

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

April 2023

Issue 89



Hay & Kilner  
A Clear View of the Commercial Property Market

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33



169



72



# Contents

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| 10/11   | • Business News                          |
| 16/17   | • Cover Story<br>Hay & Kilner            |
| 22      | • Recent Appointments                    |
| 34      | • Deals News                             |
| 46      | • Legal and Financial News               |
| 60/62   | • Community News                         |
| 88      | • Manufacturing News                     |
| 100     | • Technology News                        |
| 108     | • Property and<br>Construction News      |
| 118/120 | • Marketing and<br>Media News            |
| 134/136 | • Education News                         |
| 148     | • Arts News                              |
| 156/157 | • Travel                                 |
| 158     | • Leisure News                           |
| 169/171 | • Streets Ahead<br>Tynemouth             |
| 186     | • The Last Word with<br>Barry Speker OBE |







174



48



19

# Foreword

Welcome to the April edition of Northern Insight.

With Spring finally upon us we are delighted to bring you another bumper edition for you to enjoy in the lighter nights ahead.

Our cover stars are Hay and Kilner Solicitors pictured at their wonderful new headquarters within the Lumen building in Newcastle.

On the social front we showcase the recent North East Automotive Alliance Awards as well as the inaugural Durham Cricket Hall of Fame Dinner.

Look out for our new "Streets Ahead" feature showcasing the lovely seaside village of Tynemouth.

On our travels we explore Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky and closer to home make welcome returns to Dobson and Parnell and the Radisson Hotel in Durham.

*We hope everyone finds something to enjoy including this new contents page!*

*Thank you as always for the continued support. Till next month.*

*M.J. Grahamslaw*

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher  
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## Yorkshire entrepreneur wins international award while toasting prestigious contract

Independently-owned Coupland Leather, based in Osmotherley has been named the winner of the International Retail Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the UK, in the Corporate LiveWire Innovation and

**Excellence Awards, which comes as the company celebrates a contract with high-end lifestyle brand Twisted Automotive.**

Coupland Leather recently started offering bespoke luggage for customers commissioning a Land Rover Defender, in partnership with Twisted Automotive of Thirsk and has now been recognised for its exceptional business performance, innovation, experience, sustainability, and service on an international level. Over 90,000 businesses and corporate professionals, magazine contributors, and subscribers nominated companies and individuals to win the award.

Stuart Coupland, managing director of Coupland Leather, said: "It's an honour to win the Retail Entrepreneur of the Year Award. Since the launch of Coupland Leather, we have managed to send products to 18 different countries and within the US, to 17 different states, with new orders and opportunities popping up from all over the place."

Coupland Leather is a luxury leathersmith, set up by Stuart Coupland following redundancy in January 2020. Stuart won several awards in 2022, including The Best New Young Entrepreneur of the Year in the Tees Business Awards, Insider's 42 under 42 list, Leather Products Retailer of the Year in the North East Prestige Awards, and Best Men's Luxury Leather Goods and Accessories Retailer (North East) in the Northern Enterprise Awards.



## Talent team are fired up by Vitabiotics contract win

**Talentheads, which was launched by experienced recruitment specialist Sam Spoor in 2020, has been awarded the contract to recruit for Vitabiotics.**

Vitabiotics was founded in 1971 by Professor Kartar Lalvani and has been run by his son Tej, who starred on Dragon's Den between 2017 and 2021, for more than 20 years. The business turns over more than £300m annually.

Sam said: "While we're deeply proud of our North East roots and heritage, this win really proves that we're moving onwards and upwards with our strategy, working with large, multinational companies as well as our regional clients.

"I'm so pleased with the growth we have seen in less than three years, which has also included new offices, the rapid expansion of our team and plenty of exciting contract wins.

"This contract demonstrates that we have grown from a local, North East, start-up business to a mature recruitment specialist that can help any firm, anywhere."

Sam attributes much of Talentheads' rapid growth to its novel way of working, absorbing itself into companies as their internal recruitment, talent and resourcing teams, working with business owners on long-term, sustainable strategies to help them take control of the recruitment process.

Tej Lalvani said: "Vitabiotics has an ongoing need for recruitment due to its rapid expansion and Talentheads was recommended to me in a shortlist of in-house recruitment options.

"In the first month of working together, an important hire, secured for us by Talentheads was our National Accounts Manager, which we had been looking to fill for some time. Their approach to instilling themselves into our business and building a talent pool specifically for the roles available, has been a great resource."

## Independent female photographer snaps up big name clients and award shortlisting

An independent photographer who has been operating her business full-time for just 12 months, has been shortlisted in the Rising Star category for the North East StartUp Awards, as well as securing work with a host of well-known brands across the region and beyond.

MHG Photography was founded by Megan Geddis and became a full-time venture in early 2022. In the short time since its inception, the company has collaborated with Great British Racing, Beanies Flavour Co, Growtivation, Seller Presto, Horslyx and the Marshall Robertson Group, among others.

The awards recognise exceptional startups in Yorkshire, Humberside and North East England, honouring individuals who have had a great idea, spotted the opportunity and taken the risks to launch a new product or service.

Megan said: "I'm ecstatic to be nominated in the awards, it really is a huge accomplishment after just completing our first full-time year in business and growing from strength-to-strength.



Working with such big names so soon has been a real honour, and I'm excited for the future."

MHG Photography specialises in commercial shoots, delivering lifestyle and branding imagery to clients, whether it be product, food, event, or staff-focused. The company also provides equestrian, pet, family, and wedding photography services.

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## NECS AWARDED CLEANING CONTRACT BY MORGAN SINDALL INFRASTRUCTURE

Cramlington-based professional commercial cleaning services company, NECS has been awarded a cleaning contract by Morgan Sindall Infrastructure for six sites across Northumberland.

Morgan Sindall Infrastructure has been appointed as the primary contractor on Northumberland County Council's new stations framework to build six new stations on the Northumberland Line.

NECS went through an extensive tendering process to provide daily cleaning services to Morgan Sindall Infrastructure's Newsham, Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Seaton Delaval and Northumberland Park sites. The contract is expected to run for 18 months and will be overseen by NECS's National Operations Director and at a local level by a supervisor and team of operatives.

Gary Breach, Managing Director at NECS, said: "I'm absolutely delighted to have been awarded a cleaning contract with Morgan Sindall Infrastructure. It was a very competitive tender process with a number of key criteria including local suppliers, community engagement and employing local labour in Northumberland. As a business, we pride ourselves on supporting our local community through the suppliers we use, creating employment opportunities for local people and supporting causes close to our values.

