 'If it ain't broke...' comes to mind!

"When you've got the rock solid reputation that Howie White have, I'd be mad to make sweeping changes," says David. "We still have a number of clients who were with us on the day that Fred founded the firm 24 years ago. You don't earn that sort of loyalty by not being good at what you do. So no, clients won't see any huge changes to the way we do business, but I also need to make sure that we move with the times."

Last year was a period of letting the dust settle after the disruption caused by COVID. Work patterns changed for a lot of companies; working from home and hybrid working became the norm; some companies didn't survive while others did very well. However, in amongst the turmoil, recruitment still had to take place, although the big difference was now being done online and not face to face. David explains 'to start with it all seemed very strange, but we came through it and, if anything, I think a lot of companies now prefer to use Teams, Zoom, Skype etc. It's also something that we have adopted on a wider basis because we can speak to more candidates in a short space of time and also maintain close relationships with our clients.'

Something that certainly has changed over the last twelve months, is the number of clients who use Howie White Recruitment. You'll need to take our word for it, but David has already attracted some very well known, big, household companies that want him to look after their recruitment. (Client confidentiality means we can't name names, but we've seen the list.)

So, what is the marketplace looking like when it comes to recruitment?

"To be honest, even though there are, quite rightly, concerns about a recession, cost of living, industrial unrest etc., companies will always want good people and will spend money finding the right person. Good candidates are still

in a very strong position and can lead the market to a certain extent. We've seen growth in all industries across all specialisms. We're also doing an increasing amount of recruitment work across Europe and North America.

We're fortunate here at Howie White in that we have a good spread of clients who need different types of candidates. It means that we've built a terrific network which allows us to move quickly to find the right person. Candidates are a bit more cautious of moving due to concerns about economic stability, but our experience gives clients and candidates confidence that we've done our homework and won't push ahead with a project if it didn't look right."

As for 2023, David has a simple strategy.

"We'll be building on the strengths that we already have and making ourselves as good as we can be...but there certainly won't be change for changes sake. This business has been hugely successful for 24 years and I will ensure that our reputation continues to build. We are known as a company that is always willing to help, that wants to always find the right candidate and is interested in quality rather than quantity. That sort of reputation means everything."

In other words, Howie White is in good hands with David Taylor leading from the front.

And everything is about to go full circle. David will, at some point in 2023 be looking to add a new member to the Howie White team. We suspect that he's got a pretty good idea of the sort of person he'll be looking for.

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“

...our experience gives clients and candidates confidence that we've done our homework...

Teesside body builders go from strength to strength

For most of us, buying a car or van is a fairly simple process. In terms of cars, it's really a choice of saloon, SUV, coupé or estate. Vans tend to be something like a single or double cab, rear doors or side doors, flat bed and how much weight do you want to carry. But what if you need something which is tailored to your requirements? That's where CPD Bodies in Stockton come in.

They specialise in custom-built vehicles which are designed to do a job. This can be something like a flat-bed which tips; a flat-bed with side bars or side panels which are either fixed or can be lowered. How about one with a large cage?

Imagine that you have a landscaping business and need to be able to easily load and offload mowers. CPD can construct a flat-bed which has a rear ramp that allows you to drive the mowers on and off.

Or what if your company specialises in traffic management where operatives need to safely position orange cones on the road from the side of the vehicle.

If you need to be able to load some heavy or bulky items, why not have a tail lift.

And of course there is the classic Luton panel van. CPD can provide you with a range of sizes, carrying capacities and even fit a tail lift.

Stockton based CPD started from very humble beginnings 14 years ago. Managing Director and owner, Cathal Doocey, who learnt his trade at his father's civil engineering firm, bought out a failing business for just £1, acquired all of their machinery and took on their workforce...of one person.

Since then, CPD has become one of the largest commercial vehicle body builders in the UK...and it is continuing to grow.

Turnover for 2022 was in the region of £40m and coming into 2023 and onwards Cathal sees continued growth for CPD Bodies Ltd with a forecast turnover of £50m for the end of this financial year. The business is looking to upskill its current staff as well as adding new products to satisfy customer demand.

Another part of CPD Group Holdings Ltd is CPD Land and Property which owns various pieces of land in and around Teesside. Cathal has plans for both residential and commercial with various pre apps already submitted.

"We've grown from one member of staff to over 100 employees and if things continue as they are, we could climb to near 140," says Cathal. "In 2010 we were named as North East Best New Business, but arguably one of the turning points for CPD came in 2017 when we were awarded the title of North East Business of the Year. It put us on the map and gave us some national exposure. Since then, the orders have come in thick and fast.

At the moment it looks as though we will complete approaching 4000 vehicle builds over the next twelve months. We're having particular success with our own Praevia range (it's a Latin word which translates to 'leading the way') which we developed to safeguard the business. As well as boasting market-leading payloads, the range is lighter, more robust and cheaper than established alternatives. We saw a gap in the market and it's doing incredibly well."

CPD design and build the vehicles at their 14 acre Stockton base. Such is their reputation that they work closely with every major manufacturer, including Ford, Iveco, Mercedes and Volkswagen, who provide the cab, engine and chassis. Everything else after that is built by CPD.

They've secured sizeable orders from well-known firms such as LEX Autolease, United Rental Group, Europcar, Northgate and SHB Hire.

"We're now big enough to ensure that if a customer wants a particular design, we'll go the extra mile to give them exactly what they want and when they want it. It's our service offering that's made us stand out from the crowd. In an industry where too often the body builder dictates the delivery times, what we deliver is in the timescale that the customer requires. If you need it for that date then that's when you'll get it. We've grown the business by being honest and doing what we say we're going to do, ensuring we give top quality every time."

Cathal and his CPD company are one of the North East's business success stories. They're a major employer in the Teesside area.

As you can see from the photos in this article, if you need a custom-built vehicle, CPD will ensure that you get something built to do a job.

For more details, the best idea is to log onto the CPD website...www.cpdbodies.com and see what they can do for you.



The Big Interview...



Cathal Dooney



Jonathan joins Hay & Kilner Commercial Property Team in Partner role

North East law firm Hay & Kilner has further strengthened the senior team in its commercial property department with the appointment of Jonathan Bone.

Jonathan has joined the Newcastle-headquartered firm as a

partner and brings almost 20 years' experience to his new role, most of which has been gained with high-profile firms in the North East legal sector.

He has worked on commercial property projects with businesses of all sizes, from North East SMEs and local landowners through to major national developers and large listed housebuilders, and has extensive experience of managing investment sales and acquisitions, portfolio management, landlord/tenant matters and site development projects.

New appointment at Sunderland law firm goes full circle

A high flying young lawyer has taken up a position back in the city that put her on her career path.

Amy Orange has recently joined the family team at Richard Reed Solicitors, following gaining a first-class law degree at the University of Sunderland and then further studying on the legal practice course and qualifying for a Masters degree.

And now, after gaining four years' experience as a paralegal for a leading Newcastle law firm, she has come back to Sunderland to progress her career again.

Amy's new post as a newly qualified solicitor will see her representing parents and other



family members in all Family Court proceedings as part of a busy department at the Frederick Street practice.



Master Chef of Great Britain joins Leila Lily's

A holder of one of the culinary world's most prestigious titles is to take the reins at a top Newcastle restaurant.

Jim Hall is one of just 140 chefs in the country to hold a Master Chef of Great Britain title – putting him at the centre of one of the most select and prestigious industry

groups in the country.

And leading leisure operator Malhotra Group plc has announced the 37-year-old chef from Washington is the new head chef at its flagship venue, Leila Lily's, at Grey Street.

Jim who joins Leila Lily's from four AA star Lumley Castle Hotel, at Chester-le-Street, brings more than 20 years' experience to his new position including stints at hotels and restaurants across the UK and at Ramside Hall Hotel and Mal Maison in the North East.

New year, new Chief Executive for Groundwork North East and Cumbria

Steven Roberts starts the New Year as Chief Executive of leading environmental and community charity, Groundwork North East & Cumbria as the organisation continues its efforts to tackle rising levels of poverty, the energy crisis and addressing environmental concerns across the region.

Groundwork North East & Cumbria was set up 30 years ago to improve prospects and deliver environmental action within communities. With these issues now dominating the national agenda, Groundwork is well placed to advise and lead the campaign to mitigate these issues.



Steven Roberts will 'hit the ground running' this year, as he has worked for the organisation for 21 years, joining as a volunteer before progressing to the post of Director of Youth, Employment & Skills. Under his management, the division has expanded to now employ over 135 people and works with partners across the public, private and voluntary sector.



David Taylor

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Margaret Simpson

Solicitor of the Month

Margaret Simpson

Silk Family Law

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I always thought I would be a doctor but I soon found out that my strengths were in the arts rather than the sciences and I therefore pursued a career in law.

Tell us about your current role and what you most enjoy.

I am a specialist family law solicitor dealing with all aspects of family law but mainly matrimonial finance. I really enjoy working on high-value and complex cases which have the greatest intellectual challenge. I love making sense of chaos and helping to put clients' lives back together again.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Without doubt, being a co-founder of Silk Family Law – recognised in Legal 500 as an 'outstanding family team'. We provide a national service at regional prices. Increasingly, our clients are realising that proximity is largely irrelevant. Although we have a very strong following in the north of England, we attract work from all over the UK and are frequently up against the London based specialists.

How has your industry evolved in the last decade and what changes do you see in the next decade?

There have been many changes recently. One of the most important has been the 'no fault' regime in divorce proceedings – avoiding tensions and hostility which existed under the old law when we often had to rely upon allegations of adultery or unreasonable behaviour.

I very much hope that within the next decade the law relating to cohabitation is changed so as to provide cohabitants with fair and appropriate protection. So many people enter into long-standing cohabiting relationships, buying property together, having children together and making joint decisions regarding the compromise of one of the partners' careers. Yet, in the event that the relationship breaks down, there is no protection for the financially weaker party. A change to the law relating to cohabitants is long overdue.

What are you currently working on?

A number of complex and interesting cases involving generational farms, pre-owned assets, trusts, Nuptial Agreements.

We have a constant source of new work. Each of our clients is valued. The solicitor/client relationship is extremely close and very demanding. It is a privilege to work with people during such difficult and often emotional times in their lives.

Tell us about the team you work with.

All of the team (Partners, Associates, Solicitors, Paralegals and all support staff) are astonishingly good. Silk Family Law has an excellent reputation as a specialist family firm and the staff know that they have an opportunity to learn and progress with proper encouragement and support.

We all rely heavily upon each other. We work collegiately, mindful always of the needs of the client and to ensure that client care is at the heart of all that we do.

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

Throughout my professional career I have worked on the basis that first and foremost, we are a profession. Although we are a business needing to generate an income and collect fees, our professional obligations to our clients must not and cannot be compromised. It is imperative that the needs of the client must always come first and we have to be mindful always of opportunities for reaching a settlement in a cost efficient and proportionate way.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Hopefully as busy and as fulfilled as I am now.

Who would be your four ideal dinner guests, alive or dead?

Any of my old Yorkshire friends who have been so welcoming and kind since my husband and I moved to North Yorkshire from London some 30 plus years ago. However, if I had to choose, without doubt I would choose my husband of 38 years, Lady Brenda Hale, Joni Mitchell and Winston Churchill.

How do you unwind outside of work?

Long dog walks with friends in the Yorkshire countryside.

Favourite Book and Boxset?

Any of Kent Haruf's novels. If I had to choose only one it would be 'Plainsong'. Boxset – that is very difficult although Gavin & Stacey always makes me laugh!

www.silkfamilylaw.co.uk



Emily Dickinson from Gosforth recently hosted a party at South Northumberland Cricket Club, for family and friends, to celebrate her 21st birthday.





Tony Ibson, Innovate Mortgage & Loans

Are mortgage rates stabilising?

After a turbulent period for mortgage rates, which at one point seemed to be increasing on an hourly basis, things appear to have now stabilised.

Did you hear this in the media? No, neither did I – they seem to revel in bad news and let the positives slip by!

Over the past few weeks we have seen a reversal in this upward trend, with most mortgage products drifting downwards as the money markets stabilise and the banks compete for business – hopefully this will continue so that the main news outlets have to take note...

We are also seeing more demand for tracker or discounted variable rate mortgages than we have for many years, giving borrowers more flexibility as the economic climate continues to evolve.

Whilst it seems likely that the period of ultra-low interest rates we have experienced since 2008 is over, the UK has a highly competitive mortgage market which should ensure that for the majority of homeowners looking to move or to re-mortgage there are still many very valid options.

As ever, expert whole of market mortgage advice is recommended.

For further mortgage advice, contact myself, Tony Ibson or my colleague, Paul Hardingham, on info@innovateml.co.uk

Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. Your home or property is at risk of repossession if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it. Innovate Mortgages and Loans is a trading style of Innovation Financial Management Ltd.

Meeting the needs of modern Estate Agency



Duncan Young reflects on the evolution of the market which now favours centralised property consultancy with better digital presence and communication.

It was with a great deal of sadness that I closed my Ponteland office in January this year having been involved personally in the building since 1984 when I first visited as a trainee Valuer. Figureheads and doyens of Estate Agency have led that office over the years including David Leslie, June Carter, Sandra Todd, Molly Gilhespie and Elaine Newbigin to name but a few. Over the last 38 years it often provided a very vibrant and busy day to day estate agency office.

Sadly, as e-commerce has changed the way we operate, the need for local offices has also altered, with many clients preferring the ease of emails, text messages and social media to communicate their preferences and choices when moving home. Indeed, the number of walk-ins to a local branch has dramatically reduced, hence the rationale of merging the team in Ponteland into our regional headquarters in Gosforth where our Ponteland colleagues are now working.

The old adage of "use it or lose it" applies to many industries and certainly, in estate agency, many buyers/sellers and tenants/landlords find it easier and more efficient to trade and communicate through our websites and the portals we support, as well as via Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, to name just a few of the platforms we utilise well.



Duncan Young, Chairman

I can reflect on the 1990s when we used The Journal Homemaker to launch a property for sale and how, on a Saturday, we had to "staff up" to take the calls into our offices. That no longer happens as when we release a new property now we receive immediate contact from our social media and email database, regardless of the day or time, to request a viewing or to value their home.

I am still, however, keen to retain some of the old fashioned ways and, in particular, the need to meet clients face to face, so we can assess their priorities, their needs and wants, as well as understand their desire to be in a new home in a particular timescale. There is still a real need to negotiate and help bring people together, which I often find only truly works when you meet them in person and not through emails or distant communication.

Our regional branch is about to expand its operations with a new building and office next door to the existing one, which will add another dimension for those clients looking to purchase or rent a new home. This building will be known as the Sanderson Young New Homes Hub and will employ four to five people, double that of our old Ponteland office.



Ashleigh Sundin | Penny Wright | Greg McCarthy

The trading of estate agency is much more about personal interaction of experienced and professional teams who cover a larger regional presence than the historic local branch covering a smaller geographic area. Our teams will still support local people, who know the local marketplace, but often those people will be more mobile based in a regional office or perhaps even working from home (during Covid we expanded our business due to the number of colleagues who worked from home or remote to the local office).



Jo Thompson | Julie Douglas

Sanderson Young, in the first week of January, took three new instructions to sell for clients in Ponteland and the Tyne Valley, all of whom understood the regional office strategy and for whom we very much look forward to moving in the near future.

Sanderson Young will continue to focus on successfully moving people in Darras Hall and Ponteland, as well as the villages of the Tyne Valley, from our regional base in Gosforth, but using the skills and professionalism of Penny Wright, and her colleagues Julie Douglas and Jo Thompson, as our Ponteland & Tyne Valley specialists.

Please let us know if we can help you with your move on 0191 2130033.

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Please contact our Ponteland and Tyne Valley team for a free, no obligation valuation/appraisal.
T: 0191 213 0033 | E: Contact@sandersonyoung.co.uk | www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



MAPLE COTTAGE
HIGH ANGERTON
£525,000



CORNERSTONE
MEDBURN
£1.4 MILLION



KING JOHNS COURT
DARRAS HALL, PONTELAND
£650,000



THE SCHOOL HOUSE
MAIN ROAD, WYLAM
£595,000



REGENCY WAY
DARRAS HALL, PONTELAND
£1.295 MILLION



BRIDGE BANK COTTAGE
CORBRIDGE
£950,000



MARIAN WAY
DARRAS HALL, PONTELAND
£640,000



NORTHUMBERLAND HOUSE
NORTH WALBOTTLE
£379,000



LANGTON COURT
DARRAS HALL, PONTELAND
£585,000



SANDERSON
YOUNG



What is the meaning of a snowdrop?

Search



snowdrop

/ˈsnəʊdrɒp/

noun,

Snowdrop is a beautiful flower that symbolises hope, renewal and rebirth. It is often seen as a sign of the coming of Spring and is associated with optimism, new beginnings and the start of something special...

With Spring just around the corner why not set the ball rolling for *your* new beginning.



CMYK Christmas Golf Day at Close House

The region's leading Business Technology provider CMYK warmly welcomed guests to their Christmas Golf Day in December, held at Close House.

The day started with a hearty festive breakfast, before golfers headed out for 18 holes on the magnificent Lee Westwood Filly Course. Cold, frosty but with plenty of sunshine and festive golfing fun a brilliant day was had by all. CMYK's Golf Day concluded with Christmas lunch, refreshments and prize giving.

Craig Pratt, Regional Sales Director of CMYK commented; "Huge thanks to our clients, partners and guests who attended. Your support throughout 2022 has been truly amazing and we are extremely grateful. Special thanks to our partner and client Close House for hosting our event and congratulations again to all of the prize winners."

www.cmyk-digital.co.uk







Square One Law advises Atlas Copco

Square One Law, led by corporate partner John Hammill, advised Atlas Copco on the acquisition of Precision Pneumatics Limited (Precision) and its wholly owned subsidiary Wearside Pneumatics Limited (Wearside), two compressed air distributors and service providers based near Liverpool and Newcastle Upon Tyne.

He commented: "We have advised Atlas Copco on three acquisitions in the North of England this year and have enjoyed working with their team. Being appointed to assist a global business of the scale and calibre of Atlas Copco in its growth plans is a strong endorsement of the commercial legal expertise at Square One Law."

Based in Stockholm, Sweden, Atlas Copco is a world-leading provider of innovative, sustainable productivity solutions and serves customers with compressors, vacuum solutions, generators, air treatment systems, construction and mining equipment, power tools and assembly systems. Founded in 1873, Atlas Copco has a global reach spanning more than 180 countries and employs about 43,000 staff.



Cascade looks to cash in on growth opportunities

An award-winning North East cash management firm set up by the founders of start-up bank GBB is ready for the next stage of its development after securing a six-figure investment from the North East Growth Capital Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Cascade Cash Management is the UK's first cloud-based savings platform and is unique in providing savers with direct access to all accounts and all providers on the market.

The Wallsend-headquartered firm provides an independent and transparent savings service which generates enhanced cash returns and increased depositor protection through professional cash management.

It has already managed more than £1bn of customer assets, with over £200m currently under its administration, and has a network of over 3,500 financial advisers right across the UK that are using its platform.

Cascade has now worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in the £150,000 Growth Capital Fund investment, which it is using to make further investments in the technologies which support its savings platform and enhance its business development activities.

New jobs in sales, finance and administration are expected to be created next year as the business grows.

Founded in 2015 by Dr Emma Black and her brother and business partner Stephen, Cascade Cash Management is the only service of its kind to track every bank and building society in the market to help clients secure the best possible outcomes from their cash.

INFINITY27 creating new growth reality

A North East immersive games design studio is diversifying into new markets after securing a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

INFINITY27 was set up in 2020 as a design studio providing games, immersive VR and AR and real-time 3D solutions to a range of clients across the UK.

Based at the PROTO advanced digital production facility in Gateshead, INFINITY27 has now adapted its expertise to create bespoke Skills Bootcamps funded by the Department for Education (DfE).

The 'Interactive Real-Time 3D (IRT3D) Bootcamp' combines live project work with tailored on-the-job professional development, and helps people in England aged 19 and over develop the skills and knowledge they need to be able to take high-skilled, high-paid jobs in the

games and immersive technology industries.

INFINITY27 is now using the £25,000 Small Loan Fund investment, which was obtained through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers, to expand its capacity to deliver more Skills Bootcamps and win new business outside its home region.

INFINITY27 has so far provided 70 high-quality, work-based professional development placements to students, graduates, career changes and T-Level students from a number of different backgrounds.

It has also worked with a number of North East colleges, including Sunderland College, New College Durham and Gateshead College, to help shape the content and impact of the Skills Bootcamp offering, with each one coming with high-quality training and a guaranteed interview for an open role in the games or immersive industry.



It is looking to complete at least 100 placements during 2023, with new jobs expected to follow as the number grows.



CCBS Group
Business & Funding Solutions

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



Peter Cromarty

E: peter@ccbsg.co.uk
M: 07715 409 386



Graeme Harrison

E: graeme@ccbsg.co.uk
M: 07719 560 356



Matt Lister

E: matt@ccbsg.co.uk
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Another record year for Azets Corporate Finance in the NE



The Corporate Finance team in the North East at UK top 10 Accountancy firm Azets is celebrating after delivering a second successive year of record results. This follows the news that the team were also ranked 2nd in the Experian M&A review of most active North East financial advisors, and 5th in the UK standings.

2022 saw a range of transactions for the team including several sales of local businesses to overseas buyers and continued prevalence of Venture Capital and Private Equity in their deal flow. Sales to employee ownership trusts have been a frequent transaction type and the team has had repeated success in the care and technology sectors.

The team has also continued to expand and invest in key talent, with the promotion of Lee Humble to Corporate Finance Partner and Mike Williams to Associate Director and the appointments of Jamie Hepworth and John Aitken as Corporate Finance Senior Executives.

In the North East Dealmaker Awards, the firm was shortlisted for Corporate Finance Advisory Firm of the Year, Lee Humble shortlisted for Corporate Finance Adviser of the Year and Steve Plaskitt shortlisted for Dealmaker of the Year.

Lee Humble, Corporate Finance Partner, said: "Our team has performed

strongly in the last 12 months, and we are pleased with what we have achieved for our clients with some complex and demanding transactions. It's also massively encouraging to be completing such strategic deals for North East businesses, helping them to grow at a time when the economy needs it most.

Our experienced and trusted team give our clients confidence whatever the nature, size or time constraints involved, and we have a strong and varied deals pipeline for at least the next 12 months.

Although the economy has become more challenging, capital remains available and there is no let-up in the appetite for mid-market corporate deals.

However, it is becoming increasingly apparent that quality is key and businesses looking to sell need to be well prepared and able to withstand rigorous due diligence. Given our strength of relationship with buyers, investors and funders we are well placed to support a variety of client needs and we remain confident of what the new year will bring.

There are still many businesses in the region with a desire or need to transact. With the rumoured changes to Capital Gains Tax, we are also seeing an increase in companies getting in touch to accelerate their plans.

My advice to companies would be if you're thinking of doing something in the next couple of years to start thinking about it now and get expert advice."

www.azets.co.uk



Dispelling myths about Corporate Finance

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

Ambitious businesses that are looking to expand and develop tend to have a lot of things in common – an experienced management team, a robust business plan, products and/or services that stand out from the crowd and a determination to succeed, whatever the ups and downs of their growth journey.

They equally also often lack something that's crucial to realising their potential – some or all of the capital required to make it happen.

It might be possible, depending on how much you need, to find the funds you require from friends, family or business contacts, or if you're lucky, from your existing business reserves – but this often won't be possible.

One of the other ways in which this missing money can be found is by working with venture capitalists and investment funds, who can provide the capital you require in return for an agreed proportion of the equity in your business or a capital return over a given period.

The process of getting money from these sources into your business bank account has been demystified to a degree by the TV success of *Dragons' Den* and its even more dramatically named US equivalent, *Shark Tank*.

But despite this, a surprising number of management teams aren't properly aware of the opportunities that working with fund managers could offer them, nor of the way in which they should be approaching obtaining the investment that will help them move their plans forward.

There's probably never be more opportunity for growing businesses to access investment capital, whether from providers inside the region, such as the North East Fund and the County Durham Growth Fund, or increasingly from elsewhere.

Fund holders across the UK have become increasingly aware of the North East's commercial strengths, particularly within our thriving technology sector, and our experience tells that they're keen to find out more about what our expanding businesses have to offer.

This widens the field in terms of the number of options that you might have for finding the investment you need, and it's important that you take the time to research these options before deciding on which ones are most suited to your particular requirements.

They all have individual personalities in terms of the sectors on which they focus, their attitude towards risk, the amount of money available and the stages of development at which their target businesses currently are, from pre-launch

and early-stage through to growing SMEs and mature companies.

Working with your professional advisors to decide what the right options will be for you and how you should shape your approach to them will give you the best chance of achieving your goals.

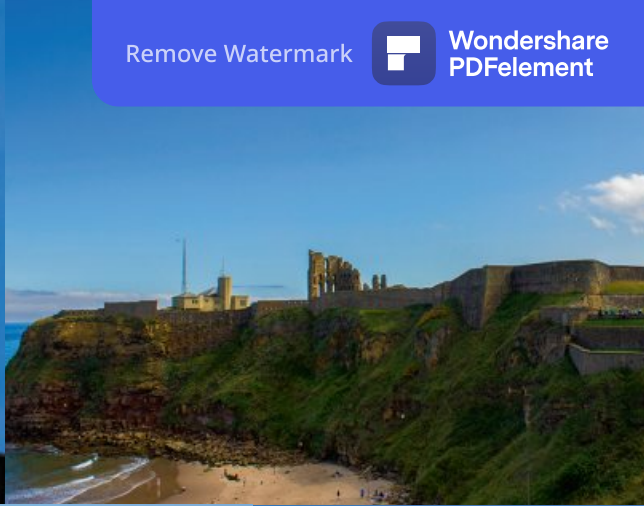
Each potential investor will want to know the capabilities of the management team that will drive the implementation of the business plan in which you're looking for them to invest, as well as the workforce that will deliver it on a day-to-day basis.

Do they have the collective credibility, knowledge, skills and determination to turn what's on paper into something more tangible, exactly how will they do this and how will venture capital involvement make success more likely?

Can you show that your people and/or your business have achieved their commercial objectives in the past, how this experience is going to be used to make similar success more likely in the future and how you differ from the competition?

The actual process of presenting your ideas to potential investors will most likely be rather less melodramatic than the pitches we see on *Dragons' Den*, but you'll most likely be pressed just as hard on the credibility of your forecasts and ideas, so the more detailed planning, preparation and research you do, the more likely you will be to succeed.

For further information on all aspects of securing outside investment and all aspects of corporate finance, please contact Michael Cantwell at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors on 0191 256 9500 or via michael.cantwell@r-m-t.co.uk



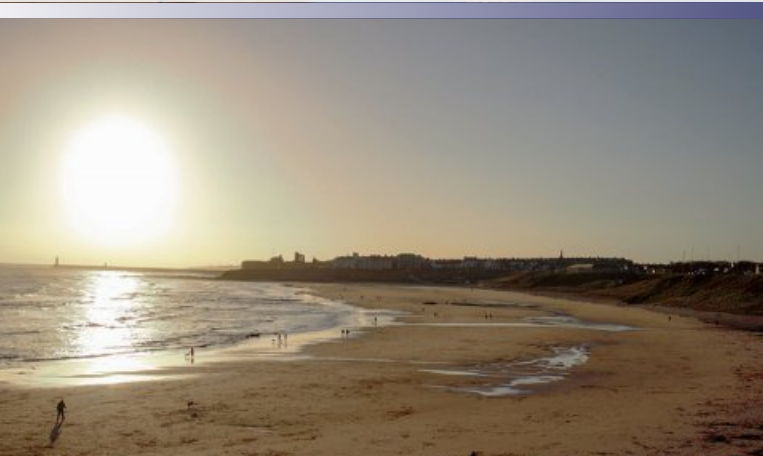
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How peer groups combined with the right mentoring can become award winning

A well-known coach and mentor has reflected on the success of 2022 for his clients, with many of them excelling under his care to win a number of high-profile awards.

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

Andrew said: "I don't count myself as successful unless my clients and companies that I work with are excelling and whilst 2022 has been a challenging year for many, those who I have been working with have been focusing on opportunity.

"Through my Vistage peer groups, speaker sessions and one-to-one meetings, my clients focus on changing mind-sets and being the best they can be. This is not necessarily an easy journey, there can be real 'looking in the mirror' moments and realising changes you have to make to succeed can be uncomfortable but ultimately, essential.

"Last year, in 2022, I am proud to say that many of my clients won awards and accolades for their work, which is a great way to boost your reputation and brand, and to celebrate successes with the team.

"To win these awards, you need to be demonstrating excellence, and focused on your USP's, your people, your customers, your team and investing in success with training and support relevant to the level of your teams. These are all topics we focus on in Vistage, and therefore award success becomes more natural."

Dr Emma Black, co-founder and CEO of Cascade Cash Management recently collected the award of Small Business of the Year at the Great British Entrepreneurial Awards (GBEA). She joined Andrew's Chief Executive and MD Vistage cohort three years ago, and she said: "Working with Andrew and within the peer group, which is made up of people from wide ranging sectors and experience, you start to think differently when looking at your own challenges and opportunities. As a person it pushes you further, but with a support structure to catch you. The sharing of these lessons with the team and also by enrolling some of my rising star managers onto Andrew's Emerging Leaders Vistage cohort, has impacted positively on the business. We shared those positive impacts within our GBEA application, and we were delighted with the result. We see the difference in our performance but for others to acknowledge that and how we stand out as a business is very satisfying. Thank you, Andrew, for his constant support and belief in us as a business."

Andrew attributes the success of his clients to the teams at the business, as much as to the work the leaders have been doing with Vistage. The benefits to CEO members of Vistage are wide ranging, ultimately helping with problem solving and giving a competitive advantage in decision making, spurring faster growth in the company. By focusing on instinct, judgement and perspective, better decision making is made, and the peer advisory group supports this bringing outside perspective too. Collaboration from varied industries brings unbiased educated feedback, support and experience, and when you mix in a range of events and speaker experts, growth becomes a strategic transformation.

Andrew continues with why the right peer group and mentoring helps drive success and acknowledgement: "Good mentoring is a collaboration of the mentor and the mentee. It doesn't work unless both buy into it fully. Mentee's have to trust, share and be vulnerable. They also have to be driven and commit to being held accountable.

"Our peer groups take that a step further, by granting a safe space for high level executives, board members, business owners and emerging leaders to flourish, learn and explore. As well as sharing my insights and experience, I encourage my clients to travel the path our sessions light up for them, and both their peers and I are there for them if they stumble.

"This works well for companies of all sizes and for charities too, who are often so deserving of awards and accolades but are too busy or too self-effacing to go after them. I was delighted to see Citizens Advice Gateshead win North East Charity of the Year 2022. Having worked with Alison Dunn, the CEO, in my Vistage group for a number of years, I was aware of what they were achieving and that she and her whole team were very deserving."

Alison said: "It's been an incredibly difficult few years for the Third Sector. We've been at the heart of welfare reform, the pandemic and now we're facing a cost-of-living crisis. With this as our backdrop, it was fantastic to win both Gateshead Charity of the Year 2022 and North East Charity of the Year 2022, giving everyone in the charity a huge boost. To have our work recognised in this way is a public acknowledgement of the many sacrifices our staff and volunteers have made over a number of years to ensure people get the help they need to solve their problems, its hugely satisfying and rewarding for the team.

"Testament must also go to Andrew for all the support he has given not just me, but the team, through my Vistage membership opening the charity up to new experiences, ideas and networks, challenging our mindset to supercharge our ambition. I am delighted to now have him on the board as a trustee for the charity, adding even greater benefit to my Vistage membership.

Andrew's Vistage sessions focus on the individuals and their needs, with an open and transparent approach. Members share a sense of authenticity, leave judgement at the door, and discover new, exciting purposes and passions that drive business to the next level.

If you want to project your business to being award winning in 2023, please contact Andrew on Andrew.marsh@vistagechair.co.uk or visit Andrew's webpage at myvistage.force.com/sites/s/chairs?username=andrew.marsh&partner=UKEN



“

*...Good mentoring is
a collaboration
of the mentor and
the mentee...*



Peter Neal

Use your brand to attract talent

Peter Neal, founder The Experience Bank Group, is well known for his expertise in leadership and board level recruitment, as well as for his support for SME's ready for that next stage of growth who need advice from an experienced panel of experts.

Here for Northern Insight readers, in his first article of 2023, Peter talks about the importance of making your brand stand out to make your high-level recruitment a success.

"Recruitment, particularly at a higher level for organisations, is in an all-time competitive situation. Recent events, skills and staff shortages, and the combination of unprecedented challenges and opportunities has led to a job seekers market.

"Better wages and benefits are on offer at all levels, but in higher-level recruitment for leaders and board members, there are specific things attracting talent to organisations.

"When put together these individual elements

equal a strong brand presence. And at the end of the day, we all want to be proud of where we work and have pride in our job. For leaders it seems that is currently even more important. Employers in a winning position, attracting talent, are using brand as the initial draw and as the closing gambit of the deal.

"So, what are the elements that make a brand not only known but attractive?

"Noticeably, any established brand's aim is to be recognised as doing a job well, breeding a positive experience for employees and customers. A culture fostering positivity is far more attractive to work for than one accepting negativity and mediocrity into the workplace.