"This is a very exciting time for Northumberland and this project, and the new Northumberland Lines, will not only improve transport links but create economic opportunities for the area."



## New partnership between Loganair and Newcastle Rugby takes flight

Premiership rugby side, Newcastle Falcons, has announced Loganair as its 'Official Airline Partner' for the remainder of the 2022-2023 season.

As part of the sponsorship deal, Loganair recently supported the team with travel arrangements to Sandy Park where they faced the Exeter Chiefs on Saturday 11 March.

The sponsorship deal is part of Loganair's plans to further expand its presence at Newcastle Airport with an additional Embraer ERJ-145 aircraft which will also create a further 16 jobs at the base.

The UK's largest regional airline is offering customers in the region almost 200,000 seats to seven destinations, representing a 40% increase in capacity compared to the prior year.

The partnership between the two companies will see Loganair customers receive the chance to win tickets to the Newcastle Falcons home games at Kingston Park as part of a launch competition.

The airline and Newcastle Falcons are understood to be in positive discussions about extending the deal to next season.



## Breathing new life into the past and the future

The new multi-million-pound regenerative project, Ad Gefrin, Anglo-Saxon Museum and Whisky Distillery in Wooler, has created a major new North East tourist attraction and is expected to transform the future of the local

### community and the local economy.

Ad Gefrin's unique combination of immersive Northumbrian heritage experience, distillery tours and tastings has been made possible by a £16m investment, much of it from the founders, Alan and Eileen Ferguson. But the promise of its positive impact on the critically important Northumberland tourism industry has also attracted additional funding of £4m from Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal, £1m from North East LEP, and £600k from Northumberland County Council.

Giving comment, Leader of Northumberland County Council and Borderlands Partnership Board Member Glen Sanderson said: "I want to pay tribute to the Ferguson family and the team at Ad Gefrin for their vision, passion, and incredible hard work to create a first-class visitor destination and distillery which will boost and

regenerate this rural economy.

"This has included funding from both the county council and a £4 million investment from the Borderlands Growth Deal. More recently we have worked closely with Ad Gefrin and local businesses to shine a spotlight on the town and ensure that the financial benefits from the influx of visitors are felt by the wider community.

The Ferguson family's vision has already created 60 new jobs, with nearly half the positions filled by people living in Wooler, and the large majority living in north Northumberland, making it one of the largest employers in the area. As a world class visitor attraction, the regenerative effect of more than 35,000 visitors expected in the first year will be immense, with the business uplift to the local rural economy reaching far beyond Wooler's ancient boundaries.

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# COMMUNITY CHAMPION AWARDS



Lee Kirtley



Michael Grahamslaw

## Young people get a chance to shine with exciting new awards programme

Northern Leaders Trust (NLT), in association with Northern Insight Magazine are excited to announce the launch of NLT Community Champion Awards to celebrate the achievements of the exceptional young people who make our community a better place.

Humbled to hear about the extraordinary contributions made by young people, Mr Kirtley, CEO of NLT, said: "I wanted to create the opportunity to acknowledge the kindness and support towards others that so many young people demonstrate every day."

Nominations can be made by anyone provided that the young person attends a primary or secondary school/college in Newcastle – whether that is in the independent sector, a local authority maintained school, a faith school, an academy or a school for children with special needs.

Michael Grahamslaw, owner and manager of Northern Insight, said: "We are delighted to support the awards and promote the kindness of young people in our region. I am sure many of our readers will know someone who should be nominated."

There are seven categories to enter, which are:

- ★ Community Hero
- ★ Young Fundraiser of the Year
- ★ Welcoming New Students into the Community
- ★ Special Recognition
- ★ Act of Kindness
- ★ Young Carer
- ★ Courage Award

A glittering awards ceremony will take place on 30th June at Kenton School.

*If you are aware of any Newcastle children who deserve special recognition, please head to our website: [www.northernleaderstrust.org](http://www.northernleaderstrust.org) where you will find an application form at [northernleaderstrust.org/about-us/community-champion-awards](http://northernleaderstrust.org/about-us/community-champion-awards)*



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## Taking a proactive approach.

### The customer is always right...

Or so they say, but this creates a divide, and I can imagine every single one of you bringing to the front of your memory a customer you would rather forget who absolutely wasn't right. But ours are – let me explain why.

**Our existing customers have the ability to support us and inform, educate, innovate, grow, hire and stay ahead of the market. Customers can be the richest source of information in the market you operate in. They know what's working and what isn't, what future products or services they may need and what their competitors are doing.**

They can inform us of sector information, new projects and where future opportunities lie – presenting a chance to gain new clients. Referrals, as we all know are worth their weight in gold and those coming from your existing clients are well worth nurturing. Whilst you work in a specific sector, there are always niches and specialisms and your customers have (and will) educate you on these should you ask and pay interest – leading you to better understand the industry, present opportunities and open new doors. Becoming a specialist or having someone within your business who is, will lead to increased exposure in certain fields presenting an opportunity to differentiate.

Understanding and knowing your customers is an essential aspect to taking a proactive approach. They can help you innovate, look at new processes, practices and methodologies, new services or products and revising existing ones.



Jessica Williams

It's in this way that we at Just Williams have seen the biggest impact. We asked our customers for their help in forming our offering moving forward, in understanding their future ambitions and needs. Following significant changes for many of them, funding restrictions and the end of ERDF, the ability to commit to long term solutions is not right for everyone. They wanted more flexibility with consultancy, one day strategic sales and marketing workshops, and solutions for smaller businesses. Without speaking to our customers, we wouldn't have necessarily come to this conclusion and as a result have now successfully launched a new range of solutions in addition to our Associate model. Working with a range of local freelancers and businesses we now offer a full sales, marketing and communication agency offering whilst supporting the local economy through our Business as a Force for Good mentality – all thanks to taking a proactive approach with our customers.

By engaging with our customers, our business has grown and so has theirs – we've asked for introductions, we have become sector specialists and we've entered into new markets. Retention is a subject often overlooked when businesses are looking to grow – but it's this that should take front and centre stage when it comes to creating a sustainable organisation. So often we focus on new business, which can be highly worthwhile but often forgetting the work gone into achieving the ones we already have. Very few organisations know the cost

to acquire new customers or indeed the value of their existing customers; and therefore Customer Lifetime Value – both essential metrics when managing your growth.

Your customers can be your greatest ambassadors – this works both ways so be careful! They can promote your brand in multiple ways, including to assist you in hiring new team members.

Staying in touch with the market and adapting your offering, be it products or services in line with listening, engaging and asking your customers is an area and one I would encourage you all to be more actively involved in. We've changed our offering as a result and continue to evolve in line with needs and the market.

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***We would love to chat to you. Contact me or any of my team to find out more.***

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# Cover Stories...

## Securing the right commercial space to help your business grow

*By Jennifer Boynton, Associate in the specialist Commercial Property Team at Hay & Kilner*

**There comes a time in the lifespan of any expanding business where it begins to outgrow the space in which it is based.**

**This might be anywhere as basic as the kitchen table at which many well-known businesses have had their beginnings, or an office that no longer has enough desks for a growing team, or an industrial unit that doesn't provide the space for the new production line that you're planning.**

Whatever the reason, identifying and securing the new space into which you're going to move your operations is one of the most important decisions that a management team will make, as it will at least partially define the way in which the business grows for the foreseeable future.

Despite the prevailing challenges, this year has seen our commercial property team working on a steady flow of successful new lease agreements, most of which, encouragingly for



Jennifer Boynton

the wider regional economy, involve clients taking on more space.

There are always a wide range of issues to consider when going through this process, but more so than ever before at the moment as we all navigate the aftershocks of the pandemic, the impact of which is continuing to have repercussions for the North East commercial property market.

There are particular sectors where reaching these agreements involves a bit more work than others, with clients in the leisure and hospitality sectors usually needing to make more of a detailed case to lenders to convince them that their business plans are robust.

If you need to bring in outside finance to help support your business's plans, it's essential that you take the time to gather as much management data as possible before approaching your lender or lenders of choice, so you're in a position to answer any questions they might have about your plans before they ask them.

A proactive, organised client is much more attractive to a lender.

Getting this work done as early as possible also removes one potential reason for delays in securing and completing your new lease.

Your choice also needs to take into account more than just your short-term, immediate needs - if everything goes to plan, or better, you may find yourself needing more space than you'd first thought.

Giving yourself that extra bit of growing room at the beginning of the lease could mean you avoid the disruption of having to move again more quickly than you'd originally anticipated. You could even consider sub-letting additional space for a short period, if your landlord is agreeable to this.

Just like any commercial contract, the lease that you sign obviously needs careful examination from a qualified legal perspective. Issues like break clauses, annual rent increases and who has responsibility for the cost of maintaining the property while you're occupying it need to be addressed and agreed before you put pen to paper.

Agreeing how and by when any work required on the property is going to be carried out and paid for is also an important consideration.

The North East offers a wide range of commercial space into which every type of ambitious businesses can move, and often at a costs that is the envy of other parts of the country.

Making sure that every part of your lease has been properly reviewed before you sign it will give you the peace of mind you need to get on with executing your growth plans and realising your business's potential.

**For further information on reviewing commercial leases or any other aspect of commercial property law, please contact Jennifer Boynton on 0191 232 8345 or [jennifer.boynton@hay-kilner.co.uk](mailto:jennifer.boynton@hay-kilner.co.uk)**



# A clear view of the commercial property market

*By Nicola Tiffen, Partner and Head of the specialist Commercial Property Team at Hay & Kilner*

The variety of great places to visit across the North East is matched by the range of different locations and spaces that its commercial property sector offers – and after a busy first quarter of the year, we’re looking forward to seeing activity levels being sustained right through 2023.

**The worst aspects of the pandemic may be beginning to slowly recede from public consciousness, but the economic impacts are still very much in full effect – and that’s especially true within the commercial property sector.**

For a great many people, the last three years have seen an accelerated shift to a hybrid model of splitting their working week between their homes and their offices.

Indeed, it’s a model that Hay & Kilner has adopted itself since our move last year into the fifth floor of The Lumen building on St James’ Boulevard within the landmark Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter, and it’s working well for both the members of our team and the wider firm.

This change has seen the focus in the North East office space market very much turn towards quality.

Demand is still strong for the right type of high-spec office premises, our team is working on a range of interesting office projects right across the region, and from our own lofty point of view, we’re seeing high occupation rates of



Nicola Tiffen

the impressive new buildings that have been developed across the totally transformed corner of Newcastle in which we’re now based.

The number of high-quality businesses from outside the region that are choosing to establish themselves in the North East, including games developer Creative Assembly, global technology and management consultancy Credera and multinational defence and security firm Leonardo, is also extremely encouraging.

And from a retail point of view, the £9.3m acquisition of Gosforth Shopping Centre by regional real estate firm Monument Real Estate at the end of last year, on which we acted as advisors to the purchasers, expresses great confidence in the future prospects of the sector, as well as in the wider local area.

The industrial sector has seen sustained demand so far this year, with many of the businesses that we’re working with looking for larger premises as part of their plans for developing new products and services that may have been put on hold for the last couple of years.

Securing these new leases, and the funding that can be needed to bring them into reach, is requiring management teams to present a strong case around their future prospects to give their potential landlords certainty that they would be a reliable tenant.

Gathering as much management information as possible before entering into these discussions is crucial for businesses that want to give themselves the best chance of securing the property agreements they’re looking for. An additional factor in this is the general

increase in post-pandemic corporate insolvencies, which is leading to property deals arising in the aftermath of business administrations and bankruptcies.

In the present economic situation, we’re expecting such opportunities to sadly become more frequent and businesses that put themselves in a position to move quickly as soon as they come up are likely to be the ones to benefit.

As far as specific industries are concerned, there’s no doubt that it can be more difficult to finalise property deals in sectors that have been especially hard hit over the last three years, such as leisure and hospitality, but that doesn’t mean that, with the right planning and approach, they can’t be done.

Our work with Newcastle-headquartered leisure operator The Apartment Group on the acquisition of the Grade II listed Croft Hotel at Croft-on-Tees shows how a deal based around a clear commercial strategy can be successfully secured and we’re excited to see how our client’s refurbishment plans for this historic property are revealed in the summer.

Whatever the economic climate, the North East offers a huge array of options for businesses of any size in any sector – and having the right advisors on your side could help you find the ideal base from which to realise your growth and wealth creation ambitions.