"A brand that is transparent, open and honest, steeped in its local community is attractive to potential employees. If your company talks up the local area, supports community activity, and is spoken well about by all in return, then people will want to work there. If what you see is what you get, there are more likely only good things to be said, and believe me, any potential employee of higher level will be doing their own research about you.

"Flexibility is also attractive, not just in terms of benefits – in terms of delivery, service and product. This shows a sustainability to the organisation, being forward thinking and able to pivot to survive and thrive, is reassuring to those leaving a stable high-level job to join you.

"Now for your marketing, the place where a brand is born and should be nurtured. Your company should be visible, with strong PR, social media and promotional activity.

"Your website should be well thought through, with inclusive language, clear values (not just listed but demonstrated), good, robust policies

and of course, it should have good SEO so it easy to find.

"Finally, reviews online are imperative to demonstrate performance. A potential high-level candidate will look to these to gauge the strength of your brand and performance.

"Don't worry if you don't tick all the boxes, lots of execs look for challenges, places where they can bring their own improvements from things they've learnt in their careers. As long as some of these attractive brand qualities are achieved or being worked towards, your brand will be appealing, and ultimately, it is also about synergy and of course, having the right recruitment expert on board working with your team to find you the right candidates!"

Experience Bank Group incorporates The Experience Bank philanthropic, social enterprise company along with a commercial venture providing three symbiotic services - EB Board Level Recruitment, EB High Performing Boards and EB Continuous Personal Development.

With this combination of specialist expertise, the Experience Bank Group is uniquely positioned to help organisations ensure they have not only the right skills in the leadership team and boardroom but also optimum board performance with higher value creation.

5% of all revenue from Experience Bank Group is gifted to The Experience Bank social enterprise to enable more start-ups, early-stage businesses, charities and social enterprises access to high quality, advisory and non-executive talent.

If you are keen to know more then visit www.theexperiencebank.co.uk or call Peter on 07843 329393.



From zero to hero

Zero Trust (ZT) is a powerful concept that can significantly reduce risk and amplify benefits to businesses, but how far do you take a lack of trust?

ZT amounts to a set of principles for improving and maintaining security based on the concept of “never trust, always verify”. By adopting policies, culture and technology that enforce these principles, modern workplace environments can remain assured that their assets are protected regardless of where they – for example in the cloud or on a remote worker’s laptop, not just inside the office network.

Because it has the potential to massively

reduce risk, as well as add value across a whole business, ZT is gaining a lot of traction in the media, security, and technology industries. However, ZT gets tricky when you start to dig into it.

There is no single agreed standard but lots of models based on the principles (e.g. NCSC, NIST), and many companies claiming to sell ZT, or ZT-aligned products, each with their own interpretation of what it means. More complications arise when it comes to educating staff on not only its importance, but its continual implementation.

Implementation looks different in every environment, but the end goal is always the same: continuous security assurance in ever-evolving workplaces. At Waterstons we can provide clarity to our customers about ZT, educating them so they can make informed decisions about how to adopt ZT moving forward, and helping transform it from a buzzword into a strategy with real value.

If you want to develop your organisation’s Zero Trust approach, we’re with you.

Dan Morrison



Find out more about Waterstons and the business consultancy services on offer by scanning the QR code or visiting www.waterstons.com





L-R: Jack Spoor with Dan Adamson

Robson Laidler announces new appointment to business advisory team

Robson Laidler Accountants has announced a new appointment to its business advisory team as it gears up for further growth.

Dan Adamson, 30, has taken on the role as business advisor having previously worked at the firm, which has offices in Newcastle and Chester le Street, for the past three years as an accountant in the business innovation department.

Dan who is pending Mindshop accreditation, has made the switch to advisory following his recognition and passion for solving client issues and making referrals for more strategic cashflow planning and forecasting, which has already seen the department witness 22% growth in the past 12-months.

Head of Robson Laidler's business accelerator services Jack Spoor said: "Dan's appointment has come at a crucial time for us to take

advantage of new opportunities coming our way and to develop our strategy for future growth.

"Businesses are operating in an increasingly competitive world impacted by economic and environmental challenges, recruitment demands and technological advancements and Dan's commercial acumen and the strategic business skills he has demonstrated in helping to grow the business innovation department will be invaluable in the development of our advisory offerings."

Speaking of his new role, Daniel Adamson said: "I am passionate about helping business to succeed, that's what drives me, and I am so fortunate that Robson Laidler has provided me with an opportunity to grow and develop my

career with relative autonomy, supported by an ambitious and highly capable team.

"I really enjoy being asked unique questions and scenarios from clients about their business performance, forecasting trends, staffing and operational queries and then being able to help solve them and make decisions to help them future proof."

Robson Laidler accelerator client Emma Walker for EW Estates said: "Dan has helped me turn my business around. I wouldn't be in the strong financial position I am now in it if wasn't for his guidance."

With the appointment of Dan, Robson Laidler's Business Accelerator services are set to increase turnover by 28% in the next year.

Dan continued: "Business Accelerator services are ideal for business owners who are growing sustainably, scaling up and looking to create a high performing team. Our team of Mindshop accredited business coaches and motivational map practitioners can also provide regular coaching support.

"Having vast accounting and audit experience in our team also gives us a cutting-edge advantage when it comes to submitting research and development claims for our clients."

www.robson-laidler.co.uk/accelerator

Adapt, Innovate and Thrive

2022 was a year of change, as businesses transition to a new normal after two years of disruption caused by the pandemic. Companies have managed to adapt, innovate and, in some cases, thrive – but many have needed a helping hand along the way.

Business Durham, the business support service of Durham County Council, supported dozens of businesses through that challenging year, which was defined by political turmoil at home and abroad, and a cost-of-living crisis that has sent energy bills and raw material costs soaring. The organisation's support has been wide-ranging, from providing grant funding and property to practical advice on all aspects of growing a business.

During the pandemic, networking was done almost exclusively online but many firms returned to in-person meets last year. This gave them the chance to reconnect at regular events run by Business Durham and through business park groups across County Durham.

2022 also saw the return of conferences and festivals that have been key dates on the County Durham business calendar. From the North East Space Conference in March, Together Towards Net Zero business showcase event in July to Durham Ambitious Business Start-Ups Festival of Enterprise in October, there have been many opportunities for businesses to meet in person, share their challenges, develop ideas and find solutions to real-world issues.

2022 was also a successful year for the property portfolio managed by Business Durham, with a 95% occupancy average for the year. And work on



Sarah Slaven, Managing Director of Business Durham

Station Place in Newton Aycliffe was completed in November and is ready for tenants to move in.

Throughout 2022 the Business Durham team got out and about again, visiting local businesses to discover the challenges companies have been facing, and help with connections to support they need to overcome them.

To achieve their growth goals, businesses need access to appropriate finance to invest and develop. Business Durham-managed funding programmes, including the County Durham Growth Fund and the Finance Durham Fund, have benefited dozens of companies over the year.

As we enter 2023, there is renewed optimism among the business community, despite the inevitable challenges that lie ahead.

www.businessdurham.co.uk

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Your success, is our success.

Call us on 07376 333 605 or visit genesissaccountants.com



EMG Solicitors triumph at Investors in People Awards 2022 to win UK Employer of the Year Award: Silver



Growing North East law firm, EMG Solicitors were delighted to be announced recently as the winner of the UK Employer of the Year Award: Silver at The Investors in People (IiP) event.

The nationally recognised award is one of many prestigious achievements for the Legal 500 firm, who are based across the North East and Cumbria. With offices in Newcastle, Durham and Penrith (with the latter opening its doors in October last year)

No strangers to winning an accolade or two, EMG were also awarded the Investors in People silver award in July 2022 and ranked within the Top 20 Silver 'We invest in people employer' UK wide.

Because of this, the team were invited to enter The Investors in People Awards 2022 – which they were delighted to be crowned the winners of!

Ian Burke, Head of People and Culture at EMG Solicitors said; "Winning this award really is an amazing achievement and I'd like to thank all our people at EMG for playing their part and helping make this happen. It doesn't matter what role colleagues have within our organisation, everyone is integral to our success and everything we have achieved so far. We really do have something very special within our business and this award goes some way in recognising that."



Strong growth in Newcastle continues for Northern law firm

A top UK law firm has recruited 13 trainee solicitors and one solicitor apprentice as it continues to grow strongly and expand its workforce.

Ward Hadaway LLP, headquartered in Newcastle upon Tyne, has recruited seven trainees to its Newcastle team who have been awarded a two-year training contract at the firm. It has also appointed a solicitor apprentice who will undertake a six-year apprenticeship.

The trainee and apprentice appointments follow a strong financial year for Ward Hadaway LLP which recently reported a 11% firm-wide growth. In July, the business completed a 28-strong round of promotions with 17 lawyers in the Newcastle office stepping up into more senior roles.



Lauren and Tom earn promotions with Hay & Kilner

North East law firm Hay & Kilner has awarded promotions to two members of its team in recognition of their legal expertise and contribution to the practice's success.

Lauren Hall has been promoted to Partner within the Newcastle-headquartered practice's clinical negligence department, while Tom Clarke has been made an Associate within its employment law team.

She has particular experience in managing inquests and regularly represents bereaved families where there are concerns in relation to the care they received.

Lauren is also chair of Hay & Kilner's employee mental health and well-being committee.

A Newcastle University graduate, Tom qualified as a solicitor in 2018 after completing his training contract at Hay & Kilner and advises employer clients on a full range of HR and employment law matters, including disciplinary and grievance issues, employment tribunals, strategic planning and employment documentation.

Tom is now part of the Hay & Kilner team that manages the firm's graduate recruitment process and is also vice chair of the Newcastle Young Professionals' Forum.

Lauren Hall says: "Clinical negligence was always the area of law in which I wanted to work, and as a local firm with an excellent reputation in the field, Hay & Kilner was very much the practice I wanted to join when I started my career.

"The quality of the clinical negligence work we undertake has enabled me to gain a wide breadth of experience in many different areas, as well as to help people and families who've gone through extremely challenging situations get the outcomes they're looking for.

Tom Clarke adds: "When I started my career, I wanted to find a firm that had a friendly and supportive environment, and Hay & Kilner has certainly lived up to that ambition.



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Northern Law Awards announce main sponsor for 2023 as Trinity Chambers



L-R: Dorothy Inverarity, Echo Events Director, Jenny Lowrey, Sponsorship Manager, Tim Harris MBE, Trinity Chambers Director

The Northern Law Awards is delighted to announce that Trinity Chambers will return as its main sponsorship partner for a second year.

With premises in Newcastle, Middlesbrough and Leeds, Trinity Chambers will sponsor the 7th Northern Law Awards on 22nd June 2023, celebrating the best of the talent of those practising and working in the legal industry throughout the whole of the North of England.

The awards, whose reputation for integrity stem from its rigorous judging process provided by a wealth of experienced judges in order to truly find the highest quality talent, will, in the 2023 awards, look at the work from March 2022 to March 2023 with categories representing the full breadth of legal expertise in the region.

As main sponsorship partners, Trinity Chambers will be involved in some capacity at every stage of the Awards, including forming part of the

judging panel for two Awards, attending on the Awards night to welcome all guests, and sponsoring and presenting the prestigious Award for Outstanding Achievement.

Tim Harris MBE, Trinity Chambers Director, explained why the Barristers had chosen to sponsor the Awards for a second year saying, "The Northern Law Awards are quite simply a 'red letter' event in the legal community's calendar. Trinity Chambers' members and staff are delighted to be the Main Partners of the 2023 Awards for a second consecutive year, with fond memories of the 2022 Awards ceremony which gave us all such a welcome lift following the restrictions we endured as a consequence of the Covid pandemic.

What is becoming increasingly clear is that the region has so much to offer, not only in terms of the high standard of legal services, but also as a great place to work with plenty of opportunity, energy and ambition.

We look forward to catching up with our colleagues from different sized law firms, in house legal teams, academia and not for profit sectors on the evening. Best of luck to everyone taking part and we'll see you on 22nd June."

Thanking Trinity Chambers for their

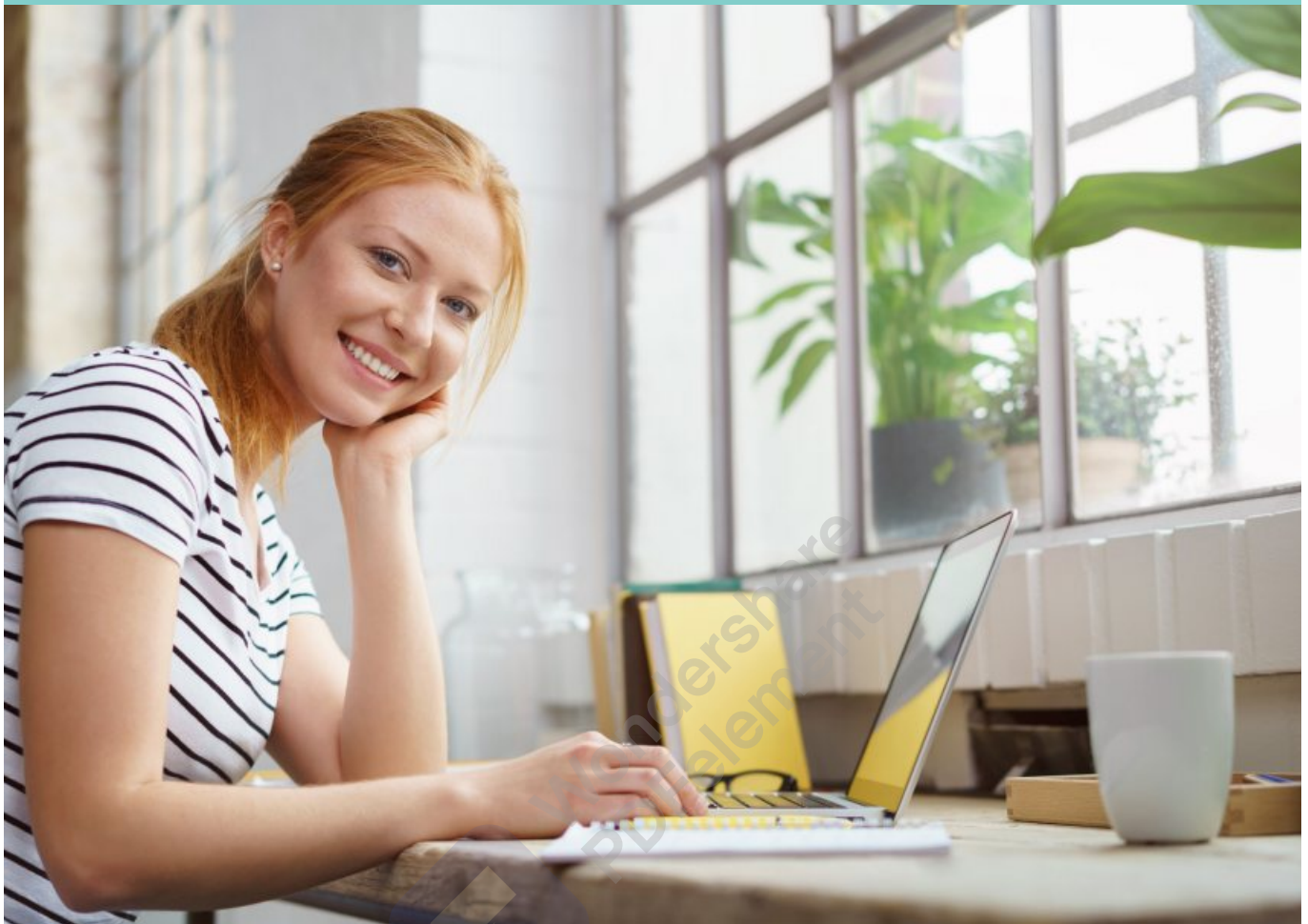
sponsorship, Jenny Lowrey, Sponsorship Manager of Echo Events, who organise the Awards, said: "We are particularly pleased that Trinity Chambers have returned as the Main Partner of The Northern Law Awards for a second year. As a Chambers that work across the entire North of England and beyond, their sponsorship is testament to the value that these awards hold for the best of the legal sector in the entire region.

With this fantastic support from Trinity Chambers, we are excited to bring together the legal community once again to celebrate the impressive achievements of the past year."

Dorothy Inverarity, Director at Echo Events added: "Trinity Chambers is the ideal main sponsor for the Northern Law Awards; its reputation for leading quality and high standards in the field of law are perfectly aligned with what the Northern Law Awards represent, as well as having a united aim to promote the great legal work of the North to the rest of the nation. We are truly delighted they have returned as main sponsor for a second year."

For further information on the Northern Law Awards visit: lawawards.co.uk

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Striking the perfect balance is the secret to success for North East Law Firm



Richard Miller

Recruitment has become a major issue in the post-pandemic world and there are few sectors which haven't been hit by this in one way or another.

One North East law firm is not only bucking the trend but is also managing to recruit top legal practitioners – thanks to its commitment to sustaining a healthy work/life balance.

Burnetts is based in the heart of Newcastle at Milburn House, Dean Street as well as operating a smaller office at Hexham and two offices in the North West at Carlisle and Cockerham.

The firm has built up a reputation for providing the highest levels of advice across a range of sectors– from banking, corporate, commercial property, employment, family through to medical negligence and serious injury cases.

Burnetts is also proud of its roster of national clients, with a good proportion of the people and businesses it works with based in London and other major cities across the UK.

Equally as important as providing a quality service, the firm is very much about looking after its own and developing talent.

It's the reason why some of the newest members of the team have come from some of the biggest legal firms in the North East and beyond.

"It's the family feeling that we have at Burnetts

which genuinely makes it a great place to work," said Nicola Nutley.

"It's a fantastic team of people who are all experts in their field but all just want to get the best job done for their clients in an efficient and pragmatic way and support other at the same time."

2023 will see even more names added to the Burnetts roster at their Newcastle office, including two new corporate partners and a new commercial property partner.

The firm has developed a national reputation in two key sectors namely Banking and Medical Negligence & Serious Injury cases. In particular, the Banking team has experienced rapid growth since its conception in 2017 which has led to the creation of a Banking Solicitor Recruitment and Training Programme.

This scheme provides a brilliant opportunity for a legal graduate to get real insight and training to work in this sector, giving them all the skills they need to work in the complex world of banking.

The first recruit was 23-year-old Northumbria University graduate, Alex Goldthorpe, who already had Burnetts in his sights and so was delighted for what he sees as a real career boost.

The plan is to employ more young people on to the programme in the future, ensuring that Burnetts play a really meaningful role in helping graduates along the career ladder.

It's all part of the company's commitment to creating a "magnetic workplace" – the name now given to places where employees love to work and customers love to do business.

This ethos has been reaffirmed with the firm's

commitment to employee engagement which has won them a second consecutive year of accreditation as a 'Great Place to Work™'

This recognition focuses on measuring the trust and wellbeing of employees; it ensures that everyone has a voice and are involved in shaping the future of the firm and its success. This places the firm in the top medium sized professional services organisations in the country overall, and it was with great pride that they also received a national award in 2022 for being a 'Great Place to Work™' for Women' too.

This kind of thinking certainly puts Burnetts in good company– following in the footsteps of organisations such as Apple and Google which are known for this approach to both staff and clients.

Richard Miller, Head of Property and Burnetts' Partner responsible for the Newcastle office, believes the firm's philosophy is helping to drive its positive reputation.

"We are lucky enough to have attracted a lot of talented and enthusiastic people who have come to join us from other firms in the region," he said.

"The quality of our people and the way we look after them, combined with our down to earth and plain speaking approach has been a key part of retaining key clients and introducing new opportunities to the firm.

"We deliver our services in a way that's very accessible, solutions focussed and in a way that shows how much we care about our clients and staff."

For further information on all of Burnetts' services visit www.burnetts.co.uk

Confidence in our own and our region's future

By Jonathan Waters,
Managing Partner at Hay & Kilner

The year 2022 was extremely memorable in a lot of different ways, sadly not all of them good - but for Hay & Kilner, it was a landmark 12 months during which we set the course for our growth strategy over the rest of the decade and beyond.

Our move in September into our new headquarters in The Lumen, which sits within the vibrant Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter, and the fresh, dynamic brand identity that we adopted at the same time represented a real step change in our operations and ambitions.

Taking over the whole of the fifth floor of The Lumen, with its iconic views across the Newcastle and Gateshead skyline, allowed us to bring all of our Newcastle team together in one place and the buzz it's created across the firm is unmistakable.

It's been a great pleasure to introduce clients and contacts old and new to our new offices over the last few months, with the 'wow factor' that we wanted it to deliver being very clear in everyone's reaction (not to mention in the number of photos that they've taken of our spectacular surroundings!).

But our new headquarters are about much more than just glass, light and fantastic views.

They're very much a statement of confidence in our future, and in the future of the city and region that we've called home for more than 75 years.

Despite the wider economic situation, our firm belief is that there's very much still confidence in the North East, perhaps as much now as there has ever been, as well as a real sense that there

is much more growth potential to be realised.

From Hay & Kilner's point of view, our long-term aim remains to become a bigger, better version of ourselves by retaining our focus on providing high quality advice and support to clients which meets both their commercial and personal needs while also expanding our capacity to work with more and bigger organisations.

Part of this obviously means bringing in more of the right calibre of people, and as well as helping us retain some key people, our new headquarters has undoubtedly played a role in enabling us achieve some of our recruitment aims.

Some extremely talented and highly-regarded solicitors have joined the firm in recent months across a range of specialisms, including Jonathan Bone, Louisa Bestford and Jessica Cousin in our commercial property, family law and commercial contracts departments respectively.

Our dispute resolution team is also expanding, and we've allowed space in The Lumen for even more appointments to follow across the firm through 2023.

Looking at activity levels in the corporate and commercial sector over the last 12

months, we've seen a continuing flow of client instructions for a diverse mix of transactions, including MBOs, private equity investments and property deals, and there's no sign so far this year of this trend slowing down.

The invaluable relationships that we hold and are building across the North East SME community are absolutely central to our future growth strategy, and we're proud of the positive impact that we can have on individual firms' operations and commercial success.

There are clearly challenges ahead from which none of us will be immune, but with challenges always come opportunities, and we stand ready to help regional entrepreneurs make the best of them during 2023.

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

For further information on the full range of legal and commercial services and advice it provides by Hay & Kilner, please visit www.hay-kilner.co.uk or call 0191 232 8345



Jonathan Waters

Divorce during the cost of living crisis

Throughout recent months, many couples are finding themselves in a position where they can't afford to separate due to the increased cost of living. Money worries have always put a strain on relationships, often causing many marriages to end, now more so than ever.

Two is better than one when it comes to finances

Couples contemplating splitting up have found themselves in a situation where they simply cannot afford to get a divorce. The increased cost of living means many people are struggling to pay the bills even as a couple. Splitting up and living separately only makes this worse as it means dividing a single household, and its wide range of expenses, in two bills once paid by two people will only be paid by one.

Planning for the future

A significant part of the divorce process is ensuring a fair split of the couple's assets and planning ahead for the future. Resolving finances during a time of economic uncertainty is becoming increasingly difficult as no one can accurately determine what each side may need financially to move on with their lives given daily changes with inflation, house values, mortgage and interest rates, as well as pensions and other investments.

Help is out there

Commenting on the challenges divorcing couples are facing during the current period of economic uncertainty, Head of Sweeney Miller Law's Family Team, Rebecca Cresswell said:

"No one should feel forced to remain in an unhappy marriage just because their financial position will not allow them to leave. Against this background, many people unfortunately feel that there is nowhere to turn and they are trapped in a relationship, unable to move on with their lives. The team and I are always looking for ways to help our clients deal with these difficult situations and have some practical ideas that may be of help."

Practical Tips

There are several practical things that can be done to alleviate some of these challenges:

- **Counselling** - the first step in many marriages under strain is to seek counselling. Confidentially talking candidly through relationship issues with an independent and experienced professional can result in both sides understanding each other more and can lead to the marriage being less likely to break down. Seeking marriage counselling will be far less expensive and emotionally burdening than divorce.
- **In cases where finances** are the main cause of contention, obtaining the advice of a financial advisor at the early stages of discussing a split can often be helpful, giving you the full picture of what divorce will mean for both sides.
- **Do-it-yourself divorce** – as a result of a recent change in the law and introduction of 'no-fault' divorce, many people now choose to go through the process with little or no help from a solicitor. This has been deliberately simplified to help splitting couples. You can apply online at www.gov.uk/divorce or by post. That said, we always strongly recommend that splitting couples seek legal advice as divorce does not end any financial ties with a former spouse - you still need to deal with any financial settlement, whether that is through a clean break or consent order. Properly sorting finances

on divorce with professional help from a solicitor could result in saving considerable legal fees by reducing the chance of any future disputes.

- **Check whether you qualify for help with fees** - there is a £593 fee to apply for a divorce, this is often too expensive for many. Help with fees is calculated based on your monthly income. In many cases the party applying for the divorce cannot afford to pay the fee and so may qualify for help with the cost. If instructed to deal with your divorce, we will carry out this test for you.

- **Only seek advice for finances** - resolving finances can be complex, depending on what assets/liabilities are involved. Splitting couples will often benefit from having a solicitor to act on their behalf for the financial side of the divorce.

- **Just one side gets the advice of a solicitor** - if the separation has been amicable, this is often achievable. If you are uncomfortable going through the process with no guidance from a solicitor, it is possible for just one side to instruct a solicitor to get their advice and split the cost.

- **Be reasonable and willing to compromise with your former partner** - especially in cases where there are children involved, it is very important to be able to compromise and take a non-confrontational approach regarding issues such as child contact. Any Court proceedings, including those involving children, can get very expensive and are often avoidable through communication and negotiation. An obvious exception to this approach is if domestic abuse is involved and it is therefore not advisable to communicate with your former spouse.

- **Make the most of 'free' initial appointments with solicitors.** Some law firms offer free initial meetings to talk through your options when considering a split. Sweeney Miller Law are one of those firms, we provide a free initial no obligation 30-minute consultation.

- **Explore payment plans with your solicitor** - at Sweeney Miller Law we know that each of our clients' circumstances are unique. If clients need legal advice, we always explore with them a range of options to see if we can help with payment plans to manage their particular situation.

Expert team

The Sweeney Miller Law Family team has longstanding connections with financial, tax and pension advisors who can advise on the valuation and division of assets, including pensions, following a split. Our large Conveyancing team can help with the sale or transfer of the family home. We also have an experienced Commercial team to help with any company interests on divorce. Our Estate Planning team can help you create a Will to reflect your new wishes following divorce.

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



“

... No one should feel forced to remain in an unhappy marriage just because their financial position will not allow them to leave...

Legal advice and litigation privilege and protection of confidentiality for clients

Nathan May is a solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Nathan considers the importance of legal advice and litigation privilege for employers.

Most employers are aware that advice from their lawyer is protected by “privilege”, but there are often misunderstandings regarding the conditions for a particular document to be protected by privilege and, therefore, not disclosable in any legal action against an employer.

The key components of privilege

There are, broadly, two types of privilege: Legal Advice Privilege (“LAP”) and Litigation Privilege (“LP”). LAP applies to confidential communications exchanged between a lawyer and their client which exists for the dominant purpose of giving or receiving legal advice. LP can apply to confidential material communicated between a lawyer and their client, or between either of them and a third party which is made for the dominant purpose of litigation, which is existing, pending or reasonably contemplated. Importantly, the litigation has to be a real possibility, not a mere possibility or an apprehension that litigation may occur.

As a result, unless there is real possibility of litigation, privilege will not extend to communications within an employer’s organisation, or between the employer and non

– lawyer advisory services. By contrast, LAP will apply to lawyer – client communications from the inception of the relationship.

A cautionary tale from the Employment Appeal Tribunal

The extent of privilege protection was made clear in the recent Employment Appeal Tribunal decision in *University of Dundee v Chakraborty*. The Claimant, Mr Chakraborty, brought claims in the Employment Tribunal and sought the disclosure of a grievance investigation report into allegations he had made against his line manager.

A first draft of the report had been produced at the time the claims were brought so the University sought legal advice prior to any disclosure. The lawyers for the University suggested some amendments and a revised version was disclosed with wording suggesting it had been amended. The Claimant sought disclosure of the original report, and this was resisted by the University on the basis that this would allow him to draw inferences as to the legal advice received and that the original report had acquired retrospective LP and/or LAP protection as a result.

The Employment Appeal Tribunal rejected the University’s arguments. It held that when the original report was drafted it did not have protection from either LP, in that it was not created in contemplation of litigation. Nor was the report protected from LAP, as the original report was not a document evidencing communication between a client and their lawyer. There was no authority for privilege to apply retrospectively, even if this meant inferences could be drawn about the legal

advice based on the differences between the two documents. The original report was disclosable.

What should employers take away from this?

The key takeaways from this case are that:

1. The doctrines of LAP and LP apply predominantly to communications between lawyers and their clients. These doctrines protecting confidentiality of communications do not apply to internal management communications or to advice given (or reports prepared by) HR professionals or consultants who are not legally qualified (unless the narrow exception for third party communications for LP is met).
2. The original report could have been protected by the doctrine of LAP if the employer sought legal advice from a specialist solicitor at an earlier stage on matters pertaining to the grievance in terms of the applicable law relevant to the factual investigation and the dispute resolution process.
3. The risks in not instructing a legal adviser at an early stage in the process are that documents and communications which expose vulnerabilities in the employer’s case may be disclosable and increase the risk of losing a tribunal case or emboldening a Claimant to seek a higher settlement sum.

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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Nathan May



0191 500 6989

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L-R: Samantha Pritchard,
Joanne Davison and Chris Hook.

Muckle LLP strengthens charities team with new senior appointment

Leading law firm for businesses, Muckle LLP has strengthened its top-ranked charities & social enterprise team with a new senior appointment.

Samantha Pritchard joins the team as a partner with over 13 years of experience in the charity and not-for-profit sector. Described as a 'Rising Star' by the independent legal directory Legal 500 UK, she is highly regarded for her work advising on a wide range of issues relating to strategic change, governance, operational matters, trust law and regulatory compliance.

Muckle is known for its work representing local, national and international organisations, including Great North Air Ambulance, The Children's Heart Unit Fund, parkrun Global and the Premier League's Football Foundation, with the firm's charities team ranked in tier 1 by the Legal 500 for the past 10 years. Samantha's specialist knowledge will further strengthen the industry-leading team led by charity law experts

Joanne Davison and Chris Hook.

Based in the North East since 2012, Samantha has developed much of her charity practice expertise in the region and is a member of the Charity Law Association. She has acted as a trustee for a number of charities, regularly providing training to trustees and senior management.

Samantha's practice includes large national and regional charities, membership organisations, community organisations, social enterprises, education providers and other service providers.

As well as advising the firm's charities and third-sector clients, Samantha will also support commercial businesses and public sector organisations in their interactions with charities as part of the joined-up approach Muckle is known for.

Samantha said: "I already knew about the success of the Muckle charities team and was attracted by the firm's strong reputation for its work across the third sector and the focus it places on providing targeted, specialist support.

"I chose to join Muckle as it's a forward-thinking firm and there is a real alignment between the culture and values of the firm and those of my charity clients, as well as my own.

"I've had such a warm welcome since I've joined and I'm excited to work amongst people who are so enthusiastic about advising the sector and who understand the complexity that involves.

"The UK charity sector is vast and plays a pivotal role in society, especially in the current climate.

"I'm looking forward to working with the team here to continue to grow the charities practice and to provide joined-up support across the wide range of legal services charities need in this region and beyond."

Chris Hook said: "With Sam's vast range of experience, we are excited to welcome her to the team to help enhance what we can offer to our clients. I have no doubt that she will be a fantastic asset to the Muckle team and a driving force for progress."

To find out more about Muckle, visit:
www.muckle-llp.com.

To contact Samantha directly, use
samantha.pritchard@muckle-llp.com
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Anniversary Celebrations

Emmersons Solicitors are celebrating their 25th Anniversary this year. Founder Jacqueline Emmerson spoke to Northern Insight about the journey so far and what the future holds.

What led you to forming the business 25 years ago?

I felt as if I had reached a glass ceiling and that I couldn't progress any further with the firm I was at. When I looked around for another job I couldn't find anything better.

What are your earliest memories?

Right from the off I knew that it was sink or swim, I knew that I had to promote the firm. Two of my friends volunteered to deliver leaflets with me, we had a great afternoon in the snow doing just that. I also contacted the local press on a regular basis. One week I made headline news nearly every day in the Sunderland Echo. A relative rang to say, I constantly read "Jacqueline Emmerson solicitor of John Street says..." I was very pleased with myself. Job done, my PR campaign had been successful.

What aspect of your job has changed the most?

As the firm has grown it has required a huge step change in how it is managed. I am now Managing Director with team leaders running departments. We have Residential and Commercial Property, Criminal Defence and Motoring and Private Client which is made up of Family, Wills and Probate. Having undertaken a Leadership Management Course I approach everything from the point of view of the business.

What has been your proudest achievement?

There have been quite a few. Becoming one of the first and youngest members of the Law Society Family Law Panel when it was first created. Winning the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Wearside Women in Business Awards. Winning Private Client Team of The Year at the British Wills and Probate Awards. This is a Blue Riband accolade and represents all of the hard work and skill set of our Wills and Probate Team. I am also very proud of the fact that I have kept going in my profession for over thirty years, not many female lawyers make it this far. For my family I am proud of the fact that I am currently the acting President of Sunderland Law Society. My grandparents would have been thrilled.