**For further information on all aspects of commercial property law, please contact Nicola Tiffen on 0191 232 8345 or [nicola.tiffen@hay-kilner.co.uk](mailto:nicola.tiffen@hay-kilner.co.uk)**



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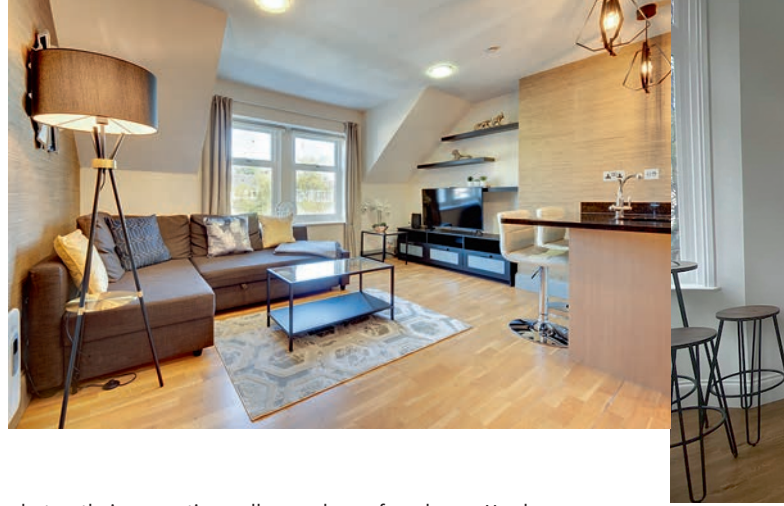
Claire Parry

**Having to work away from home goes with the territory when you're involved in business. Sometimes it can be just a quick overnight stay on a couple of occasions a year...or perhaps it's a project or regular event where you need to keep in touch with one of your clients and find it works best when you have a face-to-face meeting.**

For some of you reading this, being on the road is a large chunk of what you do. A surprising amount of business people will leave home early on a Monday morning and not be back in their own bed until Friday.

And isn't it amazing how, after a while, all hotels seem to be the same? They can be impersonal, have a repetitive menu, noisy, busy and...well...it's not like being in your own place.

Which is precisely the reason why Week2Week Serviced Apartments in Newcastle have been so successful. As you can see from the



photos, their properties really are a home from home. You have your own space, you can do your own catering, and you can stamp your own identity on the place for short and extended stays.

Some of you reading this may be responsible for finding somewhere for a client or worker to stay. Rather than sticking them in a faceless and probably expensive hotel, why not provide them with a serviced apartment in a prime location.

"We're seeing really high demand for our apartments," said Director, Claire Parry. "Following Covid, people are now more aware of having their own space where they can be private and don't have to mingle with a crowd of people. A lot of travel companies are offering apartments as an alternative to hotel accommodation. People are planning ahead and rather shuttling backwards and forwards, they're staying longer in one place and combining several meetings to avoid excessive travelling.

We're also fortunate in that we have a high level of repeat business. During Covid we had to keep accommodation going for the simple reason that essential workers like engineers, construction personnel and health workers, all had to find somewhere to stay. They were very wary of being in one of the few hotels which stayed open, so having their own apartment was the perfect solution. They were comforted by the information we provided them with and the reassurance that every property was thoroughly cleaned and hygienic before they moved in. We also saw a lot of workers relocating to the North East."

It's been a difficult time for Claire and the guys at Week2Week because their founder and inspiration, Janet Jackson, who is also Claire's mum, died of cancer in November. It was a challenging time for the business.

"My mum always used to say that people needed to be able to trust Week2Week," adds Claire. "We've been in the business for 23 years and our reputation speaks volumes. We have credibility. We're not like a lot of other property platforms because we meet guests who book into any of our properties. You don't have to scramble around to find the keys in a security box. We look after them while they're saying with us...we can help with any tourist ideas for families who're enjoying a holiday in the region...we can sort onward travel... and we also ensure that properties meet our strict safety guidelines."







All of their properties are in prime locations. You'll find them on the Newcastle and Gateshead Quayside, in Newcastle city centre, as well as Jesmond, Gosforth and on the coast in North Shields, Tynemouth and South Shields.

If you'd like to see the properties available at Week2Week, the best idea is to go onto their website [www.week2week.co.uk](http://www.week2week.co.uk). You should also speak to Claire if you have a property that you'd like to make available for rent. The financial returns are extremely attractive and are generally much more favourable than renting to private tenants.

Week2Week...serviced apartments...safe and secure...your hotel alternative.

**You can contact Claire and her team either via the website or call 0191 281 3129 or email [info@week2week.co.uk](mailto:info@week2week.co.uk)**



Booking Office Team







L-R: Craig Pratt, CMYK regional sales director with Seriös Group CEO, Lee Rorison



# SERIÖS GROUP

## CMYK Business Technology partners with SERIÖS GROUP

Newcastle-based operation of national business technology provider CMYK has added another one of the region's fast-growing tech consultancy firms Seriös Group to its client portfolio. The new partnership further highlighting CMYK's position as one of the region's go-to providers for workplace technology.

**CMYK are delighted to announce it has been selected as Seriös Group's new IT and business support partner, welcoming onboard the Newcastle Headquartered Data and Test solutions provider.**

Seriös Group deliver bespoke data and test solutions across a range of industries such as real estate, facilities management and technology, working with the likes of Jones Lang LaSalle, Sage and De La Rue. The fast-growing tech business formed in 2020, have grown their headcount to 45 and are targeting revenues of £5m this year with headcount expected to increase to 80 in the next twelve months.

The new partnership means CMYK will be responsible for all IT issues faced by Seriös Group people, including team member on-boarding services, licensing and hardware procurement. Seriös Group will also be utilising CMYK's corporate branded on-boarding services.

Lee Rorison, CEO at Seriös Group, said: "We are delighted to be working with CMYK in what I would describe as a true outsourced IT support partnership. The nature of our business means we need to be able to scale our hardware and cloud resources on demand with a quick turnaround, and CMYK demonstrated their abilities and experience in being able to do so in a manner that works well for Seriös Group both commercially and in practice. Having trust in our IT support partners was a key factor in our decision to select CMYK, and I'm looking forward to working with them over the coming months and years".

Delighted to share the news, is CMYK's regional sales director Craig Pratt: "Since the inception of Seriös Group in early 2020, I've seen lots of press coverage on the expansion of the business, and to now be working with the Seriös team is a huge privilege. We've found a real 'groove' when it comes to supporting the region's Tech sector and our new partnership with Seriös Group further highlights our service capabilities in this sector. Getting to understand Seriös Group's service offering and working with their exceptionally talented people will be immensely beneficial to our team here at CMYK, as we widen our own knowledge in the Tech space. The Seriös team support some high-level clients and are doing some pretty impressive work. A firm that's certainly flying the flag for the North East tech sector"

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

Craig added: "We are extremely proud to have been selected as Seriös Group's trusted IT partner and we are looking forward to building a long and lasting relationship".

"Special thanks to the CMYK team for delivering yet another incredible win for the business. We are rapidly building a solid reputation across the region and beyond. Forging new partnerships like this showcases our capabilities, knowledge and ability to deliver a fantastic service and client experience."

[www.cmyk-digital.co.uk](http://www.cmyk-digital.co.uk)

**CMYK**  
BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY





## Experienced Hospitality Sales Manager joins Sandman Signature Newcastle Hotel

**Adam Stokoe has been appointed Sales Manager at the popular Sandman Signature Newcastle Hotel.**

Situated in Newcastle's city centre, Sandman Signature is surrounded by key attractions including the iconic St. James' Park, China Town and Northumberland Street. The property was once the headquarters of the historic Scottish & Newcastle Brewery, creators of Newcastle Brown Ale.

Adam has held roles in hospitality sales for almost a decade, working at the Copthorne Hotel, Leonardo Hotels and Hotel Indigo & Marco Pierre White Newcastle. Following some time out of the industry during Covid-19, working in utility sales, Adam has re-joined the industry at Sandman Signature.



## DPP Planning rewards Newcastle-based rising star with promotion

**Lauren Hunter, who has been promoted from Planner to Senior Planner, joined DPP in January 2017 on a work placement while at Newcastle University, before being appointed as Assistant Planner in June 2017.**

During the last six years, Lauren has worked across a broad spectrum of projects from residential developments and schools to university projects such as the Citadels in Carlisle and many of DPP's Durham University schemes. Lauren is currently working on several RAF sites, including in Kinloss, Scotland.

Lauren said: "One of the things that attracted me to DPP was its commitment to personal and professional development, which I have benefited from. I have been involved in some high quality and important projects, which has had the added benefit of helping my career and to achieve my second promotion in six years."

Gareth Hooper, DPP's chief executive, said: "We believe in rewarding talent at DPP, and this is reflected by the promotion of Lauren in our Newcastle office."



## Senior appointment to drive Sunderland's Culture House

**Leanne Littlewood has been appointed as Culture House Director and will lead plans for the £27m new visitor attraction overlooking Keel Square.**

Leanne - who has joined Sunderland City Council from Middlesbrough Council where she held a role as Head of Culture - will devise exciting plans for Culture House, which is expected to open in early 2025.

The venue - backed by Future High Streets Funding - will offer an immersive, dynamic, digitally-powered visitor experience that will inspire and entertain people of all ages.

Leanne said: "Culture is front and centre of Sunderland's ambitious plans for the regeneration of the city centre, and the development of this magnificent building - which will be an asset to communities across the city - presents a once in a generation opportunity to create a space that will inspire residents and visitors."

"As someone from the region, I have watched the transformation of Sunderland from the outside over the last few years, and there's a sense that this is a place that is on a huge journey of change and that's so exciting to now be part of. I am thrilled to be able to take the vision forward and create a space that all of our communities and visitors alike will enjoy for years to come."

## CEO steps up as container firm founder steps down

**A Teesside-based container firm has appointed a new CEO, with its founder stepping down after more than a decade at the helm.**

Cleveland Containers was set up by husband and wife Johnathan and Jane Bulmer in 2011, and has grown into the UK's largest shipping container sales company from its Stockton base.

Following Johnathan's decision to step down from the day-to-day running of the business, it has been announced that current chief operating officer Andrew Thompson will take over as CEO.

The news follows last year's announcement of the launch of the Cleveland Group, which encompasses the existing container arm along with two new divisions, Cleveland Hire and Cleveland Modular.

Johnathan said: "After launching the Cleveland Group last year, it has always been our wish to strengthen the management team to enable the business to grow and flourish without the direct day to day involvement of myself and Jane."

"We appointed Andrew as chief operating officer in May 2022 knowing we had the right candidate, meaning that the cultural fit was right for him and the senior team to take the business forward."

Andrew, who was previously managing director and senior vice president of Mobile Mini UK, has



more than 20 years management and leadership experience, in both the public and private sector.

He said: "While we'll all miss Johnathan's day-to-day involvement, I'm extremely excited about what the future holds."



David Taylor

## "No more square pegs in round holes"

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EST.  1999

**Howie White**

RESOURCING

# Stop wasting your money on wellbeing!

Guessing what employees want, investing in the wrong benefits and failing to regularly review wellbeing support offerings are some of the reasons why organisations are losing money and stellar staff, says the award-winning Teesside firm, Key Wellbeing.

**Marie Ranson, Co-founder and Commercial Director at Key Wellbeing said “While it’s great to see employers now recognising that wellbeing in the workplace matters, many are missing the mark and could be throwing their money down the drain - something nobody wants to be doing in this economic climate!**

The fact that absence rates, presenteeism and staff resignations are on the rise, highlights that workplaces might not be investing in the most effective wellbeing tools for their workers.”

Melissa Armstrong, Co-Founder and Creative Director added: “One of the main ways where employers are going wrong is by guessing what their staff want and failing to recognise that everyone has different wellbeing needs.

They either guess and see what sticks or see competitors offering wellbeing benefits like Friday yoga classes, walk in the park Wednesdays and random discounts, then automatically assume that they need to provide the same to keep ahead. When in reality, if anything, it sets them back.

The only way to find out exactly what those employee needs are is by actively listening and using the power of data.”

Through their Workplace Wellbeing Audits, Key Wellbeing helps forward-thinking businesses to do exactly that, and in turn, this means that



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

decision-makers can strategically invest in the right support for their workplace.

Marie Ranson, said: “Our audits involve a deep dive into the organisation and current working culture to help employers understand what is and isn’t working at a grassroots level.

We do this in several ways to enable us to build a really comprehensive report with actionable and achievable recommendations on how the organisation can move forward with a healthier, happier workforce.

Our methods include round-table discussions with leadership and HR teams to learn about the current wellbeing practices, policies and support they have in place and how they perform.

Informal listening groups with management and employees to get a general understanding on how the workforce feels about the work culture and support that’s available, along with their goals and challenges when it comes to wellbeing.

And employee wellbeing assessments with

questions based around the factors that have been evidently known to impact wellbeing at work including health, relationships, security, environment and purpose.

We think it’s important to really highlight to employees that the assessments are 100% anonymous too, to encourage real, honest answers given the fact that many still aren’t comfortable talking about their mental health at work.

Melissa Armstrong, added: “It’s important for employers to remember that just like everything in life, employee wellbeing needs have and will continue to change constantly which calls for a constant ear to the ground including regular monitoring, assessment and evaluation of the support that’s in place.

It can be an absolute minefield, we get it. But, we’re here to help!”