What has been your biggest challenge?

The last recession. It was relentless. But me being me I decided to open another branch office right in the middle of it!

What are you concentrating on at the moment?

Two things, steering the firm through this current recession and continuing with our community based work. We are the only solicitors firm in the country to offer Slow Shopping. Every Tuesday we offer a free drop in session for those who have any physical or mental impairment. This is part of our work with Gosforth Dementia Friendly Group.



Jacqueline Emmerson

How have you managed to achieve a work/life balance?

It was very tough when the children were younger. I had a huge family law caseload and many of those were care cases. By their very nature they are chaotic and take up a lot of unplanned time. When I opened our Newcastle office I decided not to offer legal aid family work and so my life became much easier. I had less family cases which also meant that I had time for Wills and Probate again.

Our children's schools and nursery were nearby which meant that I was able to spend more time with them. Being in business with my husband Michael Robinson has meant that we have always been able to plan our working life around the children. This was essential during school holidays.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

To continue to build upon our current offering and to bring on the next generation of directors.

From a standing start of nothing to our 25th anniversary we have built up an ethically sound, community based law firm which I will be proud to hand on when it is our time to step down.

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New year... new start?

Emily Cannell, Partner and Head of Family at Mincoffs Solicitors, explores the reasons some people choose to make a fresh start in their relationships in the early months of the year.

Colleagues, clients and friends often ask whether the beginning of the year really is the busiest time for divorce.

Given the flurry of PR activity and advertising by many family lawyers after the holidays, this would certainly suggest as much.

It could be said that divorce is more popular in January as people who have perhaps been unhappy for a number of months beforehand decide finally that want a fresh start for a new year. After all, what better time to make a change?

Another common factor could be unhappy couples choosing to hold it together towards the end of a year in an attempt not to 'ruin' Christmas – particularly where children are involved – and therefore January and February tend to see the beginning of proceedings for those who would have otherwise issued in November or December.



Emily Cannell

The holidays are also a time when most couples spend more time together than usual, many times with an invitation offered to extended family – which can sometimes create the perfect storm.

Maybe the office Christmas night out has led to a third party being involved, or perhaps an increase in social events has led to unhappy, alcohol fuelled disagreements.

Of course, the start of the year is also when the dark, cold nights draw in, finances are particularly tight after Christmas shopping and a summer holiday is a distant dream – which

could all contribute to a marriage suffering.

Or perhaps it is just a misconception that divorces are more popular at the start of the year and the rush of activity in a family lawyer's office in January is nothing more than the result of an extended break away from the office over Christmas.

For friendly, confidential advice on divorce or relationship breakdown, contact Emily Cannell on ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk or call 0191 212 7718.

www.mincoffs.co.uk



Sophie Milliken MBE

Three reasons why you should join a charity board

You probably know joining a charity board makes good professional sense. It can be a great way of giving back and align with your other business interests. Perhaps you discounted the idea because you don't think you'd get through the selection process, or you don't have the time to do it justice? Having supported charity boards for over twelve years, I hope I can persuade you of the many benefits.

Make a difference

There are loads of charities of different sizes that are looking for trustees. Take your time to find one that aligns with your values. Not only will it be more enjoyable but you'll be more likely to get through the selection process as genuine enthusiasm is hard to fake.

Development challenge

You will meet cool people and not cool people and take learning from both. Seeing how others act in the boardroom and working with people who are experts in other areas will expand your own learning. Working in another environment will challenge your thinking and perspective which can grow your own business.

Raise your profile

Being on a board gets your name in front of a whole new audience. You'll likely create and be tagged in various posts on social media and featured in the press. This adds variety to your CV and achievements, making it easier for you to get known amongst your peers and beyond.

While the benefits are clear, there are several responsibilities that must be considered. The time commitment cannot be underestimated. It is not just rocking up for meetings. There will be reading and possibly ongoing projects you might get involved in.

Don't forget the legal responsibility as you will be listed at the Charities Commission. You've also got your rep to protect. Any scandal created by the charity will impact on your reputation. The upside can be benefiting from the association and if the charity you sit on the board of is doing great things, you'll enjoy the benefits of that – including it being super easy to get conversations with people you want to speak to and being invited to fun events.

Currently, I'm Chair at the incredible charity Smart Works Newcastle, where we support unemployed women across the North East with confidence-boosting interview clothing and coaching. Check out the transformational work we do at: newcastle.smartworks.org.uk

**Sophie Milliken MBE, CEO at Moja and Chair at Smart Works Newcastle, www.sophiemilliken.co.uk
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Mind Active charity supporting older people across South East Northumberland with Newcastle Building Society backing

An award-winning South East Northumberland charity which works to enhance the lives of older people across the area has received a four-figure funding boost from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation.

Mind Active seeks to complement and build on activities available within residential homes, and to enable people living in their own homes with debilitating conditions such as dementia to continue as part of the community.

The Bedlington-based organisation, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary, operates across the Castle Morpeth, Wansbeck and Blyth Valley, and delivers a wide variety of events and activities which promote inclusion through mental stimulation.

These range from exercise sessions, fellowship groups, concerts, picnics and school and animal visits through to trips out to local attractions such as Alnwick Garden and Plessey Woods.

Mind Active is now using the £3,000 Newcastle Building Society grant to help meet the growing costs of providing its services in light of the continuing cost of living crisis and to pay for a series of lunch clubs with different kinds of entertainment.

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

Percy Hedley Foundation supported by North East property firms

Barratt Homes has partnered up with Hellens Group by contributing £26,500 toward a £50,000 target for the Percy Hedley Foundation.

The fundraising coincides with the 50th anniversary of Hellens Group and the generous donation from Barratt Homes will help them to exceed their target.

The Percy Hedley Foundation, founded in 1953, is dedicated to improving lives of people with disabilities. The money raised will provide support for over 650 people.

Kate Hellens, Director at Hellens Group said: "We are very grateful to Barratt Homes and their generous donation. We hope that this donation will lead to more opportunities to work with the Foundation in the future."

Carl Sobolewski, MD of Barratt Developments



North East added: "We're really pleased to support the Percy Hedley Foundation, a phenomenal charity and its incredible impact is felt by a lot of people in the North East. We're keen for our donation to be the beginning of an ongoing partnership."

Louise Horsefield, Head of Fundraising and Engagement at the Foundation said: "Thanks to Barratt Homes for this generous donation supporting the amazing anniversary campaign by Hellens Group. It will make a huge difference to the people we support, and we look forward working together in future."

New lease of life for lifeboat building

Local community, charity or educational groups are being invited to make their home in a unique property at South Gare.

The owner of the former lifeboat building at South Gare, PD Ports, is marketing the use of the facility to local community, charity or educational groups who may have a need for premises related to river or marine based activities.

The building, which comprises approximately 2,900 sq.ft, is being made available in the hope of offering support to a local venture.

Michael McConnell, Group Property Director at PD Ports, which owns the building, said: "This is a unique opportunity that could support the growth of a local community initiative whether that be for charitable or educational use, to name but two.

"The onsite welfare facilities include showers, toilets, changing rooms and kitchen, and the building could lend itself to a range of users relating to its prime riverside and coastal location.

"Initial discussions with Redcar and Cleveland Council Planners around this project have been positive, and they have confirmed there is no prescribed typical use of the building, which is accessed via South Gare Road, meaning it could be suitable for a range of projects.

"We recognise the challenges that local community interest groups are facing in the



current economic climate and that's why we wish to consider granting a lease for a use that could really benefit from a new premises."

Councillor Carl Quartermain has backed the call saying: "This is a fantastic opportunity for a local community interest group to bring a new lease of life to the former lifeboat building. The facility is in a perfect location for an initiative with a marine focus given its location at South Gare.

"I have been visiting South Gare for over 30 years now and love the area. I know the former lifeboat building very well and am delighted that PD Ports has offered it out for community interests.

"PD Ports has a fantastic reputation for supporting the local community and this is another example of that. I fully support this opportunity and look forward to seeing the facility put to good use and, as the ward councillor, I will happily offer any help I can."

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Yvonne on the High Level Bridge spanning her work locations of Newcastle and Gateshead (The Bigger Picture)

High level appointment for Tell Us North CIC & its Healthwatch services spanning Gateshead and Newcastle

Tell Us North has appointed a new Chief Executive Officer, Yvonne Probert, to steer the organisation forward as the world welcomes 2023. Bringing a wealth of experience in the voluntary sector, Yvonne is leading the organisation tasked with delivering the Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle services.

As part of an independent network of 152 Healthwatches, the Healthwatch Gateshead and Newcastle Healthwatch teams provide community engagement, research, evaluation and assessment services within the fields of health, wellbeing and social care. They also provide training and skills development for their teams of volunteers and the wider community.

Yvonne has worked with a wide range of communities across the North East in her health and social care career. Having most recently worked with older people as Head of Charity Services for Age UK North Tyneside, Yvonne was able to work closely with NHS services

during the pandemic to help older people make informed choices regarding self-isolation, vaccinations, and social distancing.

Working even more closely with the public is one of Yvonne's first priorities and to get her new team embedded into the heart of the community and to talk to people face-to-face in their own localities on topics that matter to them.

"We've had a lot of staff changes in the last year and after lots of hard work we are now fully staffed. These great appointments will be visible in the community and increase our attendance at venues such as community hubs, shopping centres and libraries. It's really

important that our team engages with as many people as possible, including those from diverse communities. Everyone's voice and opinion is important to us and service providers and commissioners need to hear what is happening with health and social care in Gateshead and Newcastle. By hearing from those who are underserved, we can act as an advocate to ensure services continually improve and health inequalities are addressed," said Yvonne.

Healthwatch Gateshead and Newcastle are looking to research the accessibility of the GP appointment systems and the time it takes to get to see a doctor or other medical practitioner. The accessibility of services to people with autism is a particular concern for Yvonne and her team.

"We get a lot of comments about GP accessibility and we need to use our influence to help make health services as accessible as possible, but we can only do that by capturing the feedback and experiences of the people using these services.

"This is just one of my priorities in my new role as health and social care is a top concern for everyone and I feel very privileged to lead the team into the New Year with a focussed purpose and a willingness to get back into the community to make things better for everyone who uses health and social care services in Gateshead and Newcastle."

healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk



Charity begins at The Bridges

North East good causes and national charities have all benefited this year, thanks to the support given by Sunderland's the Bridges.

Throughout 2022 the shopping centre has not only given organisations the opportunity to raise funds but has also supported a whole host of appeals and fund raising activities. Groups such as Sunderland's Fans Museum, British Legion, Wearside Women in Need, The Children's Foundation, Sunderland Samaritans and the Salvation Army have benefited from kind hearted shoppers, who have donated.

The centre has sponsored both Easter and Christmas toy appeals in conjunction with SUN FM, as well as hosting the Reindeer Dash – which raises money for Red Sky

Foundation and the Foundation of Light – and held its first MacMillan Coffee Morning.

As part of its festive fund raising, The Bridges ran an event with retailers on Christmas Jumper Day, where all money collected went to Save The Children. The Red Sky Foundation has also benefited from a custom built Wishing Well which has been installed at The Bridges, which plays music when a donation is made.

Money raised through the centre's Santa's Grotto has also been used to help local people. "The Bridges is very much a part of the local community so it's important for us to support as many charities and causes as we can," said Karen Eve, Centre Director.

"Even though this year has been particularly challenging for many people, we have been overwhelmed by the generosity and support we've had from both our shoppers and our retailers."

Tyne and Wear charities scoop share of £120,000 festive financial boost

Three charities based in Tyne and Wear recently received a £1,000 Christmas gift thanks to the Benefact Group.

The charities were nominated to win a share of £120,000 by members of the public as part of the Benefact Group's annual 12 days of giving Christmas campaign.

Safe Families for Children, which works with local authorities and churches to support families in their local communities, Friends of Rickleton Primary School, a parent-teacher association, and Springwell Village Community

Venue, which is a local venue run by the community for the community, are the local charities set to benefit from the money following overwhelming public support in the area.

Over 3,300 Tyne and Wear residents nominated a cause close to their hearts, with 2,300 charitable causes in the area receiving votes. The 120 winning charities across the UK were picked at random from those nominated.

Thanking supporters in Tyne and Wear, Mark Hews, Group Chief Executive of Benefact Group, said: "Charitable giving is at the heart



of our business at the Benefact Group. We were delighted to be giving back to deserving charitable causes once more with our annual 12 days of giving Christmas campaign, part of our Movement for Good Awards.

In these challenging times, we know that £1,000 can make a real difference and we're looking forward to seeing how this festive financial boost will change lives for the better."

Lady Elsie unveils memento to a decade of vital cancer support at Newcastle Building Society Headquarters

A lasting memento of the ten-year fundraising partnership between the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation and Newcastle Building Society has been unveiled by one of the charity's founders.

Lady Elsie Robson, who established the Foundation with her late husband in 2008, attended a reception at the Society's headquarters at the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside to dedicate a commemorative bench which now sits inside the building.

The Foundation formed its first and only financial partnership in 2012, with contributions made by the Society surpassing all early projections and now standing at well over £3m.

Lady Elsie was accompanied by two of her and Sir Bobby's three sons, Andrew and Mark, while the reception was also attended by Stuart Miller, Newcastle Building Society's chief customer officer, Dame Jackie Daniel, chief executive at Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, and Jon Goodwin, head of grant programmes at the Newcastle Hospitals Charity, of which the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation is part.



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Promotional merchandise exhibition back to celebrate

The Pro Ad Promotional Merchandise Expo returns bringing back the largest promotional merchandise showcase in the North East!

Relaunching on the back of celebrating 40 years of the business in action, the Pro Ad exhibition on March 15th is set to be a productive and exciting day with 30 stands showcasing 1000+ products. There is also two excellent speakers lined up; Craig Dallison, Chief Growth Officer of Everflow Water and Melissa Chevin, Managing Director of Globefish Consulting Limited and Board member of the British Promotional Merchandise Association (BPMA).

Held at the home of the Falcons, West Stand, Kingston Park Stadium running from 9am to 3pm, visitors attendance is free but should be pre-registered on Eventbrite.

Carlo Nardini, founder of Pro Ad is delighted to see the return of the event, which had to take a break during the pandemic.



He said: "The Promotional Merchandise Expo is a fabulous day for anyone who buys or uses promotional products or corporate clothing. Attendees will discover thousands of products on display, hundreds of new product ideas, & the industry's most prestigious experts showcasing a wide range of sustainable and UK made products. There will also be many surprises which will make this event an entertaining and educational experience helping professionals increase branding impact and customer loyalty. I am very excited to host this day, meeting new and existing customers."

Visitors will receive a goodie-bag that they can fill full of innovative ideas, along with being able to attend and enjoy two fantastic seminars benefitting all marketers.

Loren Nardini, commercial director, said: "We've got our whole team attending, including our corporate clothing and workwear experts sharing our latest range of garments and clothing accessories. They will be showcasing lots of branding techniques to help you explore the different ways of personalising your brand, the best possible way, on your garments."



"Our team will also be on hand to talk about British and sustainable products. As if that isn't enough our speakers will be focusing on 'Brand Activation – it's not always plain sailing' and 'sustainable promotions'. The event is a true landmark for our company as we wrap up our 40th year in business celebrations in style."

Feedback from the previous Pro Ad Promotional Merchandising Expo held pre-pandemic was hugely positive with comments such as: "Attending the Pro-Ad event was very useful, giving me access to a comprehensive display of new, innovative, and quirky promotional items as well as traditional products. I will definitely be attending again." Kelly Bush, SSE.


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The 2022 Lord's Taverners Christmas lunch raised an amazing £67,000

This is a regional Christmas lunch record and a huge thankyou to all supporters. The speakers this year were; John Barnes, Graeme Swann and Phil Vickery along with Pete Graves and Justin Lockwood who were all brilliant!

There was also a moving and emotional Flower of Scotland bagpipe tribute to the great Taverners supporter Doddie Weir.

Thankyou to the event sponsors Wates Group and Lockton Companies.
For information on future events please contact Jamie.graham@turntown.co.uk





International recruitment and talent specialists expands into new Morpeth town centre office



A Morpeth home-grown organisation specialising in talent and recruitment has taken its next big step towards achieving their ambitious plans to double employment numbers within the next three years.

Talentheads has taken a first-floor space within Austin House at Morpeth's Sanderson Arcade. Founder and director, Sam Spoors, has brought her team of nine to the new offices where they will continue their collaborative work with local, national and international clients to ensure they recruit and retain the right teams to grow their business.

Sam commented: "We are not a recruitment firm that focuses on purely filling jobs with CVs we share with as many businesses as possible. What makes us stand out is our collaborative, partnership and long-term approach to acquiring talent which is based on current and future talent pools required by the business we support.

"We work at an internal level with the company from identifying the talent gap, designing the role available to fit the business needs and values, advertising that role, screening applications, interviewing for the position and offering the role to that individual carrying out all necessary reference checks.

"Our approach has always seen great results leading to our organisation becoming part of the company's trusted brand. We are constantly listening to the market to understand how businesses can grow and sourcing the right talent to help them do that."

Talentheads works with a range of businesses varying in size and industry. The team is now looking ahead to expanding its services into development and skills allowing businesses to

access upskilling training sessions.

The firm was started up three years ago from Sam's own home. She needed an office space and moved on to the Morpeth High Street where she had a third floor base at Watson House for just over a year. With over 20 years of experience in the recruitment and HR industry Sam has quickly grown her own pool of talent to support their ever-growing client base.

Sam continued: "People had the chance to stop during the COVID-19 pandemic and are now looking for employment within a company which matches their personal values. In some cases, people have relocated to be closer to family or wish to work flexibly to carry out childcare or support elderly relatives.

"People know their worth and are no longer chasing a salary which is why the foundation work we do with organisations to create their offering to new and existing talent is so important."

**Interested in finding out more?
Contact the Talentheads team at
hello@talentheads.co.uk or call
0191 300 8688.**

Blyth residents get say in North East Active Strategy

A new £500m plan which aims to ensure that over half of all short journeys in the North East will be walked, wheeled or cycled by 2035 is at proposal stage and Blyth Town Council are asking residents to add their suggestions to the proposal.

Active travel means making journeys in physically active ways that burn energy such as cycling, walking and wheeling. The proposal is good news for the environment, public health and the local economy and the active strategy proposal would bring a package of investments to the region's walking, wheeling and cycling network totalling £500m.

Mayor of Blyth Town Council, Councillor Warren Taylor is a keen cyclist himself and regularly uses his bike to cycle from his home to the council offices. Whenever practical, he also walks to meetings and events within the town too. He has also seen the health and economic benefits too.

"Although this is a region wide scheme, I'd urge Byth residents to have their say. Blyth will soon have a new rail network but that connection still needs to be accessible for people living in other parts of the town too. We already have a good cycle network but it can be improved and we need your ideas."

The consultation closes on 5 March 2023 and comments can be made at www.transportnortheast.gov.uk/neactivetravel



Warren Taylor

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L-R: Phoebe Armstrong, Shaun Simmons, Julie Eardley and Fiona Bell

Lifeline given to parents with poorly babies in hospital

The parents of very sick new born babies in the North of England have been offered a lifeline to help them get through difficult times when their children are in hospital.

The operator of the Tyne Tunnels, TT2, has given the charity Tiny Lives Trust a £10,000 donation to pay for the transport of approximately 350 families to and from hospital, to visit their poorly babies, for a whole year.

Tiny Lives Trust's transport scheme enables parents to spend invaluable time with their sick children by removing the financial burden of transport. In July 2022 the charity saw a 100% increase in the need for their vital transport support scheme, compared with July 2021.

The generous donation from TT2 will buy hospital parking permits for parents with a car and pay for public transport travel passes for those that don't, and for those in the greatest hardship, help with fuel costs.

It is estimated that neonatal families in England are forced to lose on average, £405 a week when their baby is in hospital, which includes travel, parking, food and drink, childcare for siblings and loss of earnings. For many families, these unexpected expenses cannot be absorbed and without financial assistance, visiting their baby as much as they want to, would not be possible.

Rachel Hardwick, Funding & Partnerships Officer at Tiny Lives, said: "We cannot thank TT2 enough for its support. Donations like this one help us provide a valuable safety net for parents entering a world completely out of their control by supplying items, funds, staff specialists and support networks to help make their neonatal journeys a little easier."

As the Regional Centre of Excellence, the neonatal unit at the RVI hospital in Newcastle looks after babies from across the North East

and Cumbria. Babies are transferred to the RVI from other hospitals in the Northern Neonatal Network. This means parents could be travelling to the RVI from homes in the borders of Cumbria and Northumberland down to as far south as Northallerton. Many families also have other children at home which increases their need for travel to and from the hospital.

TT2's Customer Operations Manager, Shaun Simmons, said: "Tiny Lives is a charity that is close to employee's hearts. Having a premature or poorly newborn baby can be one of the most difficult and life-changing challenges a family can experience, so when we heard we could play a part in supporting parents in this terrible position, we were delighted to do so."

[TT2.co.uk](https://www.tt2.co.uk)



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Culture Club

In the latest in these popular series of features we talk to...



Nevil Tynemouth

Nevil Tynemouth

Director, New Results

Who is your favourite author and why?

Douglas Adams. His insight to technology is brilliant. How many of us are carrying around our own version of a "Hitchhikers Guide" in our pockets. In terms of writing his famous quote on deadlines "I love deadlines, especially the whooshing noise they make as they fly past". This says nothing at all about the last minute nature of this month's copy!

What would be your three Desert Island Discs?

Marc Cohn - "Walking in Memphis". Dire Straits - "Romeo and Juliet". Del Amitri - "Driving with the brakes on".

Who is your favourite film star and why?

Tom Hanks - *Big* was such a brilliant film in my teens. Every Tom Hanks film I watch makes me feel slightly better, sat here I can't think of

another actor with such a wide range of films, and I can't think of a Tom Hanks film I didn't like.

What are your top three films?

Shawshank Redemption. *Highlander*. *Ferris Bueller's Day off*. Not a Tom Hanks film in sight!

Which poem left a lasting impression on you?

"If" by Rudyard Kipling. My Dad was an English teacher and I remember going into his office and seeing this hanging on his wall and reading and rereading it as a small child. Many of the words of that poem come back to me regularly and I love some of the lines.

What box sets have you enjoyed?

I am not a big watcher of TV, but I have realised I loved a lot of first series of box sets, so any first series of *24*, *Walking Dead*, *Game of Thrones*, *Sex education*, *Derry Girls*.

Who is your favourite artist or performer?

Marc Cohn, I am seeing him in London soon (at a three times rearranged gig). I love his soulful storytelling in his songs and his voice is one of best sounds I can hear. There are only two songs that can bring a tear to my eye, and one of them is a Marc Cohn song.

What is your favourite venue?

Sunderland Empire - I recently got to see a little bit behind the scenes when running a workshop there. The history and the grandeur of the building and stage is breathtaking.

Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?

The voice! I have been learning to sing myself, so I love a range of voices from Emile Sade to Meatloaf and from Marc Cohn to Kate Nash and Prince. I love artists who have a power and depth to their voice, one that can make songs come to life.

From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

Steven Fry, Prince, Tom Hanks, Victoria Wood, Dawn French, Salvador Dali and Freddie Mercury. I think that might spark off some interesting conversations!

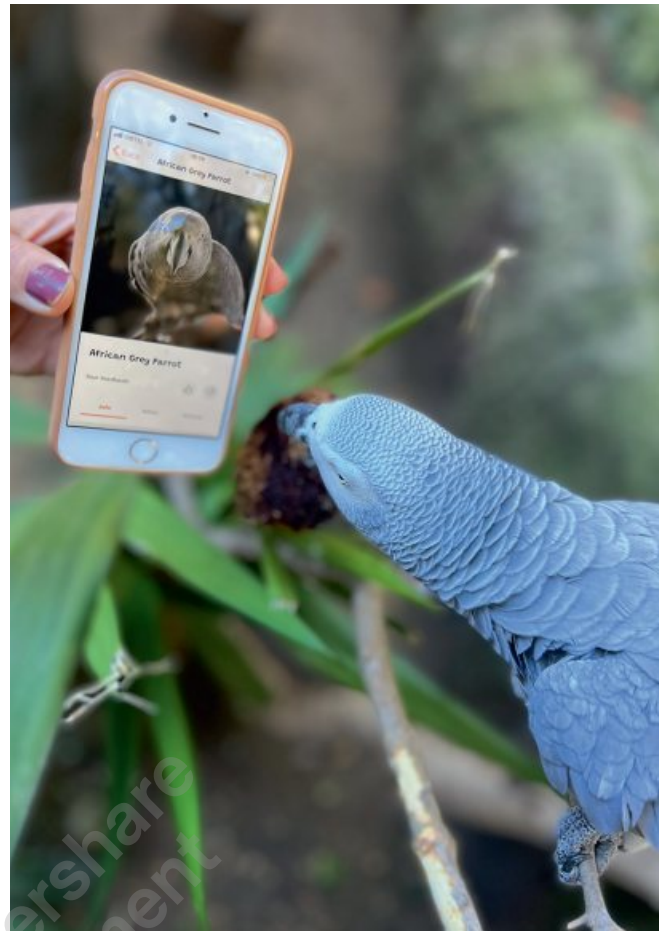
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Gibraltar zoo goes wild for North East tech firm n-gage.io

Alameda Wildlife Park, one of the smallest zoos in the world – based in Gibraltar – has partnered with North East company, n-gage.io, to embark on a digital transformation journey to use technology to modernize and engage better with visitors.

Jessica Leaper, manager at the Alameda Wildlife Conservation Park (AWCP), Gibraltar, is on a mission to spread the word on what this unique park does, and what needs to be done to keep it fulfilling its mandate, while also providing hours of enjoyment for visitors of all ages from around the world.

The AWCP, which began in the 1990s, is a small wildlife conservation park and home to a variety of exotic animals, confiscated or unwanted pets and endangered species. It started on a one-acre disused golf course within the greater Gibraltar Botanic Gardens. This was in response to the exotic animals found on container ships passing through the straits that had been confiscated by Gibraltar customs.

To support the park's many initiatives and objectives such as education on endangered species, they recently partnered with n-gage.io, a company based in County Durham, to develop an innovative audience engagement platform that comes complete with an interactive visitor experience app. Led by entrepreneur Bryan Hoare and incubated by GCV Labs, part of Growth Capital Ventures – n-gage.io aims to

transform audience experiences through a highly customisable, data insight driven SaaS platform with an integrated mobile-web application.

Jessica believes the n-gage.io platform will help the park grow much needed awareness as well as increase visits, donations, and other support for this worthwhile venture.

"We are a small park with a big message. A small space, but big ideas and small actions spark bigger results," she explains of the park's philosophy and remit to educate and conserve."

She added: "I'm quite into using technology to make our work more efficient as we are a small team. None of the apps I had looked at over the years did what I wanted them to do," explained Jessica. But, after meeting Maxine Bradley, the founder of Northumberland Zoo at the BIAZA conference last year, she was encouraged to try the n-gage.io platform which Maxine had deployed. "I was blown away by n-gage's offering – it was exactly what I was after," enthused Jessica.

"What stood out most was the app's ability to do all the things we really struggle to find the time to perform but that are essential for the everyday

operations and sustainability of the park. Things like management of memberships and all the background stuff – in other words the admin. It's easy to find the personnel who want to be with the animals but not the paperwork, so we had to find a way to make that simpler as well as attractive."

For Jessica, one of the quickest benefits she will reap from implementing the n-gage platform is the ability to follow up on the park's members and to track whether they are in date or need sending a reminder. This went live on Halloween last year, after only 4-weeks of development and integration, which in terms of app delivers is extremely fast.

Jessica said: "Now that we have implemented the app, we are going to be looking to build on our school and education offerings and campaigns. We will also see how our corporate supporters can play a more meaningful role in what we do and where they can benefit too.

"Our conservation message is paramount to us, and I believe that through this app we will be able to convey this information as well as reach more influencers who can help change the way people see things."

Bryan Hoare, CEO of n-gage.io, said: "Perhaps one of the more unexpected benefits of the app, is that being digital and the perfect platform for digital content creators and marketers, Jess is now able to attract younger digital-savvy people into the park to help. It's an ideal place for young volunteers to at once, develop skills and become more aware of the physical world around them – a bonus for Jess, her team, and the animals they are helping to conserve."

More information: www.n-gage.io

Rising Star

Sarah James

Health and safety consultant at
Carney Consultancy

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I wanted to join the police. I thought this would be really exciting. I also wanted to give back, help people and get a sense of achievement from it. I joined the police as a special but decided it wasn't for me. I then worked in retail and had the opportunity to do health and safety, this was the stepping stone to where I am today. I joined the team at Carney Consultancy nearly four years ago. Prior to this I was in a junior construction design and management (CDM) role.

Tell us about your current role.

In my current role as a health and safety consultant, my job is very varied from running health and safety training courses, conducting accident investigations, risk assessment method statements through to site inspections.

I am also a mentor to two of my colleagues, trainee health and safety advisor, Gary Tonks and health and safety advisor, Jamie Clark. I helped to train them in their roles and I also mentor a student, from Middlesbrough College, who comes onto site one day a week with me to gain real life work experience.

Why do you like working at Carney Consultancy?

I enjoy it because it is a supportive team and the role varies a lot. I can be out on site, in the office or teaching training courses, in areas such as manual handling, health and safety awareness or face fit testing.

How has your career developed working at the company?

Massively. I started as a trainee and have progressed through to a consultant. During my time at Carney Consultancy, I have completed a NEBOSH Construction certificate and NEBOSH Diploma.

I am also a member of the regional branch of the National Association of Women in Construction



Sarah James

(NAWIC) and I am currently undertaking a level 2 team leading course via Learning Curve. All of which is down to the personal progression routes that the company offers

What are you currently working on?

A number of commercial projects which involves liaising with various site managers and project managers as well as with organisations who are looking to become ISO accredited. This involves me working with the organisations during the year then with the auditors to undertake the external audits.

I am also really enjoying working as part of wider company strategy to support the Newcastle Dog & Cat Shelter. We support many initiatives across the region and I am pleased to assist the shelter with its health and safety procedures.

Tell us about your team?

The good thing about our team is that we all have different backgrounds, some progressed

their careers in the trades, others from university and from within commercial settings and we are also building our own pipeline of new talent, via our apprentices.

This means we all have someone within the business we can turn to for advice or guidance within a specific area.

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

Always take the opportunity to learn something new and to develop new skills.

How do you like to unwind outside of work?

By spending time with my friends and family and my dog, Ollie! He often enjoys coming into the office at Carney Consultancy and is a firm favourite with the team.

www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk



Podcast trend hits HR world

We all know communication is key and there are now a host of channels to target and engage new and existing businesses. One popular trend that has been hitting the airwaves is the increase in podcasts and in particular those with a professional industry focus.

Sunderland based Oculus HR has fully embraced this trend with the launch of their own podcast – Real World HR last year. With episode 5 in full swing the team are on a mission to support businesses to support their people, with Founder and Managing Director Louise Kennedy hosting the series.

The all-new Real World HR podcast shares real life stories behind the HR processes, to put the human back into HR. The good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between.

Louise Kennedy, Founder and Managing Director, Oculus HR said: "Through the series we go beyond the HR handbook, and we share

the processes and procedures which can help form solutions to common HR challenges that businesses face. HR really does have the power to change people's lives, and that'll become clear throughout the series."

A host of guests hit the panel including Sharon MacArthur, menopause educator aka Miss Menopause. Sharon brings her larger-than-life energy to the podcast, as she discusses breaking the taboo around the menopause in the workplace, and why the menopause should be managed, not endured. Delving into issues around how scary the symptoms of the menopause can be and whether we need menopause policies in the workplace.

Next up John Devitt, CEO at Recovery 4 Life hits the studio, and this episode is packed with impactful advice around mental health and wellbeing. John talks openly and with compassion about the topics of substance misuse in a workplace context and mental health. He also looks at the two sides of breaking stigma – understanding and acceptance and supporting people at work and back into work whose mental health has deteriorated.

With the recruitment market ever-changing and all the advancements that follow, award-winning entrepreneur and talent acquisition expert, Sam Spoons and owner behind Talenthreads is next to call into the studio. With the focus on strategic talent acquisition, this episode is packed with advice for businesses to implement so they can recruit and retain the best people.

Episode five focusses on company culture and Alice Rowen Hall hits the studio to chat about the excellent company culture they are creating at Rowen Homes. A place where employees are valued, where collaboration and creativity are key, and where opportunities to develop are abundant.

In this episode, listeners will get an insight into Alice's business journey - lessons learnt from scaling then exiting her first multimillion pound business, Pink Boutique, and how she's organically growing the Rowen Homes culture.

Louise added: "It is absolutely key to leverage your platforms as a business to facilitate further growth and expansion and it is no different in the HR industry. The podcasts have been a great way for us to engage with existing and new clients through our varied guests and topics from mental health, company culture to the menopause. We've received great feedback to the podcasts, and it has been a great way for us to stand out in the marketplace."

All episodes are available on Apple, Spotify and Amazon – get downloading!

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



Putting the HUMAN back into HR

Born from seeing the need for improved mental health and wellbeing support in the workplace pre-pandemic, Key Wellbeing is now entering its third year of business and is on a mission to help more organisations across the North East to create significant, positive changes where employees feel seen, heard and supported.

Co-founders, Marie Ranson and Melissa Armstrong launched Key Wellbeing with wide-eyed excitement back in February 2020 with a simple plan to support the local Teesside region with the health and wellbeing of their employees.

With over 18 years of wellbeing experience between them in personal development training and several holistic therapies, as well as first-hand experience of workplace burnout and juggling busy lifestyles, the diligent duo set off on their earnest mission to initially deliver on-site training, lunch and learn sessions, in-house yoga, healthy living workshops and more.

Encouragingly, in just a few short weeks after launch, the business had interest from large sporting retailers, banks and local industry, until Coronavirus struck and the UK went into lockdown.

With a determination to make sure all employees, regardless of their gender, age or job role felt supported through these unprecedented times, the SME pivoted plans and instead, created a library of free, online wellbeing resources with expert trainers, therapists, and lifestyle coaches.

Encouraged by user data and the demand for such resources, led to reimagining their entire business model and adopting a complete digital approach, with the creation of an online platform that covers the full spectrum of employee wellbeing support; The Key Wellbeing Hub.

The Hub is now home to 1000+ hours of on-demand, easily accessible content including



L-R: Hannah Draboczy, Marketing Lead, Melissa Armstrong, Co-Founder & Creative Director and Marie Ranson, Co-Founder & Commercial Director

accredited e-learning courses, fitness classes, guided meditations, lifestyle savings, industry expert interviews, quick link helplines and more.

Fast-forward to 2023, and Key Wellbeing is a multi-award winning business with a talented team of four and an all-encompassing support offering under its belt.

Co-founder and Commercial Director, Marie Ranson, said: "We're rolling with an ever-changing world.

Pre-pandemic, wellbeing was thought of as a 'fluffy, nice to have'. It was only when Covid hit and the rapid shift to remote working blurred work-life lines that employers really started to acknowledge the impact that poor mental health can have on their people and their bottom line, meaning they had to step up their support.

Nowadays, employees know what they want and deserve when it comes to wellbeing support in the workplace and are actively seeking organisations that evidently put their people first.

They're overwhelmed, stressed and burning out, perhaps now more than ever before, with stats showing that over half of ALL working days lost in 2021/22 were due to work-related ill health. And given the current cost-of-living crisis, inflation, rising energy prices etc. we can hardly be surprised that people are feeling this way.

Employee wellbeing needs have and will continue to change, and we get that it can feel like an absolute minefield and at times, impossible to keep up for busy HR leaders and people managers

that already wear so many hats."

With that in mind, Key Wellbeing is determined to make it easier for every organisation to get wellbeing right, starting with a Company Culture Health Check.

Co-founder and Creative Director, Melissa Armstrong said: "It's time for organisations to switch up their wellbeing game and find solutions that last. To do that, we reckon changes need to be made at a grassroots level.

That means putting the HUMAN back into HR, making the workplace a safe, non-judgemental space where employees dare to open up and be themselves.

And making sure people managers and leaders are equipped with the soft skills and knowledge needed to support staff properly is crucial.

It's about recognising that wellbeing is so much more than just our mental or physical health and making sure the full spectrum is covered!"

Key Wellbeing can help organisations with the full shebang, including tailored culture consultancy support, accredited training courses, bespoke wellbeing strategy development and engaging wellbeing initiatives that break the typical 'workplace wellbeing' mould focussing on FUN, CONNECTION and finding genuine HAPPINESS at work.

To find out more, visit:
www.keywellbeing.co.uk



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The hottest of potatoes?

The crisis in the NHS held against the background of wider union unrest, Dr David Cliff explores some of the challenges ahead for this most valuable institution.

When the NHS was conceived of in 1948, its resources were adequate for purpose. Indeed for the first couple of years of its inception it was underspent and under capacity. The British public, not used to healthcare free at point of access, made relatively few demands and had relatively few expectations. Patients were somewhat overawed with the sheer novelty of being able to easily and affordably access healthcare, normally something that hitherto was only achieved for ordinary working people by charities or extraordinary self-sacrifice by families.

It's a world of difference, when the service that is so popular, has gone beyond basic physical healthcare needs into the far more sophisticated offering that expands mental health services into notions of well-being, offers surgical and biomedical techniques that work with advanced robotics through to gene restructuring and more. It addresses matters that are not just about physical survival but about quality of life, including matters such as fertility, gender identity, advanced prosthetics, the list goes on. Indeed, the success of the model has created what might be described as a 'supply induced demand' phenomena where the more that is on offer, the more it creates its own demand.

Add to this, the fact that these interventions improve and extend life so that people live far longer resulting in concomitantly increased demand for health services as they age. The social and emotional contract between the public and the health service is now generations deep with high expectations and with correspondingly high emotional and taxation support.

So why with this level of consensus are people dying waiting hours for ambulances, spending days sometimes in corridors, whilst approximately 15% of the hospital population sufficiently healthy to be discharged cannot be so because of systemic failures elsewhere.

Many would have us believe it's a result of the Covid pandemic, a phenomenon upon which much systemic failure within government has been attributed. Then there is the increased transmissibility of influenza following lockdown restraints and other winter pressures. Ministers refer to these factors' ad nauseam, and, in the context of health, there have been so many ministers! Few, if any, will 'fess up' to the pattern of underinvestment, tokenism, drip feeding and ideological wars that occur at the heart of government over the NHS.

The fact is that not uniquely across Europe, Covid acted simply as a stress test of the system that has become unfit for purpose without the cracks being too obvious to the public. The health service, always a political hot potato has been subject to a form of political palliative care for so many years. It has been subjected to almost annual restructures, with liberal amounts of tension between public and private delivery ideologies, and now screams for radical reform. The most radical of which, is resolving the social care divide that continues to be kicked down the road by a government who pledged to put the situation right. As a young social worker, I saw the tensions in this divide forty years ago. We knew even then about the changing demographics of an ageing population.

The politics of an electoral system that is first past the post and for only five years at a time, results in a short termism in an approach to an institution as large as the NHS, which of itself is transgenerational in nature. A service of this scale requires far more longitudinal planning and cannot remain a political 'football' between polarities of left and right, public and private debates that feature amongst our contemporary political elites.

I remember working in the health service and noticed it was often doctors and nurses that filled the void between management thinking, political imperatives and resource priorities when it came to serving the public. No matter what was happening in boardrooms, somehow the vocational direction of our healers was enough to fill the interstices between policy and delivery. But treat your staff like heroes when you need them and then villains during times of recession and those vocational identities will erode. Passion for the job will diminish, burnout will ensue and most of all for the passionate, the unending drudgery of more for less as the avoidable death toll mounts whilst the government constantly talks about more money being invested against the daily grind of being called on to do more with less, day after day. They watch their entrepreneurial colleagues making much more through agency working. Small wonder so many of our vocational healers no longer wish to heal, some of them find better staff engagement, better support and better conditions working in Aldi!

When the clearly privileged in government won't transparently admit to whether they are NHS users themselves or not, this is truly an indicator of people in power having lost touch with the lived experience of ordinary people. People often follow leaders that are substandard, a point well elucidated by Etienne de la Boétie as early as the 1520's. People will tolerate much, placing trust in those who purport to lead, even where there are ideological differences evident. But the consistent and systemic failure of leaders in an arena where life or death may be involved, as in the case of healthcare, can easily be a game changer.

Radical healthcare reforms have always been more just 'sameness with difference' as a little extra jam was spread ever more thinly across burgeoning need. The public very clearly will prioritise greater healthcare spending if effective. Other public services would also function better, for example, the police would no longer have around 40% of police cells occupied with people who require psychiatric care and could begin to attend to matters more criminometrically aligned to their core function.

Real reform will be expensive for us all. A bit like paying the nurses will be necessarily expensive but by default we pay agency workers far more pro rata and asset strip the workforces of other nations to boot. But if we want the service fit for the future, reform we must, so let's pay for the right thing whilst doing it!

gedanken.co.uk



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*... So why with this
level of consensus
are people dying
waiting hours for
ambulances...*



New Year, New Mayor

The long awaited North East devolution deal has finally been announced. After months of negotiation, on 28 December 2022, Michael Gove, the Levelling Up Secretary, outlined plans for a £1.4bn deal which will bring the region's seven local authorities together with an elected mayor. The plans still need to be ratified by the local authorities, but if approved, a new Mayor will be elected next year.

What it means for the North East, is that decisions that will have a significant impact on the region's two million residents will be taken a lot closer to home, with more direct accountability, a more strategic vision for the future, and with local people having a greater say in how things are run.

At NE1, we were among the first to celebrate the news and to offer our support. We recognise that the proposed deal is great news for Newcastle and for the whole of the North East. Having guaranteed budgets in the local coffers, a directly elected Mayor providing vision and leadership, and accountability to the electorate, signals a brave new world for the whole area.

What is also clear is that we stand to benefit not just from the headline figure of £48 million a year, but from other funding and investment that devolution will bring, unlocking further financial opportunities from central Government. It will also allow the North East to behave in a more strategic way, planning long-term projects, and tackling issues that can benefit the whole region.

Taking control of the £48 million per year investment fund, will also give the devolved Mayor the chance to invest in the North East, drive growth and push forward a long-term vision. For too long our economic growth has been stymied by short term-ism, with annual budget reviews impeding the ability of local authorities to plan for the longer term.

With the prospect of increased funding and more say in our own future, Newcastle and the wider region is in a fantastic position to capitalise on this opportunity. In all my 14 years at NE1, I have never known a time when there has been such a high level of public and private sector investment in the city and across the region. It is truly unprecedented. I'm confident that the combined authority will super-charge further investment and growth which will, in turn, result in significant additional private sector investment and jobs.

Newcastle's skyline is living proof of the investment and transformation that is already happening. New buildings are going up at a rate of knots in the Helix, and on Pilgrim Street. The first occupants are scheduled to move into Bank House at the south end of Pilgrim Street in April, demonstrating that change is happening, and at pace.

We have a winning proposition as a city and as a region, a hugely compelling offer that continues to attract businesses to relocate here, HMRC and Home Group being prime examples. Both have chosen Newcastle city centre for their headquarters, a sign that we are successfully creating the right environment to attract and retain talent in the city and the region.

Devolution provides the opportunity to accelerate this transformation. It will also help focus on skills and employability, two recurrent issues for business. The combined authority will be given new powers to shape local skills provision to ensure that it meets the needs of the local economy.

At the heart of the challenge is how to inspire young people into jobs, training and education to fulfil the wealth of career opportunities available locally. Tragically, too many of our young people don't feel that the region can provide the career opportunities they are looking for. We need to demonstrate that this is not the case, by engaging with young people earlier in their educational journey and opening their eyes to the wealth of career opportunities on offer in the region.

Our schools do a fantastic job highlighting further education opportunities but we need to be far better at showing alternative routes into employment and training. Many city employers in legal, accounting, architectural and financial sectors offer apprenticeship routes, which provide opportunities for young people to earn while they learn. Our NE1 CAN programme works to bridge the gap between young people and employers, and raise aspirations in young people, making them aware of the many different careers and career paths, but their work is a drop in the ocean. Devolution and the ability to set the skills agenda, coupled with closer links and integration with education, provides the perfect opportunity to tackle the issue regionwide.

Another major issue on the devolution agenda is transport with new powers given to the devolved authority to improve local transport provision and integration. A fantastic example of this are the plans for the re-opening of the Leamside Line railway line. If realised, this could generate an additional £90m per annum boost to the local economy.

Devolution will also provide new powers and funding to increase housing opportunities, with an additional £17.4m allocated to support building new homes on brownfield land. As a former industrialised city and region, brownfield land is something we have in abundance.

The deal has yet to be ratified by the seven local authorities but already people recognise the enormous benefits devolution could deliver. Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, the new combined authority will not be the panacea for all the region's woes overnight. Rather, it provides the best possible opportunity for the region to come together, act collectively and strategically, to address many longstanding issues that Westminster has so far failed to resolve. The opportunity is clear, so too must be our resolve to grasp it, and make it work.

www.newcastlene1ltd.com

A man with short brown hair, smiling, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a white shirt, and a yellow and blue striped tie. He is standing against a light grey background.

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*... change is
happening, and
at pace...*



Shaping up your workforce

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

All businesses need a strategy. A goal to work towards, and a plan of how you will get there and what resources you will need to deliver that plan effectively.

Your employees are your most important resource, so having a strong supporting workforce plan can make or break your business goals. A workforce strategy and plan will identify and address any changes which need to be made to your current workforce so that you can deliver your short, medium and long-term business plans. It will also highlight any current problems or challenges which need to be addressed. It should answer: Do you have the right staff, in the right place at the right time to deliver your business goals?

What do we mean by the “right” staff? Firstly, look at your current employees. You need to determine if they have the right skills set and the right attitude to deliver your future business goals, and also determine whether you have the right capacity.

Skills Gaps

If you identify that there is a skills gap, you can put in place a training plan accordingly or look to recruit candidates with the right skills set. Attitude and behaviour are equally, if not more important. I wrote a recent article on the importance of trust when managing performance. You can have a high performing employee who always excels when it comes to sales targets, but you struggle to trust them and they have a disruptive effect at work. The best way I find to change behaviours to the desired ones is to implement a robust performance management framework, which links your corporate values with key desired behaviours, for example, customer service excellence, taking responsibility or excellent team working. You should use this for appraisals, tackling poor performance and for career progression.



Heidi Turner

Recruitment and Retention Issues

If you are carrying a number of vacancies and you are struggling to recruit, join the club! This is a huge issue for most employers right now. There are ways in which you can improve though, but first you need to identify where the problem lies. Are you offering a competitive benefits package? You can identify this by undertaking exit interviews to see if former employees are leaving for better paid jobs or better benefits elsewhere and by doing a salary benchmarking exercise to determine what other employers are offering for similar roles. You may simply need to communicate better in job adverts what a great employer you are and why the role is such an exciting opportunity. Rewording the job advert can work wonders.

Identifying New or Changing Roles

Many employers make the mistake of recruiting a direct replacement without taking the opportunity to review whether the newly vacant role is what is needed now, and into the future. All jobs should be underpinned by a job profile, incorporating a description of key duties and responsibilities, a person specification and key behaviours. A resignation gives you a prime opportunity to discuss with the impending leaver what the role entails. It will also provide you with the opportunity to redesign the role completely to fit the future challenges ahead.

Fit for the Future

Analysing employee demographics is a must

when it comes to workforce planning. If you have an aging workforce with little “new blood”, you may have a problem when employees with key skills leave or retire. By identifying employees who you would struggle to replace internally or externally will help you with your succession planning. Once more, by utilising an effective performance management framework, you will be able to more easily identify those employees who are ready to progress with a bit more training and support.

Leadership Development

Having an effective, engaged and productive employee relies upon having strong leadership and supportive management. Many businesses will find that employees have been promoted into management positions because of their technical expertise and not their leadership capabilities. If this is the case, the first step to implementing an effective workforce plan will be to ensure that managers are upskilled in people management skills and coached to become effective leaders, capable of supporting and mentoring their teams in their own development and providing them support to thrive.

If you would like to discuss any of the themes in this article with Heidi and how you can develop and implement a workforce strategy, you can get in touch with heidi@cheviothr.co.uk

Breathing life and regeneration into disused buildings



Following the success of several recent residential and commercial conversions in the Seaham and Sunderland area, the team behind Clearwater Developments, Ranj Gill and Gursh Kahlon are delighted to be working on Lighthouse View at Spectrum Business Park in Seaham.

The venue has been vacant for over 20 years and was in need significant investment to transform, modernise and regenerate this sea-view building, bringing it fully into use, which is where Clearwater step in! Clearwater Developments are in the process of fully refurbishing and converting the building into a mixed-use venue, offering leisure and office space under one roof.

The conversion of this building will create hundreds of job opportunities, bringing considerable further economic benefits and investment to the area.

Spectrum Business Park is home to occupiers including DWP, Northumbrian Water, Durham County Council, Trillium and Great Annual Savings, generating good footfall from the office sector. Durham County Council have approved plans for a new community scheme known as Seaham Garden Village, which will see an additional 1500 new homes being built adjacent to the Business Park.

The Lighthouse View building totals over 40,000 square feet and is presently laid out as four separate floor plates of 10,000 square feet, accessed from a central entrance atrium.

Ranj Gill said: "We are pleased to announce that Fit24 have signed up to lease the entire ground floor (over 22,000 square feet), bringing a much-needed, high quality gym and leisure facility to the building and plans to open in March 2023 to Spectrum Business Park and the surrounding area.

For Gym memberships, please contact Fit 24 www.fit24.co.uk

For office enquiries - Contact Clearwater Developments by emailing info@clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk



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Following the letting to Fit24, we have availability for office suites on the first floor ranging in size from 753 – 10,437 square feet suitable for small, medium, and larger sized organisations at very competitive rates.

Highly Competitive corporate gym membership packages will also be available to building occupiers by Fit24 offering businesses and their employees an excellent work/life balance with ample car parking facilities for the entire site.

**For further information please contact
Clearwater Developments -**

**www.clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk
or simply email
info@clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk**



The benefits of partnering with a trusted recruitment specialist

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, discusses the advantages of working with a trusted recruitment partner in 2023.

As the new year unfolds with economic uncertainty, the job market finds itself on unfamiliar ground. Typically, a fiscal slowdown like this would suggest that the number of people looking for a new role will soon diminish, alongside job vacancies.

Currently, while there is a significant rise in people feeling anxious about moving to a new job, the pressure businesses are under to deliver means we are continuing to see high levels of hiring demand and an even more pronounced emphasis on the quality of recruitment.

“Demand for staff continued to increase across the North of England at rates which exceeded those seen in the rest of England ...Job openings rose at their fastest rates for three months, with temp billings rising for the first time in three months in December. We also saw increases in starting salaries across the North.”

Neil Carberry, Chief Executive, REC.

With such a complex and challenging labour market, where the best candidates hold all the power, the competition for talent will only become fiercer.

This is why, if you believe that people are your greatest asset, there are many benefits to be found from working closely with a trusted recruitment partner:

1. Identify hard-to-find talent

Not only can recruitment specialists help you to find and attract the right candidates for your business, our deep understanding



Bryony Gibson

of the recruitment process and connections throughout the wider industry mean that we can often source (and approach) people who are right for a role but otherwise could not be found.

2. Provide market insight & analysis

At a time when recruitment is more competitive than ever, recruitment consultants offer invaluable insight into the current market, trends and best practices. Not only will this help you to hire, but it will also improve your ability to retain valuable employees by benchmarking salaries and benefits and understanding what could drive them to search for a new challenge.

3. Save time and money

If recruitment isn't your number one priority, it can become slow, difficult and, often, expensive. Managers can waste a lot of time sifting through unsuitable CVs or interviewing inappropriate candidates. A professional recruiter is trained to quickly assess candidates. We know what to look for, and what questions to ask, and can identify early warning signs. We also do the heavy lifting in terms of your time, arranging interviews quickly and efficiently, following up to collate candidate feedback, and helping you to negotiate salaries, all for your convenience.

4. Improve your “employer’s brand”

Few businesses invest the time and money it takes to develop a positive employer brand. By

finding a trusted recruitment partner, you are empowering them to act as your ambassador, offering potential candidates an insight into what it's like to work at your firm. Benefiting from the strength of the recruiter's relationships, a partner should not only be able to address any arising concerns on your behalf, but they will also represent you as an employer of choice and strengthen your appeal.

5. Help you at every stage of the process

There is nothing worse than making a bad impression on a brilliant candidate. Working with a recruitment specialist gives you peace of mind. From preparing the job specification to advertising the role, searching for candidates, screening applicants, conducting first interviews, shortlisting CVs, arranging interviews, delivering feedback, managing negotiations, supporting candidates through their resignation and counter offers, and throughout the onboarding process. A trusted partner will help you at every stage.

In 2023, posting an advert on LinkedIn or an online job board and hoping for the best is not going to cut it. While working closely with a trusted recruitment partner will help you to streamline your processes and find the right people efficiently, it is about so much more than that. You need to find someone who knows your market and can become a trusted advisor for all of your recruitment needs.

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



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You don't become one of the Top 10 best UK accountancy firms to work for without looking after your staff and that is exactly what this firm do extremely well. They are proud of their values, putting people, welfare and relationships first. With a passion to help their clients this opportunity offers a great career move for those who work hard, but also enjoy their time outside of work.

Studying towards your ACCA/ACA exams or newly qualified you will work with a varied portfolio of corporate and not for profit clients, planning, assessing and carrying out audits both on site and remotely. Opportunities to lead more juniors, feedback to clients and develop relationships, all add to your job satisfaction.

Enjoying a 35 hour week with flexible working, a suite of benefits tailored to your needs and a dedicated Managers Skills Programme this is far from the traditional accountancy firm. Having adapted to the changing environment post pandemic this firm offers something quite unique and fun. Full & part-time hours considered. **Quote Ref: 2116**

PERSONAL TAX SENIOR

Northumberland, £25-30,000pa plus benefits. Hybrid working

A tax specialist firm who provide both compliance and tax planning services to HNWI's, Directors, trusts and estates are enjoying tremendous growth on their reputation and service. With in excess of 50 years tax planning experience between the specialists you are in good hands as you navigate through your tax career.

Applicants will bring a minimum of 2-3 years personal tax compliance experience, ideally working towards ATT exams. You must have strong communication skills, confident to speak with clients and HMRC. Your presentation skills are important, we are looking for articulate professionals who can produce reports and write e-mails to clients.

You will be responsible for a portfolio of clients for whom you will develop a working relationship with, gathering the necessary information in order to produce their tax return ready for Manager review. With an experienced team around you and some really interesting clients you will learn lots.

A role for those passionate about a career in tax that will provide full ATT/CTA support and plenty of opportunities to be involved with more complex returns and advisory. **Quote Ref: 2109**

FINANCE MANAGER

Sunderland Upto £35,000pa, plus benefits

A high-end Independent UK retail business embarking upon their next stage of growth require a Finance Manager in a standalone role, yet very much part of a collaborative wider team to assist this fast-paced business.

Responsible for the financial and management accounting this will involve invoicing, reconciling, payments, VAT returns, stock, payroll, financial planning, forecasting and cost analysis.

Applicants will be qualified by experience/AAT qualified and hold a minimum of 5 years relevant experience from industry or practice. Demonstrating a genuine interest and enjoyment in managing all aspects of finance you will hold strong communication skills to work well with all departments as you provide key financial information to the business owners.

Well suited to those who enjoy autonomy and an entrepreneurial environment, the vacancy is full-time, office based, with flexible start and finish times. **Quote Ref: 2114**

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

www.bryonygibson.com



2022 Sets the standard for successful ISO consultancy

As Sunderland based ISO consultancy, Compliant, experienced their busiest year on record in 2022, they're hoping for more of the same in 2023.

The company, which was established by director Mark Henderson in 2017, supports businesses looking to gain ISO certifications alongside popular industry accreditations such as Achilles, Safecontractor and the National Highways Sector Scheme.

Following a brand refresh, investment in marketing, sales and advertising which included several additional features on their website, they experienced a 153% increase in turnover in 2022.

The world of ISO certifications can certainly seem like a minefield of resources, cost and time for many small to medium businesses. In recent years, many public sector organisations, Government bodies and Tier 1 suppliers now state an ISO certification as a standard requirement within their contracts which means that without the certification, businesses can be losing out on growth opportunities and large contract wins.

By working alongside Compliant, businesses from across the UK have benefited from their expert knowledge and guidance. The company themselves are UKAS accredited to the five main ISO standards along with their director Mark Henderson, who is a BSI trained lead auditor in the same standards so they certainly 'walk the walk' as well as 'talk the talk' when it comes to providing first-class support.

In 2022, Compliant helped 79 of their clients gain a total of 120 ISO standards including quality management, information security, environmental and occupational health & safety. Their simple and convenient business model includes offering interest free monthly payment plans, low-cost implementation fees and expert advice from their team of specialists, areas which have certainly seen the company gain many new clients in recent months.

Director, Mark Henderson, who graduated last year with a degree in Professional Practice Management & became a Chartered Manager with the CMI, commented on the business's successful year, explaining, 'I am so proud of what we have achieved over the last 18 months, the business has grown due to the hard work, diligence and professionalism of all the team.'

As companies started to return to 'normal' following the Covid pandemic, we saw that many would be looking to invest in their business, keep ahead of their competitors and look to tender for many upcoming government and public sector opportunities. With that in mind, we decided to invest heavily in our processes, marketing and sales in 2022 and I'm delighted to say that our decisive actions, strategy and decisions have been rewarded.

The problem that many small to medium sized businesses face is that they simply don't have the in-house resources or skills to manage an ISO project and can find the process extremely daunting, which is where we have been able to assist.

It has been a delight to work with such a variety of businesses across many industries including IT, telecoms, engineering, entertainment and recruitment over the last year, we have witnessed our clients win major contracts and experience phenomenal growth following their ISO certifications which is a real source of accomplishment and pride for us.

As a business, we love to support the northeast economy and are proud members of the North East England Chamber of Commerce, NEPIC and the North East Automotive Alliance, we can often be seen at their events and have been delighted to exhibit at various expos and conferences throughout 2022, something which we hope to build on this year.

We're certainly not looking to rest on our laurels however, we're planning another strong year and are looking to maintain our great working relationships with our current clients alongside bringing on board new business.

As we look to expand on our current range of services, we have recently employed the services of another qualified ISO consultant who will be working with our clients throughout the UK on the PAS 2030 Installer Scheme, a scheme that supports those installing energy efficiency measures.

We're looking forward to further growth in 2023 and helping more businesses achieve their ISO ambitions and growth objectives.'

To find out more about Compliant's services, contact the team at www.compliantfm.com

“

...the business has grown due to the hard work, diligence and professionalism of all the team...



Compliant director, Mark Henderson



Net zero - why there has never been a better time to future-proof your business

With economic uncertainty looming against the backdrop of 2050 net zero targets, now is the time to turn a challenge into an opportunity says Alex Gates, Managing Director of Simply Certification.

Soaring energy bills, mould in rented homes and the economic crisis- three subjects on everyone's lips at the moment. On top of this the government has committed to reaching carbon net zero by 2050.

The common link between all four of these is that over 24 million (read that again) houses need to undergo retrofit to meet the government's energy efficiency targets, which in turn will reduce energy bills, make homes healthier and positively impact people's personal budgets.

This is a massive opportunity for companies but with the constant threat of economic uncertainty, what are the best strategies to employ to ensure that you come out fighting at the other end?

Let's put it simply.

Standardisation was introduced to ensure that processes and procedures were adhered to on a global scale, essentially improving the lives of people on the planet. The reality of course, is that the landscape has become more complicated over time - and now, with the proliferation of information sources, its hard to know where to begin.

It's now common to see contract frameworks mandate best practice through the demonstration of ISO certified management systems such as quality (ISO 9001), health and safety (ISO 45001) and environmental (ISO 14001).

PAS 2030 (Retrofit of Energy Efficiency Measures) is a certification which is being mandated (along with TrustMark Registration) to ensure that any work carried out on publicly funded projects and residential properties are fit for purpose. With the rise of public funding to help get existing building stock energy efficient, the need for more contractors to have PAS 2030 and TrustMark has grown substantially.

The opportunity

An astonishing 35 percent of all energy emissions come from homes, so to tackle this, billions of pounds is now being pumped into various schemes such as the Home Upgrade Grant and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. In total there are 24 million existing houses that need to be retrofitted with measures to reduce energy loss and ensure a healthier home through good ventilation.

There is a huge shortfall of energy efficient installers across the country currently. To hit the targets set, there need to be around 71,500 retrofits delivered every month. Large construction players are looking to smaller contractors increase their supply chains - so there has never been a better time to invest in the future of your business to gain PAS 2030 and TrustMark registration.

Gaining PAS 2030 and TrustMark is not as difficult as it may first appear and there are three ways that it can help you thrive:

Create an environment of quality and satisfaction

PAS 2030 Certification recognises that you have the procedures in place to ensure that all installers carry out work following a design overseen by a Retrofit Coordinator, whilst TrustMark registration protects the occupier. This ensures that the work is delivered to a high and consistent standard, resulting in higher satisfaction and reducing the need for remedial works- which is cost and time-saving and builds reputation.

Attract and retain talent

By holding certification, you are not only signalling to customers that you are dedicated to training existing and future generations of your team, but to prospective talent that you take their development seriously. By ensuring standards are implemented across the business, you encourage consistency of delivery, higher standards, better employee satisfaction and a legacy of quality and staff retention.

Develop new relationships across the UK supply chain

The government endorsed Trustmark scheme is awarded alongside PAS 2030 and provides access to new consumer markets.

On top of homeowner funding schemes that a certified installer would benefit from, there are also larger construction companies that are actively opening up trading opportunities for smaller companies in a bid to meet government targets. Those that can demonstrate capability and commitment to quality are now able to access national opportunities and develop previously unattainable relationships.

So, can you afford not to invest in the future of your business, your people and the planet?

simplycertification.co.uk

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North East manufacturer cements 2022 with top industry accolade



Freddy Bourdais

Bishop Auckland based Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) have cemented a strong year of growth by picking up a top industry accolade for their JOUPLAST® range of Decking and Paving Pedestals.

The main output at 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. PMN is a regionally rooted business operating on a national and international scale and diversification is a key mechanism of growth at the company, which has seen PMN partner with the French firm, JOUPLAST®.

PMN hold the exclusive contract to distribute the JOUPLAST® adjustable risers (which ensure decking and paving slabs sit evenly) across the UK and Ireland. The decking products which

recently featured on BBC DIY SOS are stocked by Homebase, Wickes, and Amazon, with turnover in this part of the company alone hitting over £1m last year.

The JOUPLAST® range of Decking and Paving Pedestals have been awarded one of the prestigious Editorial Awards from the Professional Builder Magazine. Each year the magazine casts its cultivated eye over the highlights of the last twelve months and the result is their Top Product Awards. The annual industry accolade celebrates the solutions in the industry and the JOUPLAST® range of Decking and Paving Pedestals took one of the prestigious Editorial Awards.

The recent award has cemented a strong year for the industry innovator who recently celebrated their 20th Anniversary. Set up in 2002 by founders Freddy Bourdais and Mark Rigg, the company has grown year on year ever since. PMN have built up a prominent reputation across the manufacturing sector globally with customers and industry peers.

They have bolstered impressive post-pandemic growth doubling turnover in the last two years despite the pandemic. Alongside staff expansion, bringing the workforce to 22, new site acquisition and increasing their expansive site to three acres with 65,000 square feet of indoor storage, alongside investment in key logistics.

The process of vacuum formed plastics requires extensive experience and expertise to achieve high quality results. The company supplies clients nationwide and internationally with recent client contracts established to Australia and New Zealand. Their capabilities are highly innovative, supplying to the automotive industry, defence, aeronautical, medical,

precision engineering and food industry.

Collaboration and innovation have been at the forefront of the expansive growth trajectory with strong investment in building long-standing working relationships. Over the years PMN's wealth of knowledge and prominent reputation has seen the company work with London Underground, McLaren, Bentley, Rolls Royce, Jaguar, JCB and BAE Systems.

Freddy Bourdais, Co-Founder and Sales Director, Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd said: "We are delighted to have been awarded one of the prestigious Editorial Awards from the Professional Builder Magazine. "JOUPLAST® is very successful in France, and it makes it much easier to lay decking and paving level. We are delighted to hold the exclusive distribution rights across the UK and Ireland, and the response to the product line has been phenomenal.

The clear ambition is to make JOUPLAST® the 'go to' brand for all types of decking and paving solutions here in the UK as it is in France, so we are delighted that the product range has seen industry recognition on a national scale."

Freddy added: "We are committed to bringing investment, growth and creating sustainable jobs to support the local economy and we are delighted with the direction of the company as we hit 2023.

Collaboration and innovation is key to our growth. We heavily invest in building relationships with our customer base and have built up many strong connections over the years. We very much look forward to embracing the next stage of expansion at PMN."

To find out more visit: www.pmn-ltd.co.uk

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The Expanded Metal Company introduces innovative modular cages range

Metal mesh pioneer The Expanded Metal Company has extended its ExMesh™ security product offering with its modular security cage range.

The company, based in Hartlepool, UK, has developed the range to provide an easily transportable, flatpack alternative to static storage cages.

The ExMesh™ modular security cages have been designed to offer high impact resistance and be simple to assemble, install and disassemble.

The steel cages can be used internally or externally to secure items such as gas cylinders, PPE, tools, bins, bikes and high value equipment. They can also be used as machine guards.

The ExMesh™ modular security cages offer good through-vision and airflow. All cages are hot dip galvanised to EN ISO 1461:2022, which provides long-life and low maintenance corrosion protection.

Philip Astley, managing director of The Expanded Metal Company, commented: "ExMesh™ modular security cages are an important addition to our security range, and have been developed to meet market demand for a robust and cost-effective alternative to static cages.

"We remain an innovator in expanded metal more than 125 years after our formation, and our commitment to product development demonstrates this."



Capital gains for Durham's Core experts

A North East manufacturer revolutionising the homebuilding sector has secured another major capital city contract, as more developers embrace the concept of Core.

Apex Core designs, develops and manufactures prefabricated utility cupboards – a central hub for a home's heating, ventilation, electrical, communication and metering services – and has delivered 75 units for an exciting regeneration project in the heart of London.

R8 King's Cross is a mixed-use development in centre of the city. Designed by Piercy & Co, the building boasts offices and homes in two, 13-storey blocks that are linked by a two-storey podium with a landscaped roof garden.