**To find out more about Workplace Wellbeing Audits, please visit: [keywellbeing.co.uk/workplace-wellbeing-audits](https://keywellbeing.co.uk/workplace-wellbeing-audits)**





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# C ASTAL

BY SANDERSON YOUNG





# REGIONAL LETTINGS OPERATION EXPANSION



We are delighted to announce the expansion of our Regional Lettings operation, which will now sit alongside our Regional Sales department in our flagship Gosforth office.

The ground floor office will allow greater promotion of our properties, with prominent window displays to the corner of Gosforth High Street, as well as creating a bridge between the current sales centre and our New Homes Hub, which is opening this Spring.

We are experts in sourcing new build buy-to-let opportunities for our longstanding investor clients, having been instrumental in the ongoing lettings management of large residential schemes throughout the region including La Sagesse in Jesmond, Grove Park in Gosforth and Smiths Dock in North Shields.

Our results for the first quarter of 2023 have built further upon the success we have seen year on year, where we are achieving premium rental figures based on the high quality of accommodation we offer, as well as the market shortage. This is particularly the case for professional apartment rentals within the city centre and inner suburbs, where we are now achieving over £1000pcm for 2 bedroom apartments. We are also actively seeking quality family homes in the prime areas of Gosforth and Jesmond, as well as Darras Hall, for many professional families relocating to the area on long term corporate contracts.

Many of our current vendors are also looking at rental options to break chains and enable them to be in the best position for an onward purchase, where the sales market remains highly competitive due to lack of supply.

With legislation and regulation constantly evolving, our clients rely on our team to guide them through the myriad and complex layers that come hand in hand with renting out your property. Our residential lettings operation offers a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their field, with ongoing regular training to keep up with legislative changes, in order to successfully provide you with a professional bespoke service to meet your requirements.

If you are a landlord currently assessing your portfolio, a prospective tenant searching for your perfect home or a potential investor keen to discuss the market, I would be delighted to welcome you to our new lettings hub for a coffee and a chat in our relaxed, friendly atmosphere.

Here's to a great 2023 for us all.

**Gail McLean MARLA**

**Regional Lettings Manager**

**0191 2233 510**

**Gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk**





# Property of the month



## THE WHITE HOUSE, BEACH ROAD, TYNEMOUTH



## GUIDE PRICE: OFFERS OVER £995,000

The White House is a stylish, contemporary family home close to the delightful Longsands Beach in Tynemouth. Purchased by the current owners in 2015, the property has undergone a complete transformation having been fully modernised and extended to now offer over 3500 sq ft of internal living space. The versatile accommodation includes a superb ground floor double bedroom suite with living area, four further bedrooms, an impressive open plan living/dining space opening to the beautiful bespoke fitted kitchen, and a large study/snug. Externally, The White House is positioned on a large corner site with a south facing rear garden with hot tub, a large double garage and a driveway providing parking for several vehicles. This superb residence provides the perfect opportunity for coastal living in one of the most stylish family homes within the area.

Tenure: Freehold Council Tax Band: F EPC Rating: D

Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500 [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk) [www.sandersonyoung.co.uk](http://www.sandersonyoung.co.uk)







Rory Nicholson

## Our ongoing social media success!

Sanderson Young has always had a strong presence on social media. However, in this ever-changing business landscape, the need for us to engage with clients on all media platforms has become imperative and now forms a major aspect of our property listing timeline.

The lead generation from initial teaser campaigns to viewing requests has been extremely positive and with millions of people using social media every day, we can tap into this vast pool of potential clients by sharing listings, offering tips and advice, and building relationships with our customers.

Sanderson Young's Instagram page now has upwards of 10,000

followers and is often the first place a property will be displayed, sometimes even before I have left the listing appointment. I enjoy the buzz the social media platforms enable us to create around the launch of a property; building up suspense for our buyers as we feature 'snapshots' unique to that home, without showing the full property details. This has resulted in multiple viewings, where often homes have been snapped up by eager buyers without the need to feature on websites.

Our latest venture has been through the use of TikTok, currently the fastest growing social channel in the world, allowing Sanderson Young to capture the greatest social reach. Short, engaging videos have enabled us to display charming features of properties, which is also coupled with exterior drone footage to encapsulate some stunning views. With upwards of half a million views on some of our most recent TikTok videos, Sanderson Young are really leading the field in this dimension of the North East property market.

If you are beginning your property search, please do follow us on social media for up-to-the-minute property features of homes, often before they come onto the market.

**Rory Nicholson, Trainee Valuer, Sanderson Young**  
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## Durham Cricket recently staged their inaugural Hall of Fame Dinner

At a glittering event the first inductees were former coach Geoff Cook, England internationals Paul Collingwood, Steve Harmison and Simon Brown and overseas players David Boon and the late Dean Jones.









# Rising Star

*In the latest of these popular series of features Northern Insight spoke to...*

## Harriet Hawdon

*Newcastle based WDL Builders*

**Harriet recently won the carpentry category in the annual NCG skills competition competing against students from four other colleges.**

### **What were your career ambitions growing up?**

My career ambitions growing up were to become a vet. I love animals and wanted to make a career helping them. As I got older, I realised that I wanted a more tactile job. My dad started to take me to work with him when he worked on the weekends and that's when I decided to have a career in the construction field.

### **Tell us about your current role?**

Currently I am an apprentice joiner at WDL construction. I go to Newcastle College one day a week. I assist the other joiners to fit kitchens, doors, and lay flooring etc. A very wide variety of carpentry and joinery.

### **What is the most challenging aspect of your job?**

The most challenging part of my job can be how physically demanding it can be at times. I am working on this however and it is getting easier for me.

### **What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?**

I would say that my biggest weakness could be my strength. I am planning on overcoming this through exercise and training.

### **What are you currently working on?**

Currently we are renovating a house. It used to be two flats and we are reworking it into one house. We have removed walls and rebuilt walls in new places in the house to reimagine the space. We've currently just finished putting the floor and kitchen in.



### **Tell us about the WDL team?**

The WDL team is a very close knit, extremely hard working yet fun group of people. From day 1 I have felt included, looked after, and valued. Speaking from past experiences, I can say that working with a group of people who are genuinely caring for each other and want to be a team makes all the difference. I feel that work is never a chore because of the great team that I work with and I'd like to say a huge thank you to all of them for that.

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

The best piece of business advice I have ever been given was from the joiner that I work with. His name is Dean and he told me to be picky with myself because others will be. I take this now to produce the best possible work I possibly can.

### **Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?**

My heroes in business would be my dad, his friend Kev, and my uncle Paul. They taught me all I know about joinery and gave me the drive to pursue a career in the field. My dad and uncle run their own businesses and they do so very successfully. In work, I work with Dean and Josh. Dean is a very talented joiner and Josh is the other apprentice who is going to be a fantastic joiner with a bright future. I take inspiration from all these 5 great tradesmen.