It is a major win for the firm, which was launched three years ago, with Apex Wiring Solutions owners, Dave and Mike Lewis, investing over £500,000 to create the UK's largest utility cupboard manufacturing facility at the firm's HQ in Durham City.

To date, the firm has delivered over 6,400 units to sites, as the construction sector embraces the benefits that modular units, constructed off-site and delivered ready to install, offer.

Apex Core Sales Director, Paul Hopps, said: "Modular solutions offer so much to an industry still catching up after the impact of the pandemic. They're faster to install, promote distanced working, arrive ready to simply "plug in" and offer the simplicity most tradesmen crave.



Manufacturers urged to apply for funding before it's too late

A North East business support programme is urging the region's manufacturers to apply for grant funding before it's too late.

Hundreds of businesses have received grants of up to £50,000 from the Sustainable Advanced Manufacturing (SAM) Project at the University of Sunderland since its launch in 2018.

Totalling over £1million, the grants have helped businesses – ranging from sole traders to those with over 100 employees – embrace the latest technology and improve processes, leading to the creation of hundreds of jobs and boosting the regional economy by tens of millions of pounds.

And with the second round of the grant fund closing this month, the programme is urging businesses to apply for funding before the February 1 deadline.

Roger O'Brien, Project & Technical Lead at the SAM Project, said: "Over the past four years we've seen hundreds of manufacturers benefit from our grant funding and technical support, from companies investing in robotics to cutting-edge machinery and VR equipment.

"The embracing of such new technologies hasn't just led to increased profits, either. An impact report following the first phase of the SAM Project revealed that it had helped create over 290 jobs and add in excess of £47.1million in gross value to the region's economy, so it has had a profound impact.

"However, all good things must come to an end, which is why we are urging the region's manufacturers who have not yet applied for funding from phase two of the project to apply before it's too late."

The matched grant funding can be used to support capital/ product validation, tooling and overcoming other financial inhibitors, unblocking strategic development of both product and processes within a manufacturing business.

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Rising Star



Matilda Charles

Matilda Charles

Business admin apprentice at North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO)

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I always knew that I wanted to work within an office environment. My mum worked for the government and I wanted to work in a similar environment.

Tell us about your current role

I am a business admin apprentice with a focus on the finance side of the business. I work closely with Ged Underwood our finance and rebates officer, overseeing financial procedures and I also help to coordinate administrative work for our managing director and wider team.

Why did an apprenticeship appeal?

I knew that I would enjoy it. I wanted to make money whilst being able to learn at the same time. It also feels like a stepping stone, I am already on the career ladder and supported by a team at the same time.

How does your role benefit your learning?

I am learning new skills every day. This helps to support my studies and, in turn, I am getting more confident in my abilities. All of the team at NEPO are really friendly and helpful. I was very nervous at the beginning but my confidence has increased as I have settled in.

Tell us about your team

We have a wide-ranging team working across varying positions including our managing director, procurement and commercial director, social value and supplier coordinator, communications team, professional services lead, NEPO lead and many more! We are a busy

but close-knit team.

I am really pleased that I also learn alongside Lily Hogarth, who, like me, is also embarking on a business admin apprenticeship. We have become friends and are able to share our progress.

As previously mentioned, I largely report to Ged Underwood. We speak on a daily basis and he provides me with invaluable guidance and support.

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

To listen, keep learning and to soak up information. I also think it's important to engage with customers and meet their expectations.

How do you like to unwind outside of work?

I love beauty treatments. I used to work in a salon, so this is my favourite pastime.

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ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

ABC Awards 2023

**Recognising and celebrating the impact
of the Asian and wider community.**

19th October 2023

To nominate your colleagues, family and friends for the 2023 ABC Awards and to recognise their incredible work and achievements across the North East - please access this link or QR code.

www.abconnexions.org/abc-awards-nominations



For sponsorship opportunities please call
01661 823234 or email info@abconnexions.org

**ABC is a not-for-profit social enterprise that aims to connect, support and
promote the Asian and wider community.**



Stop sticking OR in

Every one of us wants to be included. Whether as a child being selected to play on a team in the playground or joining a sports team. Becoming a member of a social club or any other membership type organisation, even the neighbourhood we live in, all we want is to be accepted. Ideally for who we truly are, although many of us will change to try and fit in to be acknowledged.



Ammar Mirza CBE

Growing up in the West End of Newcastle, at the time a predominantly White area, all I thought I ever wanted was to be White. Like those around me. To be accepted by them. I changed who I was to fit in, exclusively hanging around with White kids. Sadly, they were racist and called Asian shopkeepers “Pakis” and then turn to me and say “not you Ammar, you are one of us”. At the time that made me happy, feeling welcome. Unbeknown to me how wrong that was and how I should have had the courage to speak out.

The abuse we all suffered was truly horrific. Some of my earliest memories were that our front doors were barricaded with locks, reinforced with steel, even metal bars placed across them at night to keep us safe. It would take a good 10-15 minutes to lock the door every night. We weren't allowed to look out of the windows from behind the curtains, as regularly there were White men stood on the street, drunk and hurling abuse at us.

Having finished education, I ran away to London, as everyone aspired to do, and worked at the British Council for a year, alongside the Canon Ionic Cinema. Both jobs I felt I fitted in, as the organisations were diverse and London cosmopolitan. **However, I missed my North East and my late mother immensely, so I returned after a year.**

Starting my local career, I applied for a full-time job at a call centre. However, as I was different – male and ethnic – I was offered a temporary position. **Having to work twice as hard as those around me, the call centre was a toxic environment focused purely on stats, although a great grounding for me.** I was eventually promoted to Team Leader then a manager running the call centre. **And whilst there, I realised the importance of championing others regardless of their background, colour or gender, even more so as I didn't have one of those characteristics.**

My biggest inspiration at the time was my mother, so I took it upon myself to champion women, and have done so ever since. Appreciating that we have so many trailblazers that have led change over the decades – women, black, ethnic minority, gender, religion, culture – it is equally important to recognise that without broader support those changes would not have materialised. **Would slavery really have been abolished, or women allowed to vote without a White male leader championing the cause and encouraging the change.**

When I established Asian Business Connexions in 2009, I prioritised Asians, as there was no representative body at the time. **However, we have absolutely focused on inclusion and we have supported more local White people through our training programmes than ethnics.** The same for our various campaigns.

With the Asian Women Enterprising (AWEsome) campaign set up to help tackle barriers for Asian women and inspire future generations to achieve. Our #Inclusionbydefault aims to help the North East become the most inclusive region in the UK by 2025. **Our Asian Awards purposefully celebrate everyone, including White people, who have made a difference.**

So, when I was notified of my nomination for the Northern Power Women Awards – Levelling Up Leader- I triple checked to see if this was real as I am a man and categorise myself as one. However, I was notified it is genuine and the awards demonstrate true inclusion. **I love this and I am delighted to be shortlisted! Making me reflect on why can't we stop using “Or” when it comes to inclusion, and start with “And”. Why shouldn't we celebrate each other for our differences?**

As the saying goes, a rising tide lifts all boats and let's use the oars to propel us forward together as one.

I would also like to wish my wonderful wife Louise a happy 40th Birthday. May all your wishes come true, thank you for being you and for all that you do.

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.



Time for change

Over the last decade, the communication methods a business can employ have never been more diverse. While many businesses have already moved away from relying solely on landline phones, essential services still rely on the century-old copper wires and the Integrated Service Digital Network (ISDN) internet that this ageing infrastructure provides.

The pandemic accelerated the use of remote worker solutions, services like Microsoft Teams and Zoom have come to the forefront in our daily business lives and there has been a move by these players to push into the business telephony space. Decisions made by UK Government and telecoms carriers have meant businesses need to look at their telecoms strategy.

In August 2021, BT Openreach announced the date for its copper switch-off is to be December 2025, and that the move from copper to fibre networks will happen in stages. In line with the UK Government's goal of providing gigabit connectivity across the UK, the Public Switched Telephone Network (PTSN) and its copper system will be switched off by the end of 2025.

Why is the Government switching off the copper system?

First implemented in 1877, the copper telephone system is well over a century old and is becoming increasingly expensive to maintain. There are other factors driving the switch off, the main one being that the current copper system consumes 0.6% of the country's energy. The new fibre network not only reduces costs, but also contributes to an overall decrease in the country's carbon footprint, in-line with the UK Government's Net Zero Strategy, which is to be net zero in all sectors by 2050.

The lines won't all be turned off at once. Openreach has explained that it will switch off the old copper system in phases. Once the majority of UK properties (75%) have been switched to the digital system, Openreach will introduce a 'stop sell' on copper services, meaning new lines cannot be ordered.

Beware of scare tactics however, that are being employed on the basis that you must upgrade services now. As a business we receive at least two calls a week where call centre staff try to convince us that we have to do something today! There is still time to plan, and businesses need to evaluate the best options for their immediate and long term future.

How will the copper switch-off affect my business?

No matter the size of the business, or what your current telephone system is, you need to plan for 2025. In many cases it may not be appropriate to do anything "right now", particularly if internet speeds in your area are currently poor. Internet speed is a major factor when it comes to your options. It is important however, to start looking at what you could do. Your business is bound to need to make changes, although you have time to plan and implement them.

The choices are wide and varied. Partnering with a company that is able to offer a comprehensive



range of services, should allow you to make the best decision. Whether you go on premise, fully hosted, hybrid or consider moving your calls to newer players like Teams and Zoom, getting the right advice is crucial.

Copper phone lines impact more than just telephone systems, and there may be parts of your business that need evaluating before a planned shut-off, including:

Alarm systems, lift service lines, payment terminals.

Many of these systems are already able to cope with this move away from legacy systems, however ensuring you have the required technology to switch to digital services, is the key to preparing for the copper switch-off.

How can Lucid help?

Lucid is dedicated to ensuring your business fully understands the upcoming changes and that you are fully aware of all the available options to you. With over 30 years of trading under our belt, our team are fully manufacturer-trained in all aspects of business communications and are here to ensure a best-fit solution for you and your team.

Contact our experts today for more information.

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It's Jammy time

As money is tighter than ever and cash for luxuries seems like a thing of the past, one company has launched a brand-new App to offer individuals and businesses the benefits of collaborations.

The App; Get Jammy, which is now available at the App Store, was the brainchild of businessmen, Matt Haycock, and Steve Imray as they sought to offer a solution to the never-ending financial crisis that is not only affecting the general public, but businesses alike, especially in the retail, leisure, and hospitality industries.

Get Jammy offers the end user pre-agreed discounts at venues throughout the North East in the form of a spin the wheel style game, which

then determines which of the offers are available to you, to take advantage of. The businesses, or partners that offers these discounts are free to choose whatever they wish and can utilise the slower times of business to increase footfall.

The term, Jammy, in the North East, at least refers to a slang definition of getting something for nothing and is used verbally to someone who has had a particular unexpected lucky streak.

The win, win situation is created by allowing users of the App to gain benefits that wouldn't normally be available to them, in a fun format and the companies offering the discounts the ability to introduce their businesses to customers, who may not be aware of them, thus increasing their client base. The partners do not pay a penny to be part of the Get Jammy experience.

razorblue welcomes Ben Houchen and celebrates tripling square footage

A leading managed service provider welcomed Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen to its Stockton office recently as part of celebrating tripling its square footage in just a matter of months due to rapid growth.

razorblue has officially relocated its head office to its Stockton premises as part of the growth process, which sees the company's square footage increase from 4,000 sqft to 12,000 sqft in under a year where it has welcomed 60 new starters and made 32 internal promotions.

Ben Houchen visited the office, which is one of seven, to tour the new space and see the work razorblue is doing.

Tees Valley Mayor, Ben Houchen said: "Business is booming at razorblue with new clients won, new jobs up for grabs and now a new head office



to meet the demand of all the work they've got going on.

"Great local businesses growing, winning more work and creating new opportunities for people across Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool is excellent news. razorblue's new HQ in Stockton will help them do just that and will unlock even more potential for growth in the months and years ahead."



Northeast Tech Agency Lumanorth expands with strategic partnerships

The international tech market may be showing signs of change and contraction, but here in the UK and the North East the picture looks very different. Lumanorth, the 'newcomer' tech company, based in Newcastle, which opened its doors less than six months ago, is doubling the size of its team, having secured a number of prestigious account wins.

The company was founded by long-term business partners Dinesh Kumar and Richard Coates, both renowned tech experts in the region, having launched and successfully developed a number of augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and gaming companies. Their latest venture builds on their combined 40year expertise, bringing a broader offering to clients, including immersive reality, digitisation and visualisation. Plus additional services through strategic partnerships.

Lumanorth, which specialises in hybrid technology solutions, has seen huge demand for its tech expertise from both tech-based companies seeking expert support and from non-tech-based companies seeking new and innovative ways to develop their business by introducing new technology.

To keep pace with the increased demand, Lumanorth has quadrupled its team size to eight, moved to larger premises within the Toffee Factory, Newcastle, and is planning for double-digit growth in 2023. Richard Coates, Managing Director, commented, "It's been an incredible first six months. Thanks to our team, partners and increasing market demand, we've been able to fast track our growth and now have a secure client base and full sales pipeline well into 2023."

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Talking Tech and Digital

In the latest of these popular series of features
Michael Gramshaw talks to...

Simon Newton

CEO from ITPS

Did you always envisage working in the world of technology?

Definitely not! But after graduating with a degree in physics I was attracted to a role at IBM as a systems engineer because I perceived them to be a company with a great name and reputation.

Over the next 20 years I developed a career in sales and marketing and gained experience in the IT and telecoms sectors. My last job was with a start-up business developing small nuclear reactors which has given me a particular interest in renewable technology.

What attracted you to your current role?

It is a joy working with a group of capable, bright, interesting people delivering complex solutions in a growing market. Being able to make a positive difference to people through the technology solutions we offer is very rewarding.

What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

I think it is important to not focus on technology but instead focus on the impact technology can make on organisations and on people's lives. Also work hard to be a good communicator – they are rare.

What are you currently working on?

Many of our customers work in the education, charity and healthcare sectors and are therefore dealing with serious social issues. I think technology has to be part of the answer and can have an extraordinary impact if we get it right. That is daunting but also terribly exciting.

If we take education as an example, there's a McKinsey study which shows that the best educational outcomes result from using technology a lot or not at all. The worst case is to use technology a little, but not enough for staff and pupils to become really comfortable with it. With limited experience and very limited budgets, how do educators make the right decisions?

Technology is becoming too complicated and too risky for non-technical organisations to manage, yet it is crucial to their success. They have to have a trusted partner to guide them. That's the part I get excited about.

What is your fondest career memory?

I always prefer to look forward, but working with great people who have become friends has been a highlight.

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

Definitely people I know rather than business celebrities. A former colleague, Stephen Haighton, gave me my first management job and taught me how to make decisions with integrity and motivate and manage people.

“

*...Make sure you
are doing well paid,
interesting work
with people that
you like...*

What is the best piece of business advice you have received?

Make sure you are doing well paid, interesting work with people that you like.

What does someone entering the industry need to be aware of?

That this is a serious sector to work in now – for one thing we're at war and cyber-crime is an existential issue for all organisations.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

Creating a brand with ITPS that makes an impact on people's lives. Too much of the industry is just about flogging stuff to make money, which misses the potential that technology can deliver. My ambition is for ITPS to make a meaningful contribution to the social issues that we face – helping our customers to address deprivation and to improve health and educational outcomes.

What item of technology are you lost without?

If I'm allowed three... my iPhone, kindle and electric car.

How do you like to unwind?

With four and five year old daughters that can be a challenge so finding a quiet corner is lovely on occasion. As they grow up I would love to start sailing again which is a long held passion.

For further information on how ITPS can help and support your business visit the website www.itps.co.uk



Simon Newton



What's in store for 2023 for Plexus Innovation

Following on from an exciting year in 2022, expanding our team, securing investment, growing our customer base and continuously improving our GUARDIAN® technology, you may wonder what there is left for us to achieve in 2023.

Not a company to rest on our laurels we have our sights set on many more goals, including winning awards, growing our team, developing new products and services, and announcing a number of exciting partnerships.

February is set to be interesting as we are shortlisted for two awards. Keep your eye on Housing Digital 2023 where we are in line for

the Best Asset Innovation Award and the Most Innovative Supplier. We are up against great talent, but still keep your fingers crossed.

We are looking to expand the team in the technical engineering and field operations, supporting our existing teams out on site and increasing our capacity for new installations and customer support.

We are forecasting expansion into further sectors in new geographic areas, as we have utilised recent investment to boost stock and manpower.

As our reputation is growing and relationships are cementing, we are enjoying working closely with clients who are expanding the use of GUARDIAN® in their organisations by remotely measuring temperature, energy consumption, humidity and air quality. GUARDIAN® is now being used to manage water/heating systems helping to reduce risk and operational costs; refrigeration and cold chain storage ensuring items such as medication is stored safely; and air temperature, quality and humidity, enabling insight-driven decisions, reduction of energy use and fuel poverty and identifying risk of condensation which can result in damp and mould.

Our customers will receive critical automated reports and alerts throughout 2023, highlighting potential health risks, failing assets, energy savings and risk of property damage otherwise overlooked, whilst enjoying business improvement and delivering better service.

The team will be attending many events, building on our memberships and involvements with organisations including Housing 2023, the Water Management Society, Housing Digital, UKGBC, North East of England Chamber of Commerce, Legionella Focus Groups and many more and many more.

As well as supporting our clients and customers in their path to Net Zero, we will be making a concerted effort to reduce our own carbon footprint. We have installed GUARDIAN® at our offices to ensure the heating and hot water system is running as efficiently as possible. We are now ISO 14001:2015 accredited and through the use of electric vehicles, recycling, reduction of paper and focusing on our digital processes we will continue to shrink our environmental footprint.

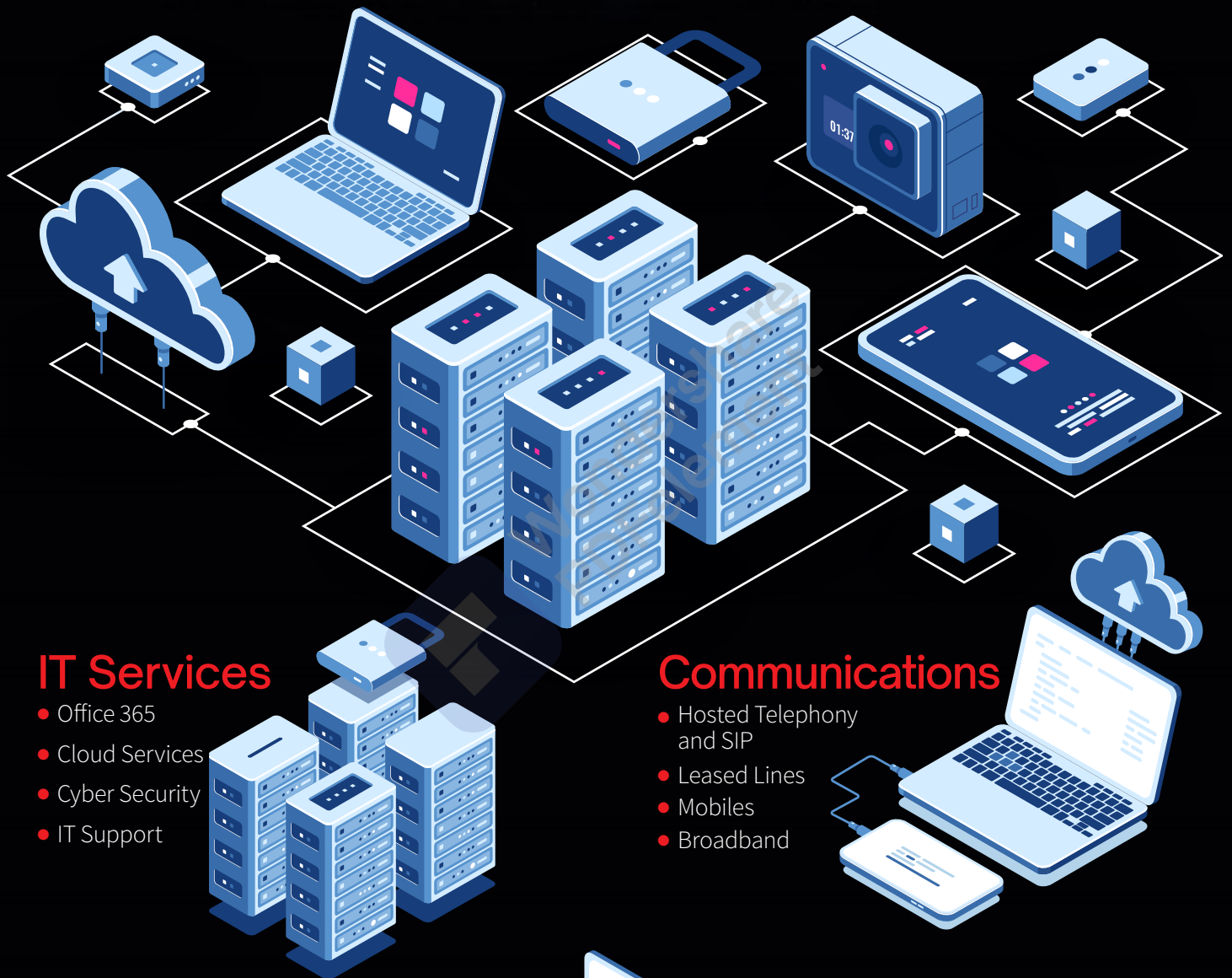
As well as ISO 14001:2015 we have also gained ISO 27001 and ISO 9001 accreditation. ISO 27001 is the international standard that describes best practices for an Information Security Management System adding to our commitment to maintaining the highest standards of Information Security. Achieving ISO 9001 accreditation has helped us develop a robust Quality Management System.

2023 is without doubt going to be a year full of challenges and opportunities, but as a team we are excited and ready!

More information on GUARDIAN® is available at www.plexus-innovation.com



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Say hello, wave goodbye (to 2022)

The end of 2022 and the Christmas break has allowed us time to reflect on some key milestones for Eclipse over the last 12 months while also thinking about what we can achieve with our Channel Partners in 2023.

Our key vision across 2022, which we will continue into the new year, is our ever-growing commitment to the channel and providing all our channel partners with the highest quality products and services at the best possible prices. We have strengthened relationships with all our key partners, securing new deals and opportunities such as the CityFibre Business FTTP. Swapping out products for more efficient and reliable services to support all our partners and their customers. As a result of this, we have onboarded several new channel partners and hope to maintain this momentum in 2023.

Our position in the channel has been solidified through recognition at many prestigious award ceremonies. Being up for Best Wholesale Service Provider, Best Partner Programme (Up to 10M), Best Channel Portal and Best Channel Business Service at this year's Comms National Awards, as well as Vendor Sales and Account Management Team at Channel Champions and Distributor of the Year – SMB at Comms Business Awards. In September we walked away with Wholesaler Billing Team of the Year at Union Streets Billing People Awards, shining a light on the great, and sometimes unnoticed, work our billing team carry out every day.



James Drake

A highlight of our year was the launch of our new Eclipse Self-Service (ESS) Portal in May, after gaining feedback and understanding our customer's needs, we reflected on the design and content of the previous version and created a new image with better features and faster processes. Within our portal, our channel partners can carry out an availability checker, order products, track them, submit faults and much more, they can do this from any location on any device, giving them the freedom and flexibility they need.

In numbers we have achieved the highest turnover in Eclipse history, delivering connectivity consistently throughout the year, switching our customers from slow and old copper lines to symmetrical bandwidths with superfast speeds. Mobile has been our fastest-growing product reaching exponential growth, in which we supply our customers with the

biggest names in the market such as Vodafone and O2 with EE coming to our stack very soon.

As we look forward to 2023, we wish to continue to grow our success within the channel and maintain growing the number of new channel partners each month. This new year also brings us a step closer to the BT 2025 Switch Off and with that, we need to prepare our customers in swapping their ISDN and PSTN with compatible substitutions such as SIP trunks, Mobile and IoT solutions. The new year will also welcome a refreshing new look for Eclipse Wholesale, we will hopefully be showcasing this shortly.

Start the year off right and join our award-winning Channel Partner Programme here:
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Synergi celebrations

Award-winning cloud solutions and managed services business, Synergi, celebrated 2022, their best year yet, by hosting their annual Christmas party at Close House's Westwood Suite in early December.

Throughout 2022 Synergi secured many key account wins. At a national level, these included The Royal Mint, Manchester Airport Group, The Science Museum and Dounreay. On home turf in the North East Synergi continues to work with Houghton International, UpNorth Group, Petards, Elanders Print, and various education trusts.



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Wellington Square almost fully let after Knight Frank completes £1.6m contract to enable new lettings

Another milestone has been reached in Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's bold plan to transform its high street as Knight Frank completes a £1.6m project to enable Castlegate Shopping Centre retailers to move to nearby Wellington Square – boosting the asset to 93% occupancy.

The 340,000 sq. ft. Castlegate, which opened in 1972, was at just 60% capacity before the plans to demolish it and reposition Wellington Square as the main retail hub of the town, were announced.

Knight Frank's building consultancy team won the £1.6m major contract for the enabling works to facilitate retailers' moves to the more modern Wellington Square Shopping Centre, which was constructed in 2001.

Knight Frank has converted the former 13,400 sq. ft. flagship H&M store and 2,217sq. ft. Goldsmiths shop into six new, smaller, 500 sq. ft. retail units and a 7,000 sq. ft. office. The office has enabled Stockton-on-Tees Employment Hub to move in and the smaller units have allowed a number of Castlegate



market hall stall holders to move - and upscale to a shop format.

Elizabeth's Embroidery moved to a bigger premises to facilitate Specsavers moving into their new location and enabling works have been carried out for Barclays bank's relocation.

In total, 31 shops have moved from Castlegate Shopping Centre into town centre premises and footfall is bucking the national trend by being up 48% on 2021, up 10% on 2019 and 8% on 2018.



Miller Homes starts 2023 with boost to North East developments

Would-be North East homebuyers can get a first glimpse of the new phases of a range of leading housing developments at a series of VIP buyer events.

Miller Homes is set to unveil the second phases at two of its prestigious sites in the region - Stephenson Meadows, Callerton, Newcastle and at Longridge Farm, Bedlington – over the next few months.

And in a separate event it will also be showcasing the Roman Fields development at Corbridge, which offers a mix of luxury three, four and five bedroomed homes, perfect for anyone wanting to downsize, buy a second home or looking for an investment property in a picturesque location.

The events will also highlight to potential homeowners the support available to them from Miller Homes at every stage, giving them all they need to purchase their dream home.

The company has created three events which will take place throughout the first months of 2023, where visitors will be able to see the range of homes on offer at all three sites, as well as have a free consultation with an experienced independent financial adviser who can give details of available mortgage options.



Developers of The Wool House take to film

Developers of The Wool House, Hexham's 45 one and two-bedroom, duplex and penthouse style apartment development, have set the scene for the year ahead with a two-minute video promoting not just their luxury apartments, but the attractions of living in Hexham and the surrounding area.

Containing some striking images that demonstrate the beauty of the Tyne Valley, the video also provides viewers with a sneak peek at the exterior of the development with its landscaped gardens and at the apartments, and how they could be made to look.

So far hundreds of people have viewed the video – some living as far away as Singapore, Saint Maarten, Australia and EU countries – which should ensure that the benefits of living in the Tyne Valley as well as the luxury accommodation on offer, will be understood much further afield and not just by those who are lucky enough to live in Hexham.

Now scheduled for completion in the summer of 2023, the development has encountered some delays throughout its build programme in keeping with the wider construction industry. However, despite materials availability issues, Covid and other factors, it is now full steam ahead with the launch of the show apartment due to take place at Easter and the final sales brochure containing all the specification details of fixtures and fittings available by mid-March.

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On a mission

‘Providing customers with an excellent service, each and every time’

- Karbon Homes talks customer experience

Karbon Homes, a social housing provider which owns and manages close to 30,000 homes across the North East and Yorkshire, has one mission - to provide a strong foundation for life.

The organisation works across diverse communities, where people face different opportunities and challenges. Some customers just need an affordable home while others need a bit more. Whatever customers need to feel more secure, confident and happy with where they're at, Karbon aims to provide it, helping to build better lives for its customers.

Ian Johnson, Karbon's Executive Director of Customer Service, chats to Northern Insight about Karbon's approach to providing an excellent customer experience and the role that plays in achieving the organisation's mission of 'providing strong foundations for life'.

"What makes for excellent customer service is always changing and the great customer experience benchmark is not one set by us, but one set by our customers. We know one size doesn't fit all and that our customers require a service that recognises their individual circumstances and expectations.

"To ensure we provide customers with an excellent service, each and every time they come into contact with us, we need to meet these expectations and, where possible exceed them. To us, that means being ambitious in our approach to customer experience, working hard to personalise the service we offer and ensure it is local and relevant to each customer."

Ian acknowledges that a crucial part of achieving service excellence is through continually measuring performance, in order to build a real understanding of how the organisation is doing.

"The measure we tend to look at first is our customer net promoter score (NPS). It's a measurement that is widely used and, thanks to its consistent format, it paints us an accurate picture of how we're performing.

"Our score is established by asking customers how likely they are to recommend us to their friends and family if they were in a similar situation and looking for housing. Consistent monitoring of this is important as it allows us to recognise and celebrate our successes, building on what we're doing well, as well as to identify areas where we really need to improve.

"We're pleased to say that our customer NPS (at time of interview) sits at +53. Anything above 0 is considered good, and above 50 is excellent - so we're currently in a great position as an organisation."

Despite this positive score, Ian understands that the true measure of success is not built on numbers alone.

"Monitoring numerical performance data is valuable but we also need to really hear what our customers are telling us. Karbon is committed to building meaningful relationships with our customers, ensuring that our customers' voices are heard and that they have a direct impact on our service delivery. We listen to our customers in lots of different ways, consulting with them on key projects and involving them in much of our decision-making.

"A group of our customers recently undertook a review of our approach to building and customer safety and produced a report for us. They gave us a list of recommendations from their perspective, which will help us progress forward with our work.

"Insight like this really helps us keep customer experience front and centre in our work and ensure we are truly customer focussed."

With service excellence at the forefront of Karbon's strategic plan for the coming years, Ian outlines what Karbon is doing to continue strengthening the quality of the service it provides.

"The social housing sector is facing a number of challenge currently, challenges that we're taking very seriously and working hard to overcome. We're continually working to promote a culture that supports an excellent customer experience throughout our organisation, to ensure we demonstrate a positive commitment to customers."

To do this it's key that we enable our colleagues to gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours that support a more personalised service for customers and provide them with access to the tools that allow them to do so."

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“

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Property Focus – progressing through 2023

Kevan Carrick co-founder and partner in JK Property Consultants, provides insights on some of the key aspects of the market forecast for 2023

The Office of National Statistics report on Consumer Price Inflation, December 2023, shows a small fall of 0.2% to 10.5%, still high and causing small businesses to struggle further. It is unlikely to prevent a further increase in interest rates at the next review date, with a consequent fall in demand for housing and delayed development decisions.

The government's policy to bring inflation under control and manage the economy is not likely to have much impact on the property market other than to expect a year of limited capital or revenue growth.

Its claim that reforms to Solvency II will unlock tens of billions of pounds for investment from UK insurers in long-term productive assets, has yet to see any spill over into the real estate sector.

The government's plan is to invest and accelerate delivery of £600+ billion over the next five years in high quality infrastructure to boost economic growth and productivity. Getting to, from and moving around our towns and cities, is essential to the demand for real estate.

Sadly, the proposed Investment Zones programme was not implemented and the expected growth in areas needing regeneration will not have a fiscal accelerator to encourage faster growth. But there is progress with the announcement of funding in the region for The Sage International Conference Centre, the UK's newest International Conference and Exhibition Centre and Arena Venue – Opening 2024 and The



Kevan Carrick

Northern Film and TV Studios, at Hartlepool, both of which will have a significant economic growth impact in the wider region.

The announcement of the Masterplans for the town centres of both Hartlepool and Middlesbrough for delivery through the new Development Corporation for each town will gather impetus. I was delighted to be part of the Arup team that formulated the plans and contributed to the property and delivery advice.

In the north of the region the decision finally to establish a combined authority and mayoral devolution deal is excellent news and long overdue. Hopefully, we will see a more focused and determined delivery for growth.

The cost of energy has hit hard, both people and business. It has forced businesses to think more about costs of occupation and in the longer-term sustainability. There is a lot of anecdotal commentary of the 'flight to quality' and the use of office space. There is a clear drive by businesses implementing clear value statements through ESG, including achieving zero net carbon by a realistic date.

The government is in discussion with the Mayors Combined Authorities to devolve powers to

deliver levelling up in areas such as skills, transport and housing, including through consolidating funding. These 'trailblazer' deals will act as a blueprint for other areas to follow, which hopefully means the local authorities in the North East of England, where the government announced it will shortly be agreeing an expanded mayoral deal. The implication is that, for those who survive, there will be greater support to leverage economic growth and job creation.

Nevertheless, these are likely to be more medium to long-term delivery mechanisms. Smaller businesses need to survive over the next few months. If those who would otherwise be successful fail the regional economy will be that much weaker. That is why JK has joined with the Open North Foundation, the North East Business Innovation Centre and the North East Initiative on Business Ethics to offer support, where there is a need, to small businesses.

Having survived five recessions, my advice is prepare now for the future.

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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.

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Please don't kill the Architects

By Neil Turner, Howarth Litchfield

I was highly amused recently when reading an article in the Times by restaurant critic Giles Coren entitled, 'Damn all architects, the rich man's folly', which concluded with the line, 'the first thing we do, let's kill all the architects.'

As you can imagine, the profession got all in a twist and self-righteous at the provocative article. Its basis was actually a good question though: do architects add any value to a project and why don't projects get delivered to budget?

Architects are the key ingredient in our building industry that turn simple buildings into a piece of architecture that we can appreciate and enjoy. Their skill is in taking a brief and turning this into a three-dimensional vision which can be built, serviced, and used through its lifespan.

The architect must deal with planning laws, materials selection, environmental and energy use, building regulations compliance, buildability, contract law, builders – all to simply get the building constructed.

Yes, it is complex, and it relies on the architect liaising with a vast number of other professionals and builders to create the desired solution.

Architects add value by their nature of thinking both outside the box



Neil Turner

and inside the box, linking all the thousands of elements that need to be considered when building. Of course, everyone is welcome to try and do this without this professional help, but can anyone simply pick up a pencil or operate the CAD package and get it right, first time?

So, architects do add value, both in measurable ways, as well as the subjective, intangible value of health, light and the creation of enjoyable building experiences.

The biggest gripe of Mr Coren is on budgeting and his perception that all projects go over budget. We are all used to seeing the TV architecture shows where clients' dreams crumble in the reality of spiralling costs and blunders.

Most of these people are picked because they don't have the right team of quantity surveyors, architects and builders in place. The media love a good failure rather than boring, straight forward success. The conclusion is invariably that the design isn't over budget, simply that a budget was wrong or wasn't created at the beginning to reflect the aspiration – Rolls Royce ambition on a Ford Focus budget!

So, what is good value? In the last few years, the building trade has experienced materials cost increases and lack of availability in materials due to the pandemic, Brexit and the Ukraine conflict. This has increased the cost of building along with the market being remarkably busy, combining to create the perception of poor value.

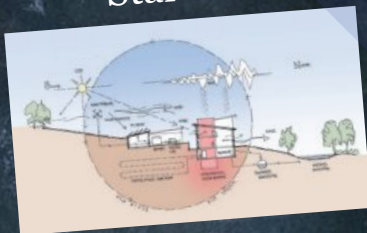
So, to build to a budget today, realism must be the key – in the budget, programme and design. Yes, people can get it wrong including architects. But the vast majority get it right with the correct preparation, the right team and right skilled builders.

An architect is not a 'rich man's folly', in fact quite the opposite. The architect will add value and expertise helping to create the right solution for the right budget. On this basis alone I suggest we let architects, like myself, live on and design more lovely buildings. As to the value of a food critic...well that's a more complex question!

Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email n.turner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com

Menu

Starters



Mains



Desserts





dunwoodieswift architects



evolution



It's one of the best known names in housebuilding – and now Miller Homes is set to unveil the latest phases of three exciting North East developments

It's an amazing 85 years since Miller Homes first started building houses and although a national company, the North East has always been one of its flagship regions.

From the elegant Lambton Park development near Chester-le-Street - created against the backdrop of historic woodlands - to the aptly named Scholars Gate on the former Sunderland College site at Houghton-le-Spring, the company has an exemplary track record in not only house building – but creating communities.

And it is set to consolidate that reputation even further, by turning the spotlight on three of its developments, at a series of special events.

Miller Homes is set to unveil the second phase of two of its most popular developments – Stephenson Meadows at Callerton just outside of Newcastle and Longridge Farm at Bedlington.

The former is the perfect site for anyone who wants to feel their close to the countryside but not out on a limb. With easy access to Newcastle and picturesque villages such as Ponteland and Woolsington near by, there's a range of three, four and five bedroomed homes available.

It's a similar story at Longridge Farm, Bedlington, which offer a mix of two, three, four and five bedroomed houses. The selection of house choices means it's perfect for everything from families to anyone wanting to downsize – or to get their ideal starter home.

Again phase two is about to go on sale – so the open event provides the perfect opportunity to reserve a dream home.

Over at Corbridge, Miller Homes' Roman Fields development has proved a huge success – and not just with those who want to live there themselves.





Known as a town steeped in history, Corbridge has grown in popularity with anyone wanting an investment property in a location that it's hard to beat.

At the same time for anyone who is dealing with an empty nest and wants to downsize – but live somewhere safe, secure and with endless amenities – then Roman Fields should also be high on the list.

There are many benefits to buying a new build – and never more so than at present when everyone is looking to keep their costs down. Low maintenance and energy efficient which means lower bills – just another reason for their overall appeal.

Miller Homes don't want perspective investors or buyers just to take their word for it – which is why they have created two open days and an open evening to see at first hand the exciting prospects these three developments have to offer.

The Longridge Farm open day will be held on 28 January, with the Stephenson Meadows event taking place on 4 March.

Both sites will be open from 11am to 4pm where visitors can call in, pick up a goody bag and find out a first hand about the range of homes on offer, as well as have the opportunity to talk to an independent financial adviser about mortgage options.

On 21 February Roman Fields will host a cheese and wine evening from 4pm to 8pm where the financial adviser will again be on hand, as will a local estate agent to talk about the investment prospects for properties at the site.

While would-be home buyers can just pop in to the various events, there's an added incentive for those who sign up in advance – the chance to win a basket of goodies from Coastal Hampers, with a free draw for those who have registered at each session.



Longridge Farm – www.eventbrite.com/e/expert-homebuying-advice-at-longridge-farm-bedlington-tickets-511899263477

Stephenson Meadows – www.eventbrite.com/e/expert-homebuying-advice-at-stephenson-meadows-callerton-tickets-511922111817

Roman Fields – www.eventbrite.com/e/cheese-wine-expert-homebuying-advice-at-roman-fields-corbridge-tickets-511934278207

Aisling Ramshaw, Sales Director at Miller Homes North East, is excited at the prospect of showcasing these three developments to house buyers from across the region and beyond.

"These are three amazing sites in key locations which have something for everyone," she said.

"Phase one at both Stephenson Meadows and Longridge Farm have been really well received so we are very confident of a huge amount of interest in phase two.

"Roman Fields is also in such a prime location in an area of such historical significance that again, we expect a high level of interest from buyers who are looking for an investment property.

"We have seen Northumberland continue to grow in popularity and with 80 per cent of the properties at Roman Fields already sold, this will be the last chance for buyers to own a home on this development."

For further information visit www.millerhomes.co.uk

The continued
adventures of...

Ziggy!



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com

Hi Everyone!

Well, here we are in another year. Hope you all had a good holiday and got what you wanted. We were very busy with lots of comings and goings - Cousin Dexter for a week; Cousin Lola and my daughter Maisie and Cally's naughty daughter Kinnie. Sadly poor old cousin Ozzy went to the big kennel in the sky. I am now nearly 13 so Cally will be coming out with us to learn the ropes - that should be fun! **More next month.**

James from Gosforth asks:

Q. Every year gusts of wind dislodge one or two of my roof slates. The roof is in its original 1920s condition with no underfelt. There are adverts in the papers for a 'foam spray solution' for old roofs. These are guaranteed for twenty or so years. Is this the easiest way forward, or should we look to get the whole roof redone?

A. The fact that slates are slipping every year probably indicates that the nails which hold them to the timber battens are rusted through. Roofers refer to this as nail fatigue or nail sickness, and it is definitely time to have the roof stripped off and re-covered.

Having foam sprayed on to the undersides of the slates may sound like a wonderful high-tech solution but it is actually a bad idea. It is at odds with the recommendations of the Building Regulations, which require a clear 50mm ventilated gap between insulation and roof covering. The foam sets hard and removes the two vital attributes that allow a traditional roof to last and perform so well for so long - the ability to breathe and the ability to move. The foam completely encloses the timber battens and the top surfaces of the rafters, which might cause them to rot. It also sticks tight to the slates and makes it almost impossible for them to ever be re-used. You will also probably find that the cost of the spray-on foam solution will be three or four times that of having the roof re-covered in the traditional way. Try to find a roofer who will remove the existing slates carefully, and re-use as many as possible. Also make sure that the roofer uses a breathable sarking felt, and allows it to sag between the rafters. The ridge tiles and any hip tiles should be rebbed using lime-and-sand mortar to match the original; do not allow the roofer to use sand-and-cement.

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Mediaworks Scotland Champions New Office Opening Following Seven Figure Growth



One of the UK's largest independent digital marketing agencies plans to create an additional 30 jobs in Scotland in the next two years following the rapid expansion of its new Edinburgh base.

As a result of seven figure agency growth, Mediaworks has relocated to a new, larger space in George Street in Edinburgh city centre, where it will continue building presence for the Mediaworks Group in the region.

Mediaworks has enjoyed long-held client relationships in Scotland, but opened its first base there in early 2021. It recently celebrated its move into new, larger premises on George Street in the city centre by launching a new regular Mediaworks Mixer series, a chance for like-minded digital operators and marketing directors to share ideas in informal surroundings.

Mediaworks Scotland has also introduced media planning and buying services through new hires based in Edinburgh, further strengthening the growing demand from clients for an agency partner that offers fully integrated media and optimised marketing solutions. It has added the likes of Schuh, Scottish Water, and the R&A's new Golf It! concept to its client portfolio in recent months.

Brett Jacobson, CEO and founder of Mediaworks, added: "I'm thrilled to see how quickly our Edinburgh office has accelerated its growth in the last 18 months. We have a fantastic team in place who have made full use of our unique IP, data and insight tools, and embraced our hard focus on customer satisfaction. It's a model that's clearly being very well received in the Scottish marketplace."



Marriott Communications wins Agency of the Year

Sunderland-based digital communications agency, Marriott Communications, received the Agency of the Year award at the 2022 Northern Enterprise Awards.

This award is the latest commendation for the agency following other North East shortlists, including Entrepreneur of the Year at the FSB Awards and Marketer of the Year at the Prolific North Awards. Northern Enterprise Awards Coordinator, Kaven Cooper, stated: "I am happy to have had the pleasure of hosting this year's Northern Enterprise Awards and I look forward to seeing what these companies do next. They are all part of our journey as humankind, and there are plenty of businesses here that can elevate our quality of life. Well done to every last one of them."

Marriott Communications' CEO, Samuel Marriott-Dowling, said: "I am absolutely thrilled to share that not only has Marriott Communications been recognised as Agency of the Year, but that we have done so as a business based in the North East. The North East business community is dynamic, vibrant, and creative; and it is a real honour to be recognised for our achievements."

Malhotra Group extends partnership with Sleeky

The Malhotra Group, which has a portfolio of hotels, bars and restaurants across Newcastle, has supported web design and digital marketing agency Sleeky, since the latter's inception 17 years ago.

And now it has extended its contract to include Search Engine Optimisation and Customer Relationship Management.

Sleeky has recently completed a bespoke redesign to the Group's website for Leila Lily's, at Grey Street and an update to the site for the adjoining Grey Street Hotel.

It is currently in the process of designing a new site for The Runhead at Ryton and for Prestwick

Care – the division of the Group which operates a chain of residential care homes across the North East.

The Group now hopes the extension to its contract will boost its online presence, driving customers directly to the websites and managing enquiries in the most effective and efficient way possible.

Malhotra Group's relationship with Sleeky began when managing director David Chapman started the company – initially as a one-man band in 2005.

And chief operating officer Atul Malhotra believes the long-standing relationship has benefitted both companies.

"We had faith in David from the start and he has never let us down," he said. "I worked with him before he founded Sleeky's and not only did I trust him but I liked him."



"Loyalty matters very much to us as a family and as an organisation. We like to build strong and long-lasting relationships and this is an example of those."

Along with handling the Group's SEO and CRM, Newcastle-based Sleeky will manage its digital marketing and is also embarking on a website for the India development.



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Marketing and Media Matters

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

Holly Thomson

Brand Copywriter & Creative Strategist, Blonde Creative

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

Content creation has always been my 'thing', and I was naturally drawn to roles where I could think outside-the-box. I was 'that' girl at school who just loved anything to do with writing and creativity, so I guess it was quite organic!

What has been your career path so far?

I spent most of my twenties working for a large digital agency. I got the chance to work with hundreds of businesses across a whole range of industries which was brilliant, but I felt limited with what I could do working for somebody else.

In 2020 it was time to make the move. I felt like I'd been hit by a bolt of lightning - I knew I could make people's business dreams come true through creative copywriting and brand strategy. Blonde Creative was founded. My amazing business partner, Liz, joined the company in 2021 and what a ride we've had so far!

What challenges have you had to overcome?

As a growing business, there's an important balance between client relationships and delivering projects, while building and futureproofing my own company. It was really tricky at first, so to ensure we're operating effectively, we have regular sessions where we work solely ON the business. This includes activities like developing new services, continuous reviews of processes and keeping up to date with industry news and trends so we always have our finger on the pulse.

We've also put slick systems in place to create a real feel-good experience for our clients.

Who do you most respect in your industry?

It would be impossible to pick one person. For me it's less about people in a certain industry and more about individuals who inspire me. People who are go-getters, not afraid of failing, true to their values and good at keeping their sense of humour when things go skew-whiff are the kind of characters I look up to.

What is your greatest strength?

As a brand copywriter & creative strategist, my superpower is tapping into incredible golden nuggets that a business has never explored or even thought about. It might be things like an unbelievable USP that hasn't been showcased, an important part of their brand story that's never been shared, or something they do well that their competitors aren't doing/talking about.

What is your biggest weakness?

My brain is sometimes my biggest nemesis...My mind goes a million miles an hour with ideas which makes it hard for me to take a step back from work and make time for myself.

What has been your proudest achievement?

Being shortlisted for a Tees Businesswomen Award was a pretty big moment for me! It was a reflection of our fantastic clients and their brand transformations, and a sure sign that people are recognising the power in having a strong brand.

I've also had a few 'pinch me' moments getting to work with some major international organisations.

What are your future career aspirations?

To continue to grow and scale Blonde Creative Ltd. This year we're launching our Brand Blitz workshops, writing our first book, creating an online course and getting our internal comms service out there to help businesses get things right from the inside out.

How do you like to unwind?

I'm really outdoorsy, so I take any opportunity to get out in the fresh air with my gorgeous dog, Hugo. It's the best way for me to switch off and get a bit of headspace. I think I need the walks more than he does!

www.blondecreative.co.uk
holly@blondecreative.co.uk
07581291510

“

*...what a ride
we've had
so far...*





...Why we love our business...

It's February – the month of love and Valentine's Day of course. Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what they love about their business.



To celebrate Valentine's day, I wished to say why I love working as CEO for Tell Us North. An important part of what we deliver are the Healthwatch services in Gateshead and Newcastle, so we gather and champion the views of the users of health and social care services. The reason I love this work is because we aim to understand the needs, experiences, and concerns of the public and to speak out on their behalf. This can result in real changes and improvements to local health and social care services. Our independency and work we do helps to make these services better for their users, what can't you love about making a difference on behalf of people who aren't usually heard?

Yvonne Probert CEO Tell Us North
www.healthwatchnewcastle.org.uk

I love our HUB, in Consett. It is the community and training space I've dreamed of for 10 years and as we got the keys on 1 Feb 2022, we are celebrating on the 14th of February by asking our business community to join us and tell us what they love about their businesses!

We love being creative and recently our members designed their own vision boards.

Nicola Jayne Little Mint Business Club
www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk



What's not to love about working with organisations? Seeing their passion, being a part of it, and being inspired to support them get to where they want to be with it, it's definitely a role I love!

Karen Goldfinch "Karen Goldfinch – Your Business Pilot"
www.facebook.com/yourbusinesspilot



For many years Off The Grid Adventures have run a range of amazing programmes and activities. We know they are amazing from the great feedback we get from the young people and adults that we work with. The thing we love most of all is listening to the stories and experiences people have when they come away with us, every story is unique, and every day is different! You may be part of the mentoring programme, taking part in holiday activities or doing personal development work. We guarantee you will love our tailored experiences and be hungry for more adventure. Happy Valentines everyone!

Paul Kirkpatrick
www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk



My French classes are always full of fun and we although we work hard, we always have a laugh. I love challenging my learners, bringing them activities to help them practice and extend their knowledge of French. In fact, I've been teaching some people for 10 years or more, and they keep coming back. There's always something more to learn. I'm still learning, and I love that!

If you'd like to join one of my classes just get in touch barbara@linguaforme.co.uk www.linguaforme.co.uk



We are a small team but absolutely love being able to work with a fantastic group of partners across Northumberland and North of Tyne in order to bring aspiration and inspiration to children, young people, and their families.

We are lead delivery partner for the Northumberland Holiday Activities Partnership which means we get to see all the great work that is going on to make this happen.

Our team meetings are full of 'what we can do' rather than 'what is not possible', and we are lucky to be able to have the creative space to achieve this with so many people in the community.

We also love that we get to work alongside fabulous young leaders who are the key ingredient to our work. They are fun, passionate and bring energy to everything we do!

What's not to love?

Lyn Horton CEO Leading Link www.leadinglink.co.uk



My love of all things creative is the driving force behind my business. I've always loved being creative and using my photography and art skills to help myself relax, come up with ideas and create beautiful products. I started Powder Butterfly to not only allow myself the freedom to work around my young family but to design and create high quality products that I would love to have in my own home. Receiving positive feedback from my growing customer base is just the icing on the cake!

Corinne Lewis- Ward www.powderbutterfly.com

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.

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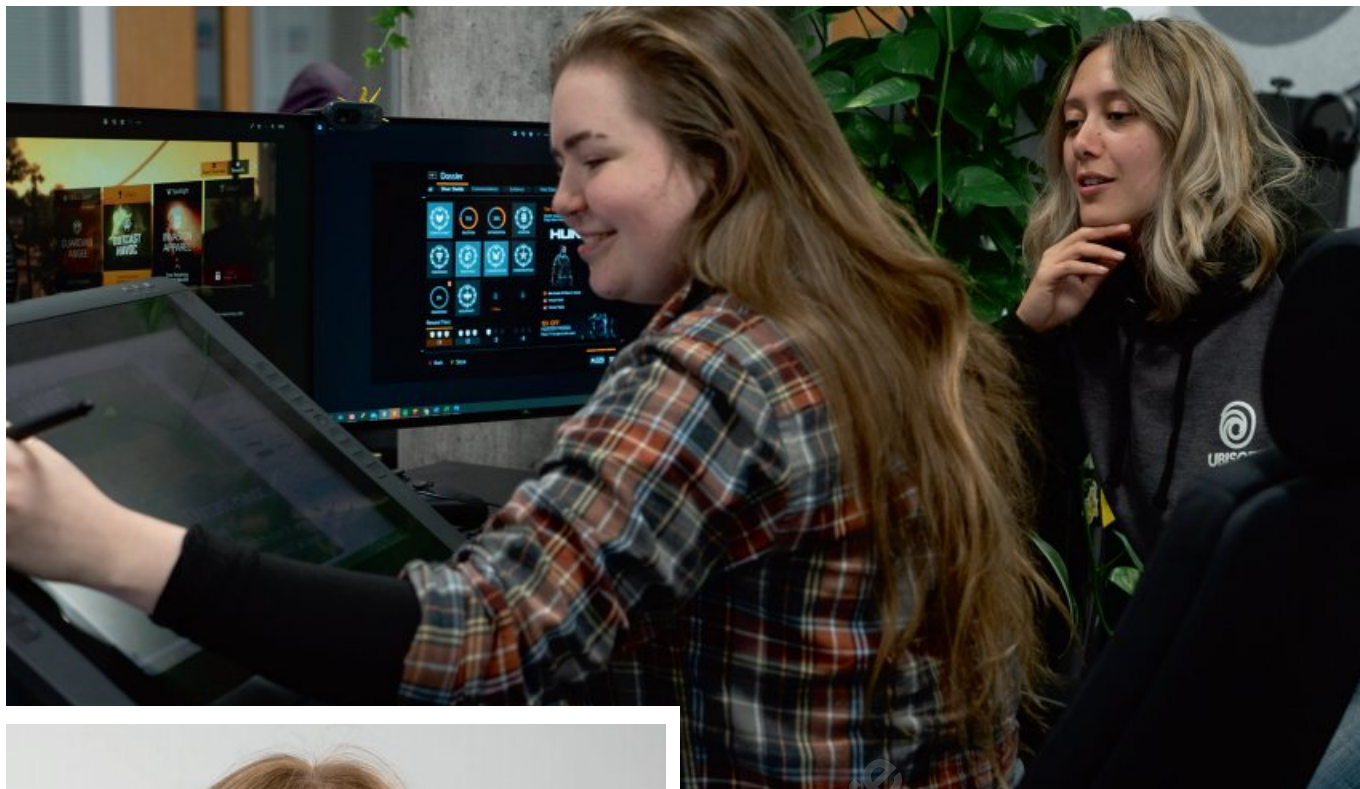
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What will your career journey look like in 2023?

In this month's edition, Veronica talks to Kala Preston, Senior Events and Studio Marketing Manager at Ubisoft Reflections and Ubisoft Leamington.

Thanks for joining me today and participating in our talks with Northumbria University undergraduates.

Veronica Swindale, nesma MD

Kala, you've had a fascinating career; how has this developed so far?

I started working for agencies in the region in advertising and design, working for retail, B2B and arts and culture sector clients. Alongside working full-time, I started my CIM journey and took a course to gain professional marketing qualifications.

I enjoyed working with my culture sector clients and had the opportunity to make the move client side to a regional theatre, then a dance company and I went on to spend seven years with a design festival, working with amazing designers and makers in our region.

I then moved into an Event Director role with conference brand MuseumNext and had the opportunity to produce events in the US, Australia, and Europe. I then worked with Scaleup North East, delivered by RTC North, producing engagement events for businesses embarking on their scale-up journey.

Around three years ago, I moved into my current role, working in the video games sector across Ubisoft Reflections in Newcastle and Ubisoft Leamington studios.

What have you learnt along the way with each organisation?

So much! Working in agencies gave me a great grounding in relationship building, collaboration, research, and project management. Working within small arts organisations gave me a huge appreciation for and exposure to all aspects of running a business, from strategic business planning, budget and financial planning, funding applications and reporting and managing teams. And working in events specifically has given me experience in logistics, programme and speaker curation, and a knack for creative problem-solving! I can draw on things I've learnt across all my roles; I've gathered skills and experiences and built knowledge along the way, working across very different sectors.

What do you enjoy most about your current role as Senior Events and Studio Marketing Manager at Ubisoft?

Working within the games sector is a joy, especially with people that are so talented and passionate about what they do. Being part of a global brand working with our HQ in Paris and other studios in the network is exciting.

Every day is different, which I love! My day-to-day job consists of organising studio events, from our annual conference bringing together all 400 staff members to in-studio celebrations to external event participation that promotes and raises the profile of the studios in the UK. I am also part of the Studio Leadership Team and enjoy working with different teams and individuals throughout the studios.

I'll be looking forward to supporting our Graduate Campaign launch this January, where we will be looking for recent graduates across programming and other disciplines to join the business.

Why did you choose to do the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme, and how has that influenced your work?

It had been a while since I'd done any formal professional development after finishing my MA in Cultural Management in 2006. It was the clear option to return to the CIM for a leadership-specific qualification. Learning with NESMA was attractive due to the flexible delivery and one-to-one tutorials. It's been great meeting the other students studying with NESMA during the socials and group sessions.

Because the course is work-related the module assessments have given me the opportunity to reflect on our sector and explore specific projects in more detail, it has been useful to apply what I've learnt in a very practical way.

You can chat more with Kala here www.linkedin.com/in/kala-preston-mcim-286141a/ and find out more about reflections.ubisoft.com

The CIM Marketing Leadership Programme is a postgraduate-level qualification aimed at senior marketers with at least five years of senior management experience. It is equally suited to managers of any discipline and business owners. The programme applies strategic thinking to facilitate and implement change at the highest level.

If you want to continue your professional development in Marketing with practical, transferable, and accredited qualifications, the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme could be the right choice.

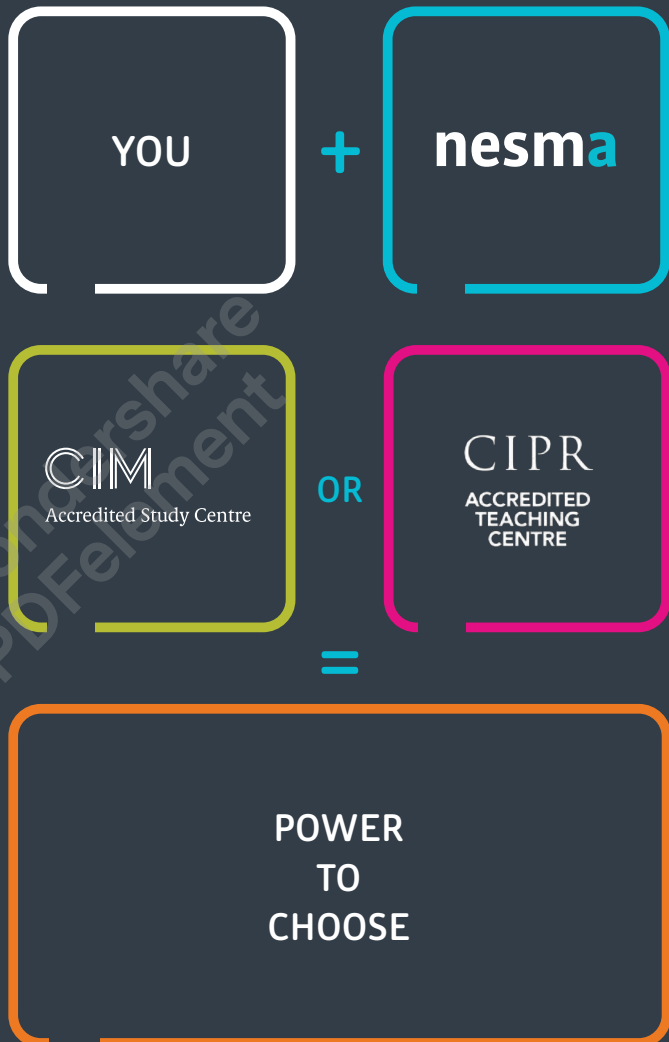


Kala Preston, Senior Events and Studio Marketing Manager at Ubisoft Reflections

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Global praise for North East skills and employment programme



An innovative skills programme designed and developed by Ryder and Gateshead College has received international recognition.

PlanBEE (Built Environment Education), which was launched in 2016, won the further and higher education category at the 2022 Inspire Future Generation Awards.

The first programme of its kind, PlanBEE is an industry driven higher apprenticeship scheme designed to help attract and retain talent in the built environment and construction sector and solve the skills shortage the industry is facing.

Supported by a growing consortium of over 40 businesses across the UK, the pioneering programme combines study with working for some of the construction industry's leading companies including Ryder, Sir Robert McAlpine, Bowmer & Kirkland, Cundall, Gleeds and NBS.

Apprentices rotate around these employers and get to experience a wide range of roles and disciplines within the sector including architecture, structural and building services

engineering and management and project and cost management.

The programme has been an overwhelming success, delivering over 300 industry placements with 98% of apprentices progressing into permanent jobs. Building on the success of the scheme in the North East, PlanBEE Manchester was launched in 2020 and there are further plans to launch the programme in other areas of the country.

Peter Barker, Partner at Ryder said: "It's wonderful news to win further recognition of our success through this award. PlanBEE is a great example of the benefit of close collaboration between industry and education to nurture a growing diversity of exceptional talent, leading to exciting careers in our industry."

David Alexander, principal at Gateshead College, said: "It's fantastic to win such a

prestigious award and it highlights the positive impact PlanBEE has on the lives of learners and on the future of the industry too.

"PlanBEE enables talented people to enter an innovative, exciting industry and supports employers to find the skills they need both now and in the future. It's transformed the way the industry sources talent and has created lasting change and real impact for people in the region.

"We're so proud of our PlanBEE apprentices and graduates as well as the teachers who work closely with all of the PlanBEE employers to make it the success it is."

The Inspire Future Generations Awards, established in September 2021, recognise organisations and initiatives globally that have been working with young people, helping them to engage in activities that promote a better built environment.

For further information on PlanBEE including how to apply for September 2023, visit www.gateshead.ac.uk/planbee

Make your marketing work harder



Apprentice star Reece Donnelly returns to Sunderland to inspire students

A drama graduate-turned theatre entrepreneur, who is currently starring in the new series of the BBC's *The Apprentice*, has visited the University of Sunderland to inspire the next generation of budding performers.

Reece Donnelly, who is hoping to become Lord Alan Sugar's next business partner, graduated at the Stadium of Light in 2017 with a University of Sunderland BA (Hons) in Drama – which he studied at West College Scotland, a former University TNE (Transnational Education) partner college.

The Glaswegian businessman returned to Wearside to check out the Performing Arts facilities at the University's Priestman Building – where he was treated to a performance by Year 2 and 3 students, which was part of their rehearsals for their upcoming show "Spring Awakening".

Reece then answered students' questions about his career success and shared tips and advice on how to make it in the performing arts industry.



Reece runs his own theatre school, has appeared on stage and screen, as well as having a massive Instagram following.

On being back on Sunderland soil, the 25-year-old said: "The University of Sunderland has been great. It has been so good to be back and see all the magic going on in the University's Performing Arts discipline.

"Watching the students perform was brilliant, I feel like I had stepped back in time to my time in training. They were great, fantastically talented – and I think you can see just how much the University's modules and courses are shining through them."

Gateshead College and JD Sports partnership creates jobs

One of the North East's leading colleges has teamed up with a global retail sports giant to enable employment opportunities for people across the region and help with the staffing crisis the retail sector is experiencing.

Working with Sunderland-based employment partner Path2Solutions and the Metrocentre, Gateshead College has seen students secure full time jobs directly from its customer service course. The college runs the four-day course at the Metrocentre and partnered with JD Sports to help them recruit and fill vacancies - a key issue many retailers across the region are currently facing.

The course is specifically tailored to develop work ready skills for retail positions. Following the course, all eight candidates were offered a job at JD Sports in the Metrocentre store.

Jodie Smith, a retail sales manager at JD Sports, said: "Many retailers across the North East and other regions are facing challenging times from a recruitment perspective.

"Given the skills shortage we face in retail, working in partnership with the Metrocentre, Path2Solutions and Gateshead College has been really rewarding.

"It's enabled us to not just fill our vacancies but genuinely equip local people with relevant skills that will enable them to lead a successful career in retail."

The course started on a Monday and by Friday afternoon all candidates were offered a

position at JD Sports ranging from cashiers to warehouse assistants.

Vicky Cross, head of department - digital technologies and business at Gateshead College, said: "We pride ourselves on being a training provider of choice, helping to meet skills shortages faced by businesses and equipping people with work ready skills they need to secure a permanent job.

"We forge employer partnerships that we know will make a difference and deliver tangible value to both our students and the businesses we work with.

"It's important to construct bespoke courses that are tailored to enable the development of specific skills so that people are prepared to fulfil the responsibilities of their job role and businesses are given the skills they need to continue to grow and succeed.

"Everyone involved in this partnership has played a critical role in not just creating jobs for our students but also helping to meet current and future industry needs.

"As a college we're constantly developing new ways to help improve employability and also meet the needs of employers too. We wish our students the best of luck as they start their career in retail."



It's a hat trick!

The Royal Grammar School (RGS) Newcastle has once again been named The Sunday Times 2023 North East's Top Independent School by Parent Power, The Sunday Times Schools Guide.

Published online at Parent Power is widely acknowledged as the most authoritative survey of the country's best performing schools. The 30th edition of Parent Power has ranked 1,700 schools according to the latest GCSE and A-Level exam results.

The award comes on the back of RGS achieving this top accolade in 2022; the school was also awarded the highly coveted recognition of Sunday Times North East Independent School of the Decade in 2021.

Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster of RGS Newcastle, said: "To be recognised again by The Sunday Times as the Top Independent School in the North East is a remarkable honour. We are rightly proud of our consistently outstanding public examination results, the product of our students' hard work and determination plus the expertise and encouragement of our staff. To have over 90% of A-Level grades at A*-B and 85.40% of GCSEs at A*-A, is incredible and competes with the best schools in the country."



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It's time to nominate staff from your school for their great work!

When South Tyneside teaching assistant Suzanne Blackburn won the Inspirational Staff Award, she felt “completely overwhelmed”.

Nominated by pupils at St Matthew's Catholic Primary school in Jarrow, she won the award last year for going above and beyond the expectations of her role, supporting the learning and development of children at the school, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust.

The Chadwick Celebration Awards are a way for the Trust to celebrate their employees' work across their 30 primary and secondary schools and nominations have opened for this year's accolades.

“One of the Trust's values is celebration and we want to celebrate all our staff across the Trust who go that extra mile,” said Brendan Tapping, CEO of BCCET.

“There are 16 categories this year and, as last year, only pupils can nominate in the Inspirational Staff Award category. We would like you to think about all the staff at your school – the headteacher and teachers, the teaching



assistants, the office staff, the kitchen staff, caretaking team, and nominate who you think has done a really good job.”

This year, there are 16 awards categories for staff to enter including the new Everyday Hero award.

Nominations should be a minimum of 50 words and a maximum of 200 words and can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/bccet2023>

Nominations for the Inspirational Staff Member Award, which is nominated by pupils, is on a separate nomination form at tinyurl.com/form23pupil

The closing date for nominations is 27th March 2023. Finalists will be notified in May and the winners will be announced on 14th July 2023.