### **Where do you see yourself in five years time?**

In five years time, I'd love to be a full time joiner working for WDL still. I'll be finished my apprenticeship and be improving my skills and confidence to hopefully be the best I can be at my job! WDL has a bright future that I'd love to be a part of for time to come.

### **How do you like to unwind outside of work?**

Outside of work I like to unwind by spending time with my best friend Deb. We like to do escape rooms, and watch movies. Specifically, crime thriller movies. I love to listen to music with her and relax with the dogs.

### **Favourite Book and Boxset?**

My favourite book would be *Mythos* by Stephen Fry. I got this book as a Christmas present and extremely enjoyed it. Greek mythology is definitely a hobby of mine to look into. I have recently found out there is another book he has written to go alongside this that I am looking forward to getting. I would say that I don't have a specific boxset that is my favourite, but any crime documentaries I would watch.

[wdlnortheast.co.uk](http://wdlnortheast.co.uk)





Harriet Hawdon





## Breeze Academy wins North East fund backing

**A specialist healthcare training provider is set to put its scale up plans into action after securing a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.**

Breeze Academy offers industry-leading CPD training for healthcare professionals in a range of disciplines, including acupuncture & dry needling, sports massage, strength & conditioning and yoga teacher training, as well as coaching professionals who are looking to create their own online courses.

Headquartered in North Tyneside, it offers a hybrid training model which combines online learning through the [www.Breeze.Academy](http://www.Breeze.Academy) website with face-to-face sessions, and currently has a highly-qualified, six-strong team of trainers working with clients across the UK and overseas.

The £60,000 Small Loan Fund investment, which was obtained through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers, will help the business scale up its operations by taking on more trainers with additional specialisms and enhancing its business development campaigns.

The business will also be looking to enhance its overseas client base, with target markets including North America, continental Europe and the Middle East, and it is aiming to double its turnover over the coming year.



## £2m upgrade planned for Croft Hotel

**An historic North East hotel is set for a £2m upgrade after becoming the latest addition to The Apartment Group's growing portfolio of unique wedding venues.**

The 24-bedroom, Grade II listed Croft Hotel at Croft-on-Tees has been acquired by the Newcastle-headquartered leisure operator for an undisclosed sum.

Work is set to start imminently on the addition of six new bedrooms, the creation of a new enchanting Chapel, an extensive transformation of the function suite and a range of other improvements across the hotel's restaurant, wellness facilities and gardens, with the expanded venue expected to be ready to host weddings and events this summer.

Up to 30 new jobs are expected to be created as part of the upgrade, with the hotel's existing team all staying in post.

And The Apartment Group is already looking at its next wedding venue acquisition, with plans in place for future expansion into Yorkshire and along the M62 corridor.

The Croft Hotel acquisition has been supported through funding from London Stock Exchange-listed investment fund, Develop North PLC, which is managed by Newcastle-based wealth and fund management specialist, Tier One Capital.

Newcastle-based law firm Ward Hardaway, led by Rosemary Moore, provided legal advice to Develop North PLC, while Julie Cuthbertson and Michael Cantwell of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors and John Morgan and Jennifer Boynton at Hay & Kilner advised The Apartment Group management team on the deal.

## Clementine going for green growth with NEL investment backing

**A North Tyneside trade services business is aiming to capitalise on growing demand for its environmental expertise after securing a six-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.**

Clementine Services provides repair, installation and maintenance services for homes, businesses and public sector organisations right across the North East.

Over the last year, it has begun to grow its presence in the green installations sector, installing increasing numbers of electric vehicle charging points, solar power panels, battery systems, and air and ground source heat pumps around the region.

And after working with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to obtain the £100,000 investment, Clementine is now bringing in the additional resources it needs to capitalise on this growing demand.

Up to a dozen new jobs are expected to be created in the coming months as the business grows, with Clementine investing in new equipment and vehicles, upgrading its website and undertaking additional business development work.



Mark Black, managing director at Clementine Services, says: "The drive to reduce our collective impact on the environment has seen demand for green installations grow substantially, among both domestic and commercial customers.

"These green technologies allow people and businesses to be part of making a positive change to the way we all live, and we know there's a lot more we can do in this area.

Mike Guellard, senior investment executive at NEL Fund Managers, added: "Clementine Services has a very clear proposition and the expertise needed to deliver the green installations that its clients are increasingly looking for.



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# R&D tax relief reductions and reform set to come into force



It was announced by the Chancellor, Jeremy Hunt, in last year's Autumn Statement that there would be significant changes to the Research & Development (R&D) tax relief system. These measures are set to be introduced in conjunction with the draft legislation proposed for the Finance Bill 2022-23 back in August 2022, which is designed to tackle system abuses specifically.

**Despite a 13% to 20% rate increase for the separate R&D expenditure credit (RDEC), SMEs have been hit hard by the Autumn Statement announcements. In what was regarded as a 'rebalancing' of the two R&D relief brackets, a cut to the deduction rate for the SME scheme to 86% and the credit rate to 10% are set to come into force from 1 April 2023.**

As a result, the RDEC and SME schemes will now have broadly the same tax value of around 16% of qualifying cost. However, most businesses

claiming are SMEs so the reduction for this part of the scheme ultimately represents a tax relief saving for the Government rather than an investment incentive.

We explore the detail of both the upcoming reforms and system changes below.

## What's involved in the reform?

**Administration and disclosure** - To combat increased abuses of the system, new compliance rules are to be introduced, including additional reporting disclosures for claims. These enhanced disclosures will require a cost breakdown across the qualifying categories and a brief description of the subsequent R&D activity. New claimants will also need to notify HMRC within six months of the end of the financial year in which the R&D work was carried out.

**Qualifying costs** - Businesses involved in software projects (cloud computing and data storage) would be able to claim for relief.

**Additional measures** - Claims would need to be endorsed by a businesses' named senior officer and the details of any advising agent needs to be included.

The underlying reason for the above implementations is to tackle and prevent the abuse that's been plaguing the R&D system. While we very much welcome action to tackle the misuse, it is argued that the changes won't address the major contributor – rogue advisors mis-selling the scheme.

The additional checks by HMRC could also run the risk of further slowing down the claiming process, leading to cashflow disruption.

## Overview of the new measures announced by Government

As noted above, there's set to be a significant 'rebalancing' of the tax relief. The impact of these changes will be a reduction of more than 30% in the tax benefit to companies undertaking R&D projects from April 2023.