School's PE lessons for primary staff win award

A South Tyneside primary school has won an award for improving the physical and mental health of the staff.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, has been awarded the Better Health at Work Bronze Award.

Teacher Maureen McMillin, who is the BHAWA lead at the Jarrow primary school, started the process to “improve the lives of all of our staff” for a happier, healthier team.

From exercising with Joe Wicks via his Body Coach app to enjoying Fruity Friday, the staff members have participated in a range of activities over the last year aimed at improving their physical health and wellbeing. Other areas of focus included women's health, work-life balance, managing stress, cancer awareness and advice on quitting smoking.

“Taking part in the Better Health at Work Award has been a great opportunity to reflect on how we support and take care of each other,” said Mrs McMillin.

“We have initiated many new events, such as Fruity Friday and book swaps, while signposting staff to colleagues for specific support. This support has come through staff at St Joseph's, as well as colleagues within our Trust.

“We now look forward to applying for and completing the silver award, with the added bonus of even better health for our community.”

Headteacher Paul Craig said: “As a school community, we try to make sure we take care of each other. This includes our wonderful staff.

“It is fantastic that we have achieved the bronze award, which recognises the value we put on our colleagues.”



New Music Award Sings the Praises of Primary School Pupils

A Sunderland primary school is singing from the rafters after winning the Sunderland Music Mark award for the second time.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was awarded the honour from Sunderland Music Hub in recognition of its “commitment to providing a high-quality music education for all children and young people”.

The Meadows school's music curriculum is provided by Elizabeth Paget, music lead at St Mary's, singing teacher Laura Parkin, who is a semi-professional singer, and violin teacher

Emma Mapplebeck, as well as music lessons delivered by Music Mates.

“We are really chuffed that we have won this award,” said Mrs Paget, who delivered music lessons throughout the pandemic via video.

“It's nice to have that recognition for the school and to know that they value everything we do.

“The Music Hub provides a space and events for us to take the children to and CPD for teachers and networking opportunities.

“Sunderland is a great place for music. Sunderland Music Hub always promotes music and has always been supportive of us. In Sunderland, there is the new music venue, The Fire Station; Seventeen Nineteen, the former Holy Trinity Church; and we're getting a new arena so music is big in Sunderland.”

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New Year, new me?

By the time this comes to publication, the not-so-merry month of January will have come and gone and the pupils at my school will have been back at school for weeks, and already looking forward to the February half term.

If you have made New Year's resolutions, you might have already reneged on at least one of them, and perhaps you are already thinking of the lost opportunities, lack of weight loss/copy of *The Brief History of Time* still languishing, unread, on your bookcase.

For 2023, I decided that I would have a year of 'Highbrow Living', as counterblast to the number of Netflix boxsets I watched over Christmas and the volume of detective novels I read. The advantages of these resolutions are such: I am not claiming that they will make me lose weight, get fitter, or even help my pocket, but they might just help stem the post-Christmas intellectual slump I feel.

So, in no particular order, here are my resolutions:

Swap 80s pop music for Radio 3

My musical tastes as a teenager were, ironically, more eclectic and intellectually challenging than they are now. As a child of the 1980s, I inhaled the culture and music like a proper aficionado, but I was also a serious student of O Level Music, and could tell the differences between a motet, madrigal and anthem with relative aplomb. However, I was never a fan of Radio 3, eschewing its musical Brahmins for the delights of Gary Davies on Radio 1. Now, my musical diet is, in the main, in a time warp of 70s Disco and the decade of the Smiths and the Pet Shop Boys, and I decided that enough was enough. Therefore, instead of asking Alexa to play 'It's a Sin', I have started to listen to Radio 3, with its



Simone Niblock

dulcet-toned presenters and performances of Bartok and Bach. I haven't yet had to endure any Wagner, but give it time, and I might be able to sit through *The Ring Cycle* and leave Bananarama behind.

Listen to podcasts at the gym, rather than Chic's Greatest Hits on a loop

Each gym session so far this year, I have chosen a different podcast to listen to when I have managed to drag myself to do weights and cardio. To date, whilst avoiding looking at myself in the mirror on the rowing machine, I have learned, amongst other things, about the history of pubs in Britain; the history of perfume; the poetry of Thomas Hardy; and the concept of Transubstantiation. It took me a while to get into my stride: the incongruity of listening to a recitation of Hardy's 'The Darkling Thrush' as I try to reach my PB on the treadmill was a bit off-putting, and it was tempting to put 'Le Freak' back on. However, I have persevered, and it has been remarkably enlightening, particularly the bit in the perfume podcast about the contents

of ambergris: I will never look at my bottle of Coco by Chanel in the same way again.

Stop watching videos of pandas 'hilariously' falling over on Facebook and watch Ted Talks regularly

Much to my husband's bemusement, I have a penchant for animal videos on social media, especially pandas and three-legged dogs who have overcome incredible adversity to find their 'forever home'. Instead, I have started downloading Ted Talk classics such as Ken Robinson's Creativity talk, and Andrea Duckworth's Grit lecture. Both went down very well, but I still have a longing to see extracts from *SuperVet*, so this change might take a little longer.

Wish me luck!

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GIRLS 3-18





The ever-evolving future of education

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster,
RGS Newcastle

While some people refer to returning to a 'sense of normality' after the last couple of years, education does not stand still.

Indeed, the Newcastle Royal Grammar School has a long history stretching nearly 500 years, in which time much has evolved and there are many changes that schools are currently grappling with. For example, we learned a lot about education technology over the last couple of years that we are taking forward in how we educate our pupils and AI, as illustrated by ChatGPT, has huge potential to further revolutionise both teaching and learning.

Separately, the Prime Minister has announced his intent that all students up to the age of 18 should study maths and, in parallel, we have the leader of the opposition stating the Labour Party's commitment to introducing VAT on independent schooling. While we may have different views about the costs and benefits of each of these two policies, in both cases they have been proposed with the aim of making a positive difference for young people. Despite all the good intention, however, there are inherent difficulties with both.

As far as all students taking Maths to 18 is concerned, even if the UK had enough teachers to implement the policy, which we don't, how is

this policy going to be made accessible? Maths is a cumulative subject in which proficiency is built up over time so targeting the policy at post 16 education does not address the underlying issue. Imagine lamenting the piano playing skills of 18 year olds and then solving this by introducing grade 5 piano lessons for all 16 year olds! The real issue that the Prime Minister needs to address is the quality of maths learning pre-16. At the RGS, much of the partnership work carried out by both our dedicated Maths partnership teacher and our Director of Partnerships (himself previously Head of Maths at the RGS) is targeted at this issue, not only working with young people directly but also helping upskill non specialist teachers in local State schools.


Meanwhile, the proposed Labour policy to charge VAT on private school fees may be seen as an easy win to tax 'the rich' to distribute to 'the poor'. However, this policy also has significant complexities and very likely unintended consequences, from which everyone loses. It would make independent education even more unaffordable and would eventually lead to the closure of hundreds of independent schools, displacing those children into the State system and placing a greater burden on the public purse. It would also limit the lifechanging bursary and partnership programmes delivered by schools like the RGS and, ultimately, lead to a levelling down from which no one benefits.

At the RGS, we consciously target our bursary funds of c.£1.2 million a year to be transformational for families with the brightest children from the most challenging circumstances. With the addition of VAT, the funds we could raise would diminish and the number of bursary students we could support would fall.

Our partnership work is a daily reminder of the phenomenal teachers and schools we have in the North East but they are facing a perfect storm of rising costs, teacher shortages, and significantly increased pastoral needs. With an additional VAT burden on independent schools, RGS partnership work would also be at risk and our ability to support the State system would be curtailed when it is needed the most. Some might say that the abolition of all independent schools should be the ultimate goal but evidence also shows us that those who can, will buy more expensive homes closer to the best performing State schools, pushing out those families who can no longer afford to live in a coveted catchment area. We would end up with a selective system anyway at the cost of the public purse. Perhaps we ought to reframe the conversation and ask how we make all State schools excellent for all young people, before we consider squeezing the lower earners out of the opportunity for high quality Independent education.

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Interview with the Headmaster...

Chris Johnson

Headteacher, Argyle House School

What, in your opinion, sets Argyle House School apart from other education providers?

We are a family-owned school, with an outstanding heritage. The size of our school allows the teachers and pupils to really know one another, which forms the most amazing bond with the children.

Argyle House School is known for its family-oriented environment. What is the impact this has on the development of children?

It allows the school to develop the whole child, so they feel strong in their academic ability, but also in their social ability and understanding of the world around them and how they can be a big part in its development.

How much emphasis do you place on extra curricular activities?

The school places a great emphasis on extra-curricular activities because this helps develop the holistic child and gives them another purpose. We provide some fun clubs to clubs where abilities are pushed to achieve more.

What major student achievements have happened in the past 12-18 months?

Seeing our Year 11's in August 2022, after two years of disruption all achieve past their target grades, where 85% achieved a grade seven and above. Watching the school ski team win the U19 National English ski trophy and then going onto the National competition and coming third in the U19 category when all of our boys are 16 years and younger. A final comment is that one of our ski team is representing Great Britain at the Youth Games in Turkey and another has become an ambassador for Snow Sport England.



Chris Johnson

What can prospective parents expect from Argyle House School?

Parents can expect a school which cares for the individual child and wants to help them achieve their personal goals.

What positive changes have you seen in education generally and what further changes would you like to see going forward?

One of the most positive changes I have seen recently is that Ofsted/ISI have gone back to looking at the whole education of the child, rather than just the academic. I would like to see further changes in the GCSE exam structure which allows children to be tested in different ways, rather than just being by an exam.

What is your fondest career memory?

Everyday I work at Argyle House School produces a memory for me, so I can't say I have just one.

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

I would have to say my mam, she showed me how to be compassionate and how to listen and help people, whereas my dad made me realise that I can always achieve in whatever I do.

How do you relax away from the desk?

Spending time with my family; watching my two boys play football for a local team on a Saturday and not forgetting walking my two dogs every day.

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In conversation with...



Helen Ketteringham

Helen Ketteringham

After joining NCFE in November 2022, Helen Ketteringham, Executive Director of People, reflects on her first months in the role, her career to date, and how the educational charity has evolved as it heads towards its 175 year anniversary.

How have you found the first few months in your role?

"I've been welcomed into the NCFE team wholeheartedly and have enjoyed meeting so many great people. I've observed that colleagues share a strong passion for NCFE's vision and purpose, which is really energising.

"The weeks are flying by, and I've been spending my time so far understanding the business and our future aspirations. I really look forward to working with talented colleagues to achieve our people vision."

What is NCFE doing well from a people perspective?

"We have a skilled and dedicated People Services team who work at the heart of the business to provide progressive policies, frameworks, resources, and support to enable colleagues to achieve our business outcomes and enjoy fulfilling careers.

"NCFE invests in its colleagues and offers great benefits, including a personal development budget and time provision that empowers colleague-led learning. This is supported by a

developmentally focused leadership approach and internal coaching solutions.

"NCFE responds to changing times proactively and listens to colleagues. An example of that is the recent introduction of 'Connection Days' which aim to balance the benefits of hybrid working with the need for colleagues to spend time collaborating and learning together."

What opportunities have you seen within NCFE?

"As we strive to deliver our vision for people, we recognise the need to be agile in our practices and mindset. NCFE has a vast heritage and having grown in scale and maturity, continues to learn and evolve. We're living in times of significant change, which creates uncertainty and demand, but also opportunities to innovate and to influence positive change in the world of work.

"NCFE promotes learning for everyone and values equality, diversity, and inclusion. We have a wealth of skills, experience, and aspirations within our workforce, and it's good to hear of internal talent movement during recent months. Strengthening our capabilities will enable us to strive forward and shape real change."

Tell us a bit about your career to date.

"I've enjoyed a varied Human Resources career, previously working in retail, financial services and local government. I'm a qualified coach with a keen interest in psychology and believe that everyone should have access to continuous learning and career development.

"I also volunteer as a mentor to young people through the Steps Ahead Programme and support career strategy in local schools for the Career Enterprise Company."

Have you always wanted to work in HR and what do you enjoy about it?

"I chose to pursue HR during sixth form at school and have now exceeded 20 years in

the industry. It's a privilege to help others find purpose, happiness and success at work whilst adding value to the organisation.

"No two days are the same and working in HR certainly comes with challenges – however, I really enjoy the profession. I work with a fantastic team of people and feel well supported professionally by the CIPD and Association for Coaching communities."

What attracted you to the role at NCFE?

"When I first connected with NCFE, I felt compelled by its vast heritage and societal purpose that benefits the education and careers of current and future generations. During the recruitment process I had inspiring conversations with members of the Executive team, Board of Trustees, and wider business.

"I soon realised a strong values alignment, which is important to me. NCFE's people share a desire to make a difference and shape real change. The scope and impact are limitless if we harness this energy and apply the combined strengths, aspirations, and perspectives of our people to our business goals."

Finally, what is the most important thing you've learned in your career so far?

"I'm always learning if I remain curious and apply a growth mindset. I know that being completely authentic at work serves us best. As humans we can also choose our response to any given situation, which is empowering and encourages us to consider others' perspectives and value difference.

"If we start with the why, the what and how will come and coaching can help with that. I've also learned that pausing to reflect and take breaks helps me to go faster in the long run. A person's success can only be measured when we know what success means to them, so self-awareness and discovery is good investment of time."

[ncfe.org.uk](https://www.ncfe.org.uk)



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Sunderland Empire and AGE UK Sunderland join forces to launch Matinée Mingle

AGE UK service users Alan, Tom and Wanda met for their first Matinée Mingle last month.

Sunderland Empire and Age UK Sunderland have joined forces to launch Matinée Mingle.

Working together to alleviate social isolation and loneliness that many older people in our community experience, Matinée Mingle is for people aged 50 and over who are unsure about going to see a show alone.

'Matinée Mingle' is a safe and warm, welcoming area set aside in one of the bars at the theatre with a personal welcome from both an Age UK Sunderland and Sunderland Empire representative. Attendees will then be introduced to other like-minded theatregoers who can make themselves comfortable in their own space, giving individuals the opportunity to socialise and form companionships.

Matinée Mingle will take place from 45 minutes



prior and during the interval of selected upcoming midweek matinée performances, the first of which has taken place ahead of a performance of Aladdin, where Age UK Sunderland invited some of its service users to take part.

Marie Nixon, Theatre Director at the Sunderland Empire said, "We care deeply about the local community so we're delighted to launch this initiative which we hope will give those people who are nervous about attending alone the confidence to join us, rest assured that when they arrive, they'll be able to enjoy the experience with other theatre fans."

Kema's work will Shine in drama musical

The story of a young man's difficult upbringing on the streets of Tyneside after leaving his home in Zambia is currently being developed into a contemporary TV musical drama.

Kema Kay's production of "Shine" received rave reviews when it played at Newcastle's Live Theatre and subsequently earned him an award at the North East Culture Awards 2022.

Now a collaboration between Newcastle production company Scattered Pictures and Bristol based Seven Seas Films is working with Kema to bring the play to life on the small screen.

Scattered Pictures is run by talented North East actor, presenter, writer, and producer Kim Tserkezie. Kim's focus is firmly on promoting underrepresented talent both in front of and behind the camera lens. In 2022, she was named in the top 10 most influential disabled people in the UK (Shaw Trust Power 100) while in 2020, she won a Royal Television Society Award for best drama performance for her leading role in Obsession (BFI Network).

Co-producer Simon Lupton also has a distinguished pedigree to bring to the partnership. As a comedy commissioner he was responsible for high profile sitcoms including



Marley's Ghosts and two series of Red Dwarf.

Kema's story is about being different and having to work extra hard to achieve your dreams. The original play also featured Kema's own music and hard-hitting lyrics which illustrated his life in an evocative and moving way which he will also feature in the musical version.

Kim has been working closely with Kema as a mentor for a number of years and has watched his career blossom with a lead role in I, Daniel Blake, through to his musical talent and the stage production of "Shine."

"Kema and I both grew up in working-class, North East council estates with big dreams of working in the entertainment industries. We have bonded over commonality for sure, but what instantly drew me to Kema was his unique talents. Thanks to BFI Young Audiences Content Fund, I feel so lucky I have this opportunity to work with him and help nurture his beautiful and important story."



Rebecca's new book brings joy

Life-coach and author, Dr Rebecca Dinsdale from Sunderland has previously penned two books aimed at helping people seek positivity and reflection, now, she has completed the third in the series Lifejoy Journal, which is an adventure to hope, happiness and harmony.

The remarkable thing about the book is that the positivity it sends masks the hardships Rebecca endures with a debilitating condition that has been with her for more than 30 years.

"Being so ill teaches you resilience, gives you great fortitude and an appreciation for the things in life that we do have. No matter what your ailment, there's always thousands of people who are worse off than you who would gladly swap with you. It's all about perspective and the way you look at life and the books are there to help you to find the coping strategies to manage those difficult days," she said.

The book is written in short sections so if you're unwell or have no energy or time, you can read a single page and feel better for it. Rebecca believes the book is the epitome of self-care and can give more benefits than a visit to the spa or a retail therapy spree. She sees self-care as an inside job.

"I love writing and talking to people but most of all, I love listening. I'm always inspired by brave people so my books celebrate goodness, courage and joy and I hope that after you've read even just a couple of pages, you feel better and that you can cope with the difficult things in your life," she said.

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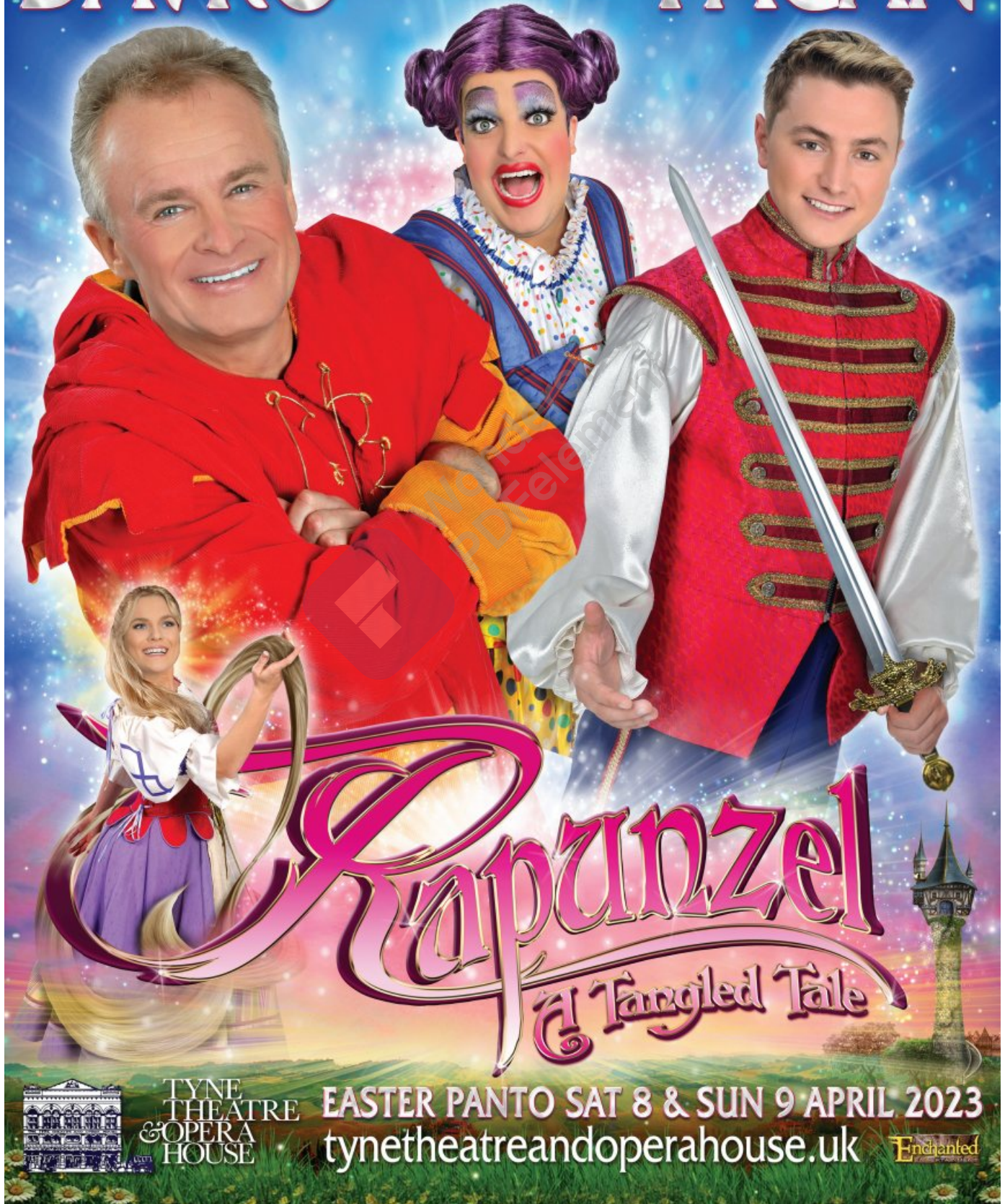
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Direct from the West End and widely acknowledged as the UK's best, frontman Paul Metcalfe is breathtaking as Sir Rod and captures all the excitement, energy and charisma of the legendary performer including the phenomenal vocals, infamous moves and swaggering showmanship that have made Rod Stewart one of the most successful artists of all time.

www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk



Otterly magic!

By Mary Ann Rogers

Post Christmas blues, and a recovering snapped thumb tendon anxiety have been swept away by the thrill of regular sightings of a relative newcomer (returner) to the river where we live.

Twice lately, when the river has been far too high and fast for swimming, we have had the privilege of spotting not just one, but two otters splashing about in the river where we live and coming ashore to crunch up whatever they were eating.

With the recent cold weather, ice has formed at the edges of the river. Yesterday I heard a tinkling sound coming from the river as I walked along the road, so I crept closer to investigate. There, on the other side of the

river, was an otter working its way along the shore, splashing up through the ice and busily searching for something. It swam across the river to my side, with its head above water, its whiskers sparkling in the bright winter sunshine.

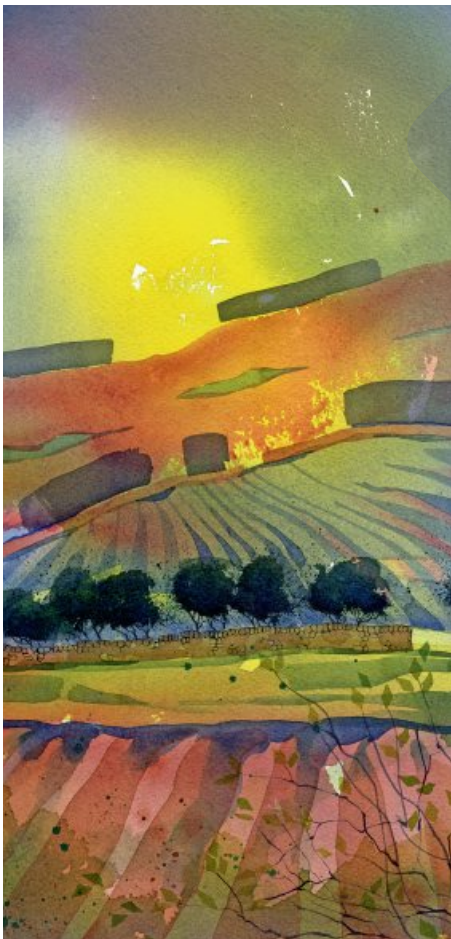
It is observations like these which can lead to a series of paintings, inspired by direct contact with the subject. As I write, I just don't have enough understanding or knowledge of otters to consider painting them, plus I would realistically need to get much closer and ideally, handle one, to discover their physiology and where the power comes from.

New paintings have been inspired by watching a handsome cock pheasant regularly creeping about in the undergrowth at home. They are still finding berries as well as pinching the bird food we put out, which the squirrels also find.

2023 is already feeling like a good year. An early invitation to exhibit in one of my favourite galleries is an exciting start!

Visitors are welcome to the gallery just outside West Woodburn, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 10-4, also Sunday 2-5pm. Great local walks, pubs and cafes!

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Out and about...



Wakefield Cathedral



Barbara Hepworth studio



Chantry on medieval bridge

Wakefield

Thursday, 5th January was not the most auspicious date for a trip out by train: an ASLEF strike day sandwiched between two RMT walk-outs. But LNER was running a skeleton service which allowed me to reach Wakefield via Doncaster, travelling on a Durham to London train with a connection to Wakefield Westgate. Travelling first class, the outward ticket was £50.60 and coming back was only £25.10. Normally, when trains are available via Leeds, the day return fare with a railcard is about £22. Wakefield has two stations, Westgate and Kirkgate, and both were rather hidden away but now have direct pedestrian links into the city centre with new vistas. In the City Centre, paving tiles cover the main pedestrian area but seemed rather slippery on a wet day even though I was wearing stout shoes. I shudder to think what it is like in ice and snow.

I could have used the Wakefield Free Bus to get from Westgate station to my first objective, the Hepworth Wakefield. This is a useful service running every ten minutes, and is also to be found in Leeds and Huddersfield. But close by was the mediaeval Chantry, set on a stone bridge, built about 1342. Here prayers would be said for the deceased, usually the person(s) who paid for the Chantry. It is now in the care of Wakefield Cathedral. Over a busy road to the Hepworth, I found Barbara

Hepworth's studio in replica, and many of her sculptural works, together with three temporary exhibitions comprising a photographic exhibition, some fantasy paintings and an area devoted to British Surrealism. All the galleries in this series of big grey cubes are on the first floor, and the inside is much more appealing than the exterior. There's also a pleasant café downstairs.

Wakefield has several fine nineteenth-century civic buildings, but the newest, One Wakefield, contains the interesting town museum which is worth half an hour's exploration. It is not large, but crammed with relevant artifacts, and worth seeking out between the Civic Quarter and Westgate station. It also tells the story of Charles Waterton (1782-1865) who was a Catholic naturalist, environmentalist and slave owner. One of his freed slaves practiced taxidermy in Edinburgh and taught the skill to the young Charles Darwin.

I had hoped to visit the Mental Health Museum at Fieldhead Hospital, a leading museum on this vital subject. Open Tuesdays to Thursdays 1300-1600, you have to book your visit on 01924 316360. When I phoned, I was told that they were closed for the Christmas break until 13th January, which was a disappointment but at least avoided a wasted trip. To go there, bus 111 (as in NHS 111!) goes to the adjacent

Pinderfields hospital half hourly from top stand 24 in the town bus station, at 19 and 49 past the hour. Somewhere to remember for another trip.

Instead, I went to the impressive Cathedral and said evening prayer with three members of the clergy. I finished my excursion to Wakefield at Estabulo, a Brazilian steakhouse a couple of minutes from the station. Estabulo is a new chain offering a fixed price combination of salad bar and meats brought round on a skewer. As such it is an upmarket all-you-can-eat restaurant, with friendly staff and a range of 15 cuts of meat in the evening, just eight at lunchtime. Whilst I can happily recommend the Wakefield location, there is another one on the River Walk at Durham, a bit closer to home. Five minutes after leaving the Wakey Estabulo, I was on the train towards home.



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Meet Leila Lily's younger sister... Eva Rose

One of Newcastle's most opulent venues has ramped up the glamour with the introduction of an exclusive new private dining room.

Leila Lily's, at Grey Street, plans to build on the success of its £1.5m, AA-rosetted restaurant and bar with Eva Rose – a private hire dining and event space.

And owners, Malhotra Group plc, are confident Eva Rose will be the new 'go to' setting for everything from family celebrations and parties, to corporate lunches and events.

The space – in the lower ground floor beneath Leila Lily's – incorporates a bar that can hold up to 60 guests and a dining area that can accommodate up to 18 people, both lavishly decorated with bespoke wallpapers and soft furnishings.

Catering is provided by Leila Lily's award-winning team of chefs, who can provide anything from canapés, afternoon teas and formal dining, to buffets and menus for children's parties, wedding receptions and themed celebrations.

There is also a DJ sound booth and stage while the venue holds a late licence until 2am.

In an echo of Leila Lily's, all wall coverings and soft furnishings are intricately patterned and have been created especially for Eva Rose.

While Leila Lily's is named after Chief Operations Officer Atul Malhotra's oldest daughter, Eva Rose takes its name from his youngest.

"And, like sisters, the two venues are alike in some ways and very different in others," he said.

"Both venues are opulently decorated and visitors to Eva Rose will find the same high standards of food and service."

Holiday Inn Sunderland officially opens as part of regeneration project

The much-anticipated Holiday Inn, located in Keel Square, Sunderland City Centre recently opened its doors creating 50 jobs.

Officially unveiled by the Mayor of Sunderland, Councillor Alison Smith, the hotel is part of Riverside Sunderland, an ambitious development aiming to elevate the city centre with a mixed-use urban quarter.

The hotel, developed and operated by Madison Cairn, boasts a unique and multi-faceted offering, appealing to both leisure and business guests by providing 120 stylish air-conditioned bedrooms, comfortable Restful Nights beds, a fully equipped gym, as well as a chic open lobby that is available to the local community as well as guests.

The open lobby space offers all-day dining, high-speed Wi-Fi and proudly serves Starbucks, making it an ideal space for local people to work and host business meetings or interviews. Adjacent to Sunderland City Hall and just a short walk to Bridges Shopping Centre, the



hotel is also perfectly placed for those visiting the vibrant, up and coming city for overnight breaks.

Rob Dixon, general manager at Holiday Inn Sunderland, said: "The opening of Holiday Inn Sunderland plays a major role in the development and regeneration of Riverside Sunderland, establishing it as a prime destination for both business and leisure. The hotel's offering is strong and varied, catering for the local community as well as those visiting from outside of the city, with a modern but relaxed feel.

"We're thrilled to see the plans become a reality after lots of work and planning and we are confident that we can provide top quality facilities to all guests, from overnight visitors to corporate groups."



Argentine steak restaurant Gaucho set to launch in Newcastle March 2023

Serving arguably the best quality steak in the world, Gaucho is set to open its first North East restaurant in Newcastle in March 2023. Bringing the restaurant group's vibrancy, elegance, and passion for the cultural and culinary heritage of modern Argentina, Gaucho's Newcastle site on Market Street will have 140 covers as well as two private dining rooms, one seating up to six diners and the other seating up to twelve.

The restaurant will showcase Gaucho's recent evolution in menus and design, inspired by modern Argentina and its global influences. A timely addition to the city's gastronomic fare, Gaucho Newcastle will become the first restaurant in the North East to serve exclusively carbon-neutral beef and embodies CEO Martin Williams' vision for the way that restaurants should operate responsibly both socially and environmentally.

Gaucho Newcastle will be offering a lunch menu, evening à la carte, group sharing, group feast, as well as Gaucho's Sunday Sessions - a bottomless Sunday Roast with live music each week. Alongside an unrivalled selection of 100% carbon-neutral steaks from Black Angus cattle, highlights from the à la carte menu include Shrimp Ceviche, Marinated Pork Matambre, Pasta Alla Norma as a vegan option and Salted Dulce de Leche Cheesecake from the dessert menu.



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Meet the GM

We are delighted to reintroduce these popular series of features. For the first Michael Grahamslaw spoke to...



Rob Dixon, General Manager, at the official opening of the Holiday Inn Sunderland with Councillor Alison Smith, Steve Cram and Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive at the Sunderland Business Improvement District (BID)

Rob Dixon

General Manager of the new Holiday Inn Sunderland

Describe your career path so far?

I began my hospitality career as a Sales Manager in 2005 in what was then the Holiday Inn Newcastle City. I joined the industry following a successful career in Telecoms, however I longed for an environment where I saw the impact of the work that I did, and I found that hotels and hospitality offer exactly that – there is no better feeling of job satisfaction than seeing a hotel busy with guests enjoying the facilities, seeing the teams within the hotel do what they do best, and that is to deliver exceptional guest service and creating amazing memories and experiences.

What has been your biggest challenges?

The last few years, since March 2020, have naturally been a challenge for everyone involved in hospitality, from venues to suppliers. Navigating the challenges that COVID-19 brought, both in terms of managing health and safety of guests and colleagues, to the financial stress of keeping a business afloat and viable during lockdown, to then coming out on the other side to a boom in demand that saw occupancies skyrocket and guest expectations heightened. Shortages in the supply chain, coupled with challenges in the labour market, meant using every tool in the arsenal to ensure the teams for whom I was responsible were able to deliver on our mission of always exceeding expectations for our guests and owners.

What do you hope to bring to your new role?

Having worked with six hotels within the Holiday Inn Brand previously, coupled with my local knowledge from being a North East local I believe this role was tailor made for me. My passion to enhance Sunderland, and the wider Northeast region, on the National and International stage to leisure visitors and businesses is a natural complement to the ambitious plans within Sunderland right now with the Sunnyside Development led by Sunderland City Council.

What is the Holiday Inn's greatest asset?

The greatest asset to any hotel is the teams of people who work within it, the people who are committed to delivering exceptional experiences to our guests at every opportunity, the people without whom a hotel is simply a building with bedrooms.

What are you currently working on?

With a new hotel comes challenges as we become familiar with the facility ourselves, bedding in and getting to know our guests and their expectations and requirements, taking feedback and actioning areas where improvements can be made.

In addition, I have a young team, some new to hospitality and some experienced but new to the brand, so the focus continues to be training, training, training.

Where do I hope the hotel will be in a year's time?

I sincerely believe the hotel will be a major player in the City, and wider region, thanks to its incredible location and the quality of the facilities and services on offer. At IHG we

have a measurement on how guests rank their experience at Holiday Inn hotels around the world, and I hope the hotel will achieve top ranking spots as my former hotels have.

Who are your Heroes and mentors?

I've been extremely lucky to have worked with some exceptional General Managers during my formative years in hospitality. My first GM, Devin Grosse was a huge influence on my career and a driving force on my ambition to become a General Manager myself. I worked with Vince Garrington and Ken Ellington and the late, and very much missed, Damon Roberts all of whom I aspired to emulate. Being appointed General Manager at Holiday Inn Sunderland, I am fortunate to work with Sean Brookes again, my COO at Madison Cairn with whom I have worked with previously, another legend in the industry and he has mentored me through this, my first major hotel opening, for which I will be eternally grateful.

For information on how the Holiday Inn Sunderland can help your business contact Rob now on gm@sunderlandhi.co.uk





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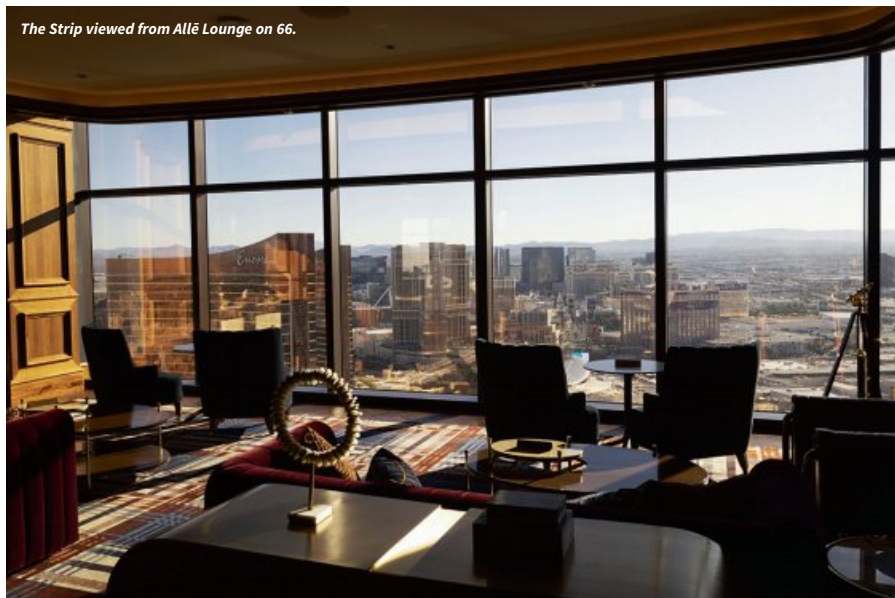
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The Strip viewed from Allé Lounge on 66.



Las Vegas for Super Bowl LVIII

By Stuart Forster

Super Bowl Sunday in the USA is immense. The two conference winners of the National Football League (NFL) clash with the aim of lifting the Vince Lombardi Trophy. Across the country, people gather for viewing parties. Advertisers will pay up to \$7m for 30-second television commercials during the game played on 12 February 2023 in Glendale, Arizona.

Viewing figures in the US peaked above 99 million during last year's Super Bowl. Famously, some television viewers tune in specifically to watch ads made for the occasion. For others, it's all about catching the halftime show. This year Rihanna will perform in the coveted slot previously headlined by The Weeknd, Justin Timberlake and Lady Gaga.

At the time of writing, official ticket packages (available from onlocationexp.com) started at \$4,972.50 for Super Bowl LVII. That's without a flight to Phoenix and hotel accommodation.

Yet for fans of American football the idea of being present in the State Farm Stadium for Super Bowl LVII is a prospect that's mouthwatering – a term that has broader associations with the day. Only on Thanksgiving is more food eaten in the US. One estimate suggests that 1.4 billion chicken wings and 28 million pounds of chips (crisps, as they are known on this side of the Atlantic) are consumed.

Enjoy forward planning? Next year's Super Bowl will be held on Sunday the 11th of February at the Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas. The state-of-the-art venue opened in 2020 and is the home to the NFL's Las Vegas Raiders and the University of Nevada Las Vegas Rebels. Over the coming months, it will also host concerts by the likes of the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Ed Sheeran and Taylor Swift.

Stadium tours are a way of stepping into the dressing rooms used by the Raiders and the Raiderettes cheerleading squad. They also mean being able to stand on the platform where coaches address members of the media and enter the owner's box, overlooking the halfway line.

Exterior of the Allegiant Stadium.



Resorts World Las Vegas – the newest resort on the Strip.

I toured the impressive stadium two days before an NFL game. The UNLV Rebels Astroturf pitch was still being rolled up. My guide explained how the grass surface used by the Raiders would enter the climate-controlled stadium on a sliding tray weighing 19 million pounds.

The lush turf was firmly in place for my gameday return. Prior to re-entering the \$2 billion stadium, I visited the nearby Fan Zone. Video footage of other NFL games was being screened as part of the pre-match build-up drawing whoops and cheers. Interactive games offered prizes and allowed me to prove to myself and onlookers that throwing an American football accurately is nowhere near as easy as star quarterbacks make it appear.

Fans wearing the jerseys of both clubs mingled over beers and hotdogs. Enjoying food and drink is part of the experience of attending sports in the US. Pleasantly, the tribal hostilities that prompt the segregation of supporters of opposing football clubs in Britain were never even remotely evident as the Raiders hosted the Houston Texans.

The mood was party-like and several fans attended in fancy dress. Far, far away from the Death Star, Darth Vader politely waited in line to have the ticket on his mobile phone scanned to enter the stadium.

Without the tour, I would have been oblivious to the significance of the Al Davies Memorial Torch. Named after a former Raiders' coach and owner, it stands 92ft tall and, reminiscent of the Olympic Torch, is lit by a guest of honour. Fans jostled for photos by it ahead of the game.

Up in the fourth tier, my padded seat was comfortable, had ample room for my long legs and offered a fine view of the playing field. Fortuitously, it was towards the end with the stage on which the Raiders House Band played and where rapper Iggy Azalea performed at halftime.

Finishing 38 – 20 for the home team, there was also plenty of entertainment out on the field. Afterwards, I walked among fans along Mandalay Bay Road for a beer in the nearby Luxor casino. Even more so than a typical weekend, Vegas will be buzzing when it hosts Super Bowl LVIII.



Sign for the Circus Circus Hotel and Casino.

Travel information: Find out more about accommodation and places to visit in Vegas on the city's official website (visitlasvegas.com). Formula 1's Las Vegas Grand Prix (f1lasvegasgp.com) and the planned opening of the MSG Sphere (msgsphere.com) count among the reasons to visit Vegas in 2023. Book stadium tours and tickets for forthcoming events via the Allegiant Stadium website (allegiantstadium.com). With three hotels, Resorts World Las Vegas (rwlsvegas.com) opened in 2021 and is the newest resort on the Strip. From 26 March British Airways (britishairways.com) will resume its direct service to Las Vegas from Gatwick. BA and Virgin Atlantic (virginatlantic.com) fly direct to Vegas from Heathrow.



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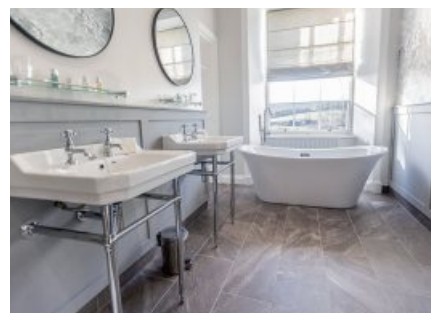
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Back in the Borders *By Michael Grahamslaw*

One of the more interesting opportunities to land in my inbox this month was the chance to review Marshall Meadows Manor House in Northumberland.

The luxury hotel is in touching distance of Berwick and is perfectly placed to explore the Scottish Borders.

Berwick is an old childhood favourite of mine with many family members hailing from there so it was great to return to this part of the world.

The hotel is conveniently located just off the A1 so after a pleasant journey of just over an hour, we checked in to find a healthy throng of guests tucking in gallantly to Sunday Lunch.

First impressions were immediately good. Marshall Meadows boasts an impressive Georgian façade with impressive sea views from a restaurant with local renown.

We were allocated Room 1 which we subsequently discovered was the Bridal Suite. This was a sumptuous haven of comfort of luxury with four-poster bed, dedicated lounge area and three glorious bay windows with ample light and panoramic sea views.

The large bathroom, with large freestanding bath and rain shower, was put to good use after

a morning run the following day.

This is a hotel with much charm and character, personal and warm from check-in to checkout. However, those after something a little different can choose one of the hotel's luxury pods, set in the grounds of the estate.

These boast great views over the rolling farmland and still offer all the class and amenities you'd expect from four star silver accommodation. Their innovative shape champions efficiency and has been designed to minimise energy loss in line with modern sustainability concerns.

After enjoying a pre-dinner drink from our complimentary mini bar, we headed down for a true fine dining experience at the hotel's award winning in-house restaurant, Restaurant 1782. It has recently been awarded a one AA Rosette too!

With the small matter of England's Round of 16 World Cup tie against Senegal to watch later that evening, we dined early but were still met with exceptional food and service from our genial waiters, Fraser and Mark.

Winter was kicking in on a frost-bitten Berwick night which made hearty, warming food the order of the day from the a la carte menu.

The spiced parsnip soup was a revelation for me with two hunks of dunkable sourdough while my wife Lisa enjoyed the oven-baked Goats Cheese cannelloni.

Lisa followed on with the blackened Shetland salmon – a nice marriage of influences local and exotic served with a side of sauteed kale.

The 10oz rib eye from the grill meanwhile was sourced from the Borders and served with chunky, fluffy chips which will live long in the memory.

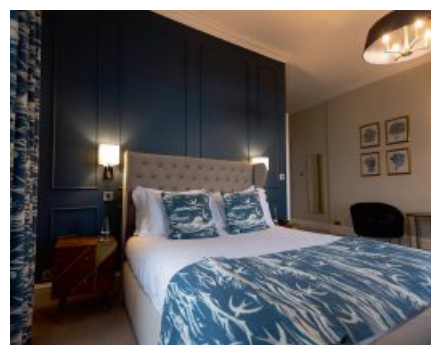
This was washed down with an excellent bottle of Sicilian White while I enjoyed a fine glass of Malbec with my steak.

Even with a match to catch, Lisa couldn't turn down the obligatory cheeseboard laden with all her farmyard treats.

Breakfast comes in various forms – both continental, and hot included. A full English the following morning really sets you up for exploring the sights or sadly for us, the journey back.

Much like England's fortunes in the World Cup, it was all over too soon!

For more information, visit marshallmeadowsmanor.co.uk





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As the name may suggest, each of the rooms is wine-themed although I'm yet to find a 'Blue Nun' variant yet amidst the booking site.

The Tattinger suite was a real grand cru of a room – remarkably, one of the biggest we'd ever stayed in – and resplendent with free-standing bath tub, dual wash basins and grand kingsize bed.

This proved the perfect place to while away the afternoon in the cosy embrace of the newspapers and Egyptian cotton.

After changing for dinner, we enjoyed a glass of Pinot Grigio in the lounge where it was great to meet the hotel's very friendly GM, Andrew Shiel-Redfern.

Wining and dining is of course top priority at Du Vin, so we then adjourned to the hotel's classic bistro restaurant. This offers a hugely pleasurable, wine-led experience where guests are invited to explore various different regions and grapes.

We sought the advice of our expert sommelier who recommended an excellent bottle of Riesling which although sweeter than our usual tastes, was a real eye-opening treat with a crisp finish.

The wine opened the palate for a lightly curried parsnip soup for I and the tomato, olive and parmesan tart for Lisa.

A champagne stay at Hotel Du Vin

By Michael Grahamslaw

After a sparkling 30th Anniversary meal, we vowed to return to the Hotel du Vin for an overnight stay at their deluxe accommodation on the banks of the River Tyne.

The hotel lies atop the Ouseburn, an impressively refurbished Edwardian building which was originally home to the Tyne Tees Steam Ship company.

From the exterior, the hotel boasts breathtaking, panoramic views of Newcastle's Quayside while inside is a neat fusion of its maritime heritage and wine-themed bric-a-brac.

Hotel du Vin translates literally as "Hotel of Wine" (or so my French teacher daughter tells me) which provides a classy theme to a hotel chain with real character.

This marries nicely with its slightly-out-the-city-centre setting, which brings an exclusive and memorable feel to each stay.

My wife Lisa and I visited on a biting cold December day which provided the perfect way to kickstart the festive season.

The freezing temperatures was contrasted nicely by the warmest of welcomes as we were checked in cheerily to the Tattinger suite.





Following on, came the free range turkey ballotine (featuring some of the most succulent turkey I've tasted) and the hearty daube of beef provençale which Lisa proclaimed delicious.

I swerved dessert in favour of a Bailey's coffee while Lisa tactically left room for an authentically gallic cheese board. We then enjoyed liqueurs before retiring to our room for a restful eight hours sleep.

Unlike some hotel chains, Du Vin has the attention-to-detail of a boutique residence which was especially true of breakfast the following morning. The avocado on toast was every bit as good as your local artisan café as well as a grand full English with all the trimmings.

From this visit, it's clear that the Hotel du Vin remains one of the best hotels in the city and we vowed to return for one of their signature fine wine dinners in 2023.

If you're looking for a show stopping overnight stay experience, do it with Du Vin.

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



STACK continues on the up

It's becoming a case of STACK not just by name but by nature for the Newcastle-born leisure organisation.



In 2022 there was seemingly an endless stream of announcements about new sites, new locations and new cities.

And the good news is that there seems to be no sign of stopping for the brand which has cornered the market in bringing together live entertainment, food and drink in unique settings.

It's almost five years since STACK Newcastle first opened its doors, transforming the corner of Pilgrim Street by putting in place a number of shipping containers to create a new kind of leisure venue.

There's no doubt the region took it to their hearts – an amazing three million visitors stepped over the threshold during its time there.

Not surprising then that the news it was to close – although the site had always been a temporary one – was met with dismay and upset.

But thankfully that has been relatively short lived, with the announcement at the end of 2022 that STACK Newcastle will return to Pilgrim Street where it will take up permanent residence at the Grade II listed building, Worswick Chambers.

The new flagship venue will be a combination of the existing building with an extension built using the original shipping container concept to create the STACK's much loved outdoor plaza area.

The whole venue will be split over three floors, to include multiple bars and street food units alongside what has become an essential element of any STACK – an outdoor plaza of a stage for live performances and a big screen, which hopefully should be up and running later this year.

In the interim the brand is still alive and well in the region, in the shape of STACK Seaburn which has also been part of the success story. Despite opening in the midst of the pandemic, the site has also welcomed hundreds of thousands of visitors and has an extremely loyal following.

That confidence in the concept has led owners the Danieli Group, to start to roll out their national expansion plan with a vengeance.

A former Argos store at St Marks Shopping Centre in Lincoln is currently undergoing construction to be repurposed as an exciting new STACK – the first development outside of the region.

Danieli Group is taking the concept to new levels – transforming a large scale empty retail shed into a leisure attraction that will combine all of the elements that make STACK such a huge success – street food, bars, roof terrace, large stage, big screens, coffee shop and gaming area for competitive socialising.

At the same time plans have been announced for a number of exciting new ventures here in the North East.

Two new, ambitious schemes have been proposed for County Durham – one which will see the transformation of Durham city's former Marks & Spencer store into STACK Durham on Silver Street, and a purpose-built STACK scheme is planned for Newgate Street in Bishop Auckland on the former Mothercare and WHSmith site.

Both developments, if approved by the local authority, will provide an exciting leisure solution to underused retail units and support the counties ambitious plans to regenerate and revitalize the town centres providing a vibrant day and evening economy for residents and visitors alike.

Neill Winch, CEO of Danieli Group, is excited about all of the new plans.

"We are in the business of transforming places, and we hope to be a catalyst for transformation in County Durham with a combined investment of more than £7 million," he said.

"We believe STACK will be a huge asset in both locations contributing to local culture, jobs, enterprise, tourism and communities."

More than 300 jobs will be created across both of these schemes, with STACK Durham due to be open by winter 2023 and Bishop Auckland in 2024.

Both sites will be the usual mix of quirky street food, top quality bars and entertainment and performance spaces, whilst STACK Durham also has some added elements of surprise with a roof top terrace and a games room with state-of-the-art interactive shuffleboards and darts.

At the same time the company's skill at transformation could also be seen in Middlesbrough, where an unprepossessing space under a flyover is being proposed to become STACK Middlesbrough.

A pop-up venture – although it will be in place for three years – is an ambitious and imaginative scheme that once again highlights the sheer imagination and commitment of the team.

Barely pausing for breath, an application to create STACK Carlisle on Lowther Street car park, which will be developed using the original method of shipping containers, is to go before local councilors in the near future, bringing a much needed boost to the leisure scene in that area.

With so many balls in the air, a less skillful juggler would have cause for concern – but not Neill.

"We made a number of exciting announcements in 2022 and this has set us up for a busy year ahead, however the plans to expand don't stop there as we enter a period of rapid growth to establish the STACK brand as a household name," he said.





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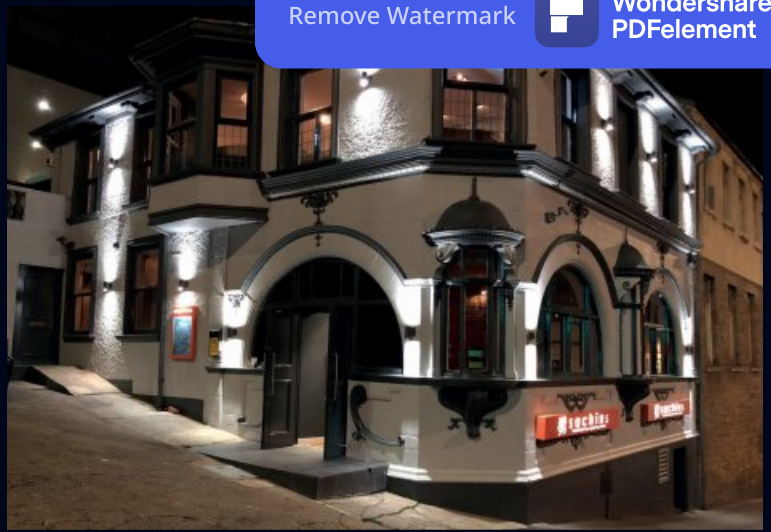


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Michelle Jones

The allure of awards

Are they worth your money and your time as a start-up?

At the start of 2021 Kind Currency and I kicked off the year with being named or nominated for awards and recognition, more followed as the year progressed. I am so very grateful to the individuals that nominated me, and truly appreciate the support.

Awards and recognitions grow confidence in your mission and you as a leader. They are great PR opportunities, helping your message to be heard. And they are very exciting.

But.

Some are genuinely all about celebrating people and business, but some are just money makers, and beyond that there is no real impact.

Throughout last year, I gained real insight into what was valuable and more importantly, what wasn't.

I reflected on my own experiences along with having conversations with other SME's, start-ups, entrepreneurs and founders.

Two factors stood out:

1. Investment
2. Community

Awards cost money for both parties. The

administration of the awards process, event planning and production etc comes at a cost, and overheads need to be covered. Recovering these costs usually comes from the awards ceremony itself, sponsorship of the awards, advertising at the awards, funding and for some the ticket price per head. Across the year we noticed a clear difference between awards for impact and awards for profit; the latter having no true value for the business to participate beyond nomination. We also learnt, some required a fee to progress from nomination to shortlist, this really should ring alarm bells for any business owner.

We found great value in awards that were authentically celebrating people and business, these tended to be industry led. These awards were not about profiteering ceremonies but building real community opportunity. Just a note to make, just because something has the word community stuck on its title doesn't make it a community. A community is active beyond the awards and they are inclusive, usually at no additional cost to you and for many they celebrate your success without a price tag. Be mindful of those awards created by an awards organisation, their sole purpose and only revenue stream is awards and they are not industry or community led. These are easily identified as they move from one set of awards to the next.

The best example of an authentic celebratory award community, is Small Business Britain.

Their awards are campaigns within the larger context of what they do as an organisation. They celebrate a small cohort of people and

businesses every year. And what you gain is far greater than just being named. You are welcomed into a supportive community, with daily opportunity to seek advice, support, celebrate, connect and help. You gain access to free training, opportunities to have your voice heard directly with decision makers and throughout the community. You are invited to regular events. You have access to regular online chats, webinars and networking. And the actual events to celebrate your recognition are free! All because they are true to their value. Their mission is to support people and business, not profit from them.

No awards are worth hundreds of pounds of your money or your valuable time to just be a bum on a seat in a sea of many unnamed individuals, with the winner included in that.

Our advice is look for the value.

If your gut tells you the investment would be better spent in your actual business, then do not let the fear of missing out take control. You are not missing out if the value is one way and you aren't going to benefit.

Apply for awards but never pay for awards.

Celebrate the nominations and use it as valuable acknowledgement of you and your business and milk the PR as much as you can. Immerse yourself in the awards that really do offer community and opportunity because these awards impact beyond the trophy.

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2022 was a great year for Northern Bar Management - and there seems no sign of slowing down for this innovative leisure group



For most operators, having your watering hole named as North East Pub of the Year would be the perfect reason to rest on your laurels.

When The Blackbird at Ponteland took that much coveted accolade, it seemed as if things couldn't get any better for parent company, Northern Bar Management.

But it turned out to be the first in a string of awards, developments and plaudits for the innovative leisure organisation.

Under the NBM umbrella is the Northumberland Pub Company – which owns both The Blackbird and its sister property, The Northumberland Arms at Felton which won Travellers' Choice certificates from Trip Advisor, consolidating their popularity and showcasing their high standards.

And it looks as if the company's latest ventures will be following suit – as they're already gaining popularity across the board.

Stuart Young, director of Northern Pub Management, also operates a number of ventures under both the Northumberland Pub

Company brand and is about to expand under his other company - Northern Restaurants.

Running food and drink operations has been in Stuart's blood for decades and his experience in the hospitality industry means he has a keen eye for what the public want.

It was for that reason that NBM decided to partner with acclaimed chef, Kleo Tabaku on his first solo venture – bringing to life the latter's passion for the food of his home.

Since opening its doors Lovage at St George's Terrace, has been a massive hit – a combination of Kleo's culinary skills and Stuart's knowledge of the industry.

"We've been delighted by how well Lovage has been received," said Stuart.

"We've even had a tweet from Michelin about one of our dishes which is astonishing for a restaurant that has just opened up.

We're very confident it will go from strength to strength."

NBM are also partners in artisan bakers, Kennedy & Rhind, which is about to move from its Jesmond base and be part of the company's latest acquisition – the Dot Bagel site at Chillingham Road.

The combination of bringing back to life the Dot Bagel brand coupled with the delicious patisserie created by K & R means that there will

be even more choice for customers.

And it doesn't stop there.

Northumberland Restaurants has just revealed it is taking over the former Quillam Brothers site at Newcastle University, which will be renamed the Claremont Tea Rooms.

Along with tea (and coffees for anyone fretting) it will be a great venue to showcase both the K & R product range and those from Dot Bagel.

"We know we have some amazing products so it makes sense to share them at as many locations as possible," said Stuart.

"Although we only took over Dot Bagel just before Christmas it has already become incredibly popular and the location of the Claremont Tea Rooms is a perfect city centre location."

Anyone craving the homemade goodies can also buy them from Jesmond Food Market, with The Blackbird also regularly hosting a pop-up bakery at various times throughout the year.

"2022 was a great year for us and 2023 has already got off to a brilliant start, so we are looking forward to having much more fantastic news in the year ahead," said Stuart.

www.theblackbirdponteland.co.uk
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A little bit of self-care

Review by Jackie Marston

After contracting Covid early September 22 and being bedridden for 10 days, followed by a nasty bout of flu, the recovery from a double whammy was slow to say the least.

I was lethargic, unenthusiastic, and feeling incredibly sorry for myself! Looking in the mirror made me even more depressed, as the illnesses had taken their toll on me, physically! There were more lines than before, I looked gaunt, and my skin was a horrible grey colour.

Now facial treatments are something I don't particularly like, so don't have them, and I am way too much of a coward to go for anything more intrusive. So, when I was asked to try out a couple of procedures by Doctor Ayesha Ali from Oliver's House in Sunderland, I thought, why not!

Although the practice is actually in the building where the franchise My Dentist operates from, the clinic offers facial aesthetics too. Doctor Ayesha Ali is qualified to carry out these procedures and for the first time in my 58 years on this planet, I allowed someone to touch my face!

After being fully assessed and advised, it was recommended that I receive Mesotherapy Micro Needling for skin rejuvenation. This looks a little like a handgun, where the tiny needles penetrate the skin at the mesoderm (middle) layer of the skin. This encourages the skin to repair itself,

improves skin texture and helps skin to glow. Over multiple sessions it can improve the appearance of fine lines, acne scarring and pigmentation. They also used a medical-grade antioxidant serum during the treatment, injected directly into the skin to boost results further. They placed topical numbing cream before treatment to make it as comfortable as possible. Although I could feel the procedure, it was uncomfortable rather than painful. The side effects are some redness and swelling for one to two days only, and I'm not going to lie, I did go rather red. Although multiple sessions are advised, for best results, I just had the one, for the purpose of this review. The next day, the redness had subsided a lot and over the next few days my skin was in the best condition ever.

My next advised treatment was Tear Trough Filler. Dermal filler (a gel made from hyaluronic acid) was placed into the tear trough area (under-eye region) to gently plump, restore volume and make the area look less tired. As I am a woman of a certain age, this is an area that always bothers me about my face. I often look tired, even though I am not, and it definitely ages me. They used an advanced cannula technique for safety, especially important in this delicate area. The results were instant, with some very mild swelling and sometimes bruising/redness at the cannula entry-point. Literally by the end of the day, the spot where I had been injected had healed and there was no sign of bruising. The results last six to 12 months for this treatment and I was delighted with the outcome.

At the end of the sessions, I was advised on a skin-



care regime, which most complemented my skin, and it was a far cry from the Asda facewipe and a touch of Nivea, but I am determined to stick to it.

Although I am not about to go under the knife anytime soon, I am really pleased with the results from Doctor Ayesha Ali and am totally converted! It's worth pointing out, that I am not wearing any make-up on these images, so you can actually see the results for yourself.

The video of the Mesotherapy Micro Needling being carried out on me is on their Facebook page, so take a look, if you're considering this treatment.

Like I say, I am converted, and it is something that I will definitely be repeating. Doctor Ayesha Ali is superb in her profession and someone I would 100% put my trust in.

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On the Tee Box

In the return of these popular series of features we visit the stunning Hexham Golf Club.

Location

Hexham Golf Club is set within acres of fabulous Northumberland countryside overlooking the River Tyne on the immediate western outskirts of this historic market town, just one minute from the east to west coast arterial road, the A69.

Setting

The golf course is a stunning and memorable 18-hole parkland course and invites both members and visitors to sample this fine test of golf.

Length of course

White Tees – 6312 yards Par 70
Yellow Tees – 6017 yards Par 70
Red Tees – 5770 yards Par 74

Facilities

18 Hole Parkland Course. Purpose built

short game facility located within a secluded Walled Garden. Historic and striking Clubhouse provide bar & catering to its members and visitors. Fully stocked Pro Shop run by our Head PGA Professional Andy Paisley. Squash Club and Snooker Table

Longest Drive

15th Hole-Long drive required on this challenging Par 5. A well struck tee shot hugging the left-hand side of the trees will give the player an opportunity to hit the green in two.

Toughest Hole

3rd Hole – Requires an accurate tee shot coming out of the trees ideally with a right to left shape and usually plays into the prevailing wind. Second shot to a well-guarded and elevated green, walking off with a par is always a good score here!

Signature Hole

10th Hole – Par 3 playing over a ravine with lovely views of the Tyne Valley. A hole you definitely won't forget.

Course Record

Amateur – Philip Waugh 63
Professional – John Harrison 61

Competitions

Member competitions running throughout the year and regular host to County and National competitions.

Prices

Summer: £50 midweek and £60 Sunday



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Knowing it is one thing, doing it is another...

It's one thing to make the decision to change your lifestyle in order to reignite the feel good factor and achieve the body shape you desire, it's another to know you are doing the correct things to achieve this.

Most people have no idea how or where to start, with both their food and exercise. Here are just a few ideas to kick start you to a healthier few months towards the summer:

- Go through your cupboards and put all biscuits, cakes etc into a bag and get them out of the house, this will stop temptation. Rather than throw them away why not donate them to a good cause.
- Make a positive decision to avoid any soda drinks eg coke, lemonade or energy drinks. These are laden with sugar and are dangerous for your health, never mind your waistline.
- Rather than eating a sandwich and crisps at lunchtime. Try taking a lean meat/fish salad into work, if you want to make changes you will need to put more effort into your organisation. Removing bread and snacks at lunchtime will consistently cut the amount of calories you are eating each day, therefore will have a big impact over the coming weeks.
- Buying, rather than making a salad at lunchtime will mean it's often accompanied with a sauce. Although you may think you are eating healthily the sauce may increase the calories to more than your original sandwich and crisps.
- Increase your portion sizes by adding more protein, you may raise your eyebrows at this but as long as the food is natural and healthy, it will keep you fuller for longer, therefore avoiding unhealthy snacks later in the day.
- If you are in the habit of snacking after your evening meal, eat half your meal at the usual time then the rest later at a time you would normally reach for a snack.
- Keep drinking plenty of water to keep you feeling full and hydrated.

Training

- If it's body shape, weight loss and general fitness you are looking for: short, sharp quick workouts are the perfect way to train. Over training to compensate for a bad diet often works in reverse and remember, you can't out train a bad diet.
- Vary your speed, pace, rest times, type of training and amount of training. Your body will get used to the same type of training, if you want results, progress your sessions and mix it up, it also stops the monotony of repeating the same workouts.
- Doing hundreds of stomach exercises per day will not make your stomach flat, stripping the fat off through a healthy diet will.
- If you are looking to improve the look of your arms, make sure you work the back of your arms (triceps) as much as the front (biceps). Again you need to pull your body fat down first to really see a change in shape.
- Working big muscle groups such as legs and bum will help supercharge your metabolism. Squats and lunges in their various forms work very well.

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David's summing up...

Stay positive, be patient and keep strong, remember the results are in your own hands.



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Barry Speker

The Last Word

Happy New Year? - welcoming 2023 has required something of an optimistic, tolerant and stoic approach.

The cost of living crisis, impact of the war in Ukraine, increasing strikes in the NHS, nurses, paramedics, ambulance workers, railways, Border Control, teachers; newspapers full of excerpts from Prince Harry's exposure of all aspects of his victimhood and intimate family life and the never ending television interviews repeating more indiscretions about the family he so loves and with whom he seeks only reconciliation. How reassuring that he has enough material to publish a second volume - 'Spare 2'. Added to this there is the promise of a book by the Duchess of Sussex no doubt entitled 'Mrs Spare' or 'No one asked me if I was alright'.

Escaping for a week to the warmth of Calpe in

the Costa del Sol in early January was quite a relief. Fortunately no flights were cancelled and the threatened two to four hour delays on return to Newcastle International airport did not happen. The army personnel appeared to provide a seamless and speedy border control service.

Returning to the North East provided snow and freezing conditions but some signs of hope. Inflation has stopped rising, we are not officially in recession, some levelling up money was distributed, Nicola Sturgeon's wings have been clipped by the law and arrangements are beginning for the coronation. Other crises are still with us and strikes are becoming a way of life.

It is notable that major strikes in France, where such demonstrations have long been a way of life, are currently about opposition to raising the retirement age from 62 to 64. In fact President Macron won his last election on a manifesto including invoking that very change. So much for democracy and respecting the views of the electorate.

Locally we have had the success of Newcastle United winning a quarter final to get to their first League Cup semi-final since 1976. This has raised the local mood as has the novelty of luxuriating in being in the top 3 (or 4) of the Premier League.

I was able to watch the cup victory over Leicester City at the Irish Sea Tavern in Calpe where Guinness was flowing. The locals joined in the celebration for 'los urracas' - the Spanish for 'Magpies'.

The internet went viral with images of Blyth born defender Dan Burn celebrating his first Newcastle goal with an idiosyncratic dance routine - now adopted by many supporters. John Travolta he isn't!

Recent horror stories about rogue police officers create concerns about the public's confidence in the Met and the police in general. Further public enquires and protestations that lessons have been learned may not be sufficient to restore faith. The performance of Sarah Lancashire in the latest series of Happy Valley may be more effective.

A nationwide billboard campaign for two weeks to raise awareness of anti-semitism. The changing images on the billboards have been shown at shopping centres, along motorways and high streets - in Newcastle at the Centre for Life. One of the messages asks 'Why am I 500% more likely to suffer hate crime?'

The aim is to address very real, day to day violence and hatred experienced by Jews even

in a tolerant country such as Britain.

The post Covid return of the Chinese New Year Celebrations in Stowell Street is a welcome restoration of normality. Happy Year of the Rabbit especially to those born in 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999 and 2011 whose characteristics are to be vigilant, witty, quick-minded and ingenious. The rabbit is the symbol of longevity, peace and prosperity. 2023 is predicted to be a year of hope! The Bank of England says we have turned the corner. I rest my case!

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