When combined with the corporation tax rise from 19% to 25% in the same month, SMEs will be faced with challenging decisions in respect to reinvestment.

We will assist our clients in preparing a technical and financial analysis of their claim, in accordance with HMRC's new disclosure requirements. We always undertake a best advice tax planning exercise on the impact of your claim. Once filed we will see the claim through to its HMRC processing and unlike most others in the R&D consultancy world we ensure your refund is sent directly to you by HMRC. In the unlikely event that HMRC want to review the claim, we can handle the Enquiry process on your behalf, every step of the way to its conclusion.

***If you have any questions on the upcoming R&D tax relief reductions and reform, please get in touch – [hello@azets.co.uk](mailto:hello@azets.co.uk)***  
***[www.azets.co.uk](http://www.azets.co.uk)***



# RMT advice supports Apartment Group's acquisition of historic Croft Hotel

Advice from RMT Accountants & Business Advisors has helped a Newcastle-headquartered leisure operator add an historic North East hotel to its growing portfolio of unique wedding venues.

**The 24-bedroom, Grade II listed Croft Hotel at Croft-on-Tees has been acquired by The Apartment Group for an undisclosed sum and is set to undergo a £2m upgrade.**

Work is starting imminently on the addition of six new bedrooms, the creation of a new enchanting Chapel, an extensive transformation of the function suite and a range of other improvements across the hotel's restaurant, wellness facilities and gardens, with the expanded venue expected to be ready to host weddings and events this summer.

Up to 30 new jobs are expected to be created as part of the upgrade, with the hotel's existing team all staying in post.

And The Apartment Group is already looking at its next wedding venue acquisition, with plans in place for future expansion into Yorkshire and along the M62 corridor.

The acquisition has been supported through funding from London Stock Exchange-listed investment fund, Develop North PLC, which is managed by Newcastle-based wealth and fund management specialist, Tier One Capital.

Julie Cuthbertson and Michael Cantwell of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors and John Morgan and Jennifer Boynton at Hay & Kilner advised The Apartment Group management



L-R: Brendan O'Grady of Tier One Capital, Julie Cuthbertson of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, Stuart Bailey, CEO of The Apartment Group, Apartment Group founder Duncan Fisher and his dog Rudy, Imogen Holland of Ward Hadaway and Jennifer Boynton of Hay & Kilner

team on the deal, while Newcastle-based law firm Ward Hadaway, led by Rosemary Moore, provided legal advice to Develop North PLC. Originally built in the early 19th century as a spa hotel for visitors taking the sulphurous local mineral waters and designed by Durham Cathedral architect Ignatius Bonomi, The Croft Hotel overlooks the River Tees and sits four miles south of Darlington, close to the Yorkshire Dales, North York Moors and North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

The Apartment Group owns a growing number of unique wedding venues around the North East, including Newton Hall near Alnwick, Le Petit Chateau in Northumberland and the Grade II listed Whitworth Hall in County Durham, and opened its latest property, Runa Farm in Barnard Castle, last year.

Apartment Group founder Duncan Fisher says: "Each of our wedding venues has its own character and its own story, and the Croft Hotel fits extremely well with this concept.

"The investment and development programme that's now underway will put its facilities on a par with all our other locations sister hotels. We can't wait to share our vision with our first wedding parties taking place this summer, especially the reveal of the new Enchanted wedding Chapel which is going to be spectacularly romantic!

"We've shown that the concept of offering affordable luxury in a series of unique venues has huge appeal to the thriving wedding market and we hope to keep spreading our footprint across northern England.

"We are renowned for creating fabulous and unique spaces, designed specifically to deliver the perfect wedding every time, and with our 'Affordable Luxury' packages we are able to offer an unforgettable day for even the smallest budget at any of our venues."

Stuart Bailey, CEO of The Apartment Group, adds: "Plans for our next acquisitions are already well advanced, and locations such as Leeds, York and Manchester are very much on our radar.

"Both RMT and Hay & Kilner are long-term advisors of the Apartment Group and their strategic input is a core part of our ongoing development plans, while securing Tier One Capital and Develop North PLC's backing for this project is affirmation of the quality of both our business model and plans for the Croft Hotel."

Julie Cuthbertson, corporate finance manager at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, adds: "The quality and heritage of the Croft Hotel makes it a perfect fit with The Apartment Group's ambitions. It's great to see the firm's impressive growth plans being realised with this latest project and to be playing our part in making them happen."

John Morgan, partner in the commercial property team at Hay & Kilner, says: "Duncan and his team have a clear, long-term vision of what they want this part of The Apartment Group's operations to become and we're very pleased to have helped them bring another landmark venue into their portfolio."

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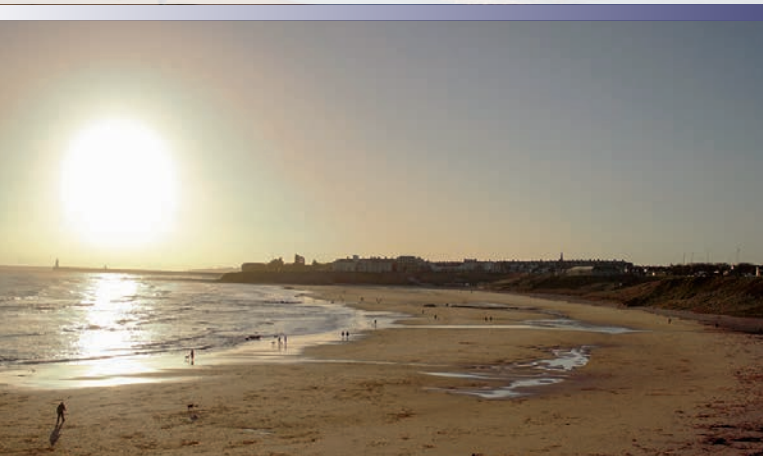
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*...Imagine what it must feel like to work hard every day but still have nothing spare after the bills...*



# Society matters

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.

**He has recently joined the board at Citizens Advice Gateshead and works closely with the team at Society Matters CIC, an organisation known for its passion for social change, designing and delivering affordable quality training, offering a continually expanding toolkit of high quality, unique services to help organisations put ideas into action. Here, Andrew talks about impact of employer's actions on employees and families and what can be done to support more people:**

"You can't help but notice that the news headlines tell us that our economy continues to be weak – high inflation, rising interest rates, a problematic employment market and the specter of recession always on the horizon. We read about and listen to the serious issues people are facing because of the crisis around the cost of living – but how many leaders can honestly say we understand the real impact this is having on our employees and their families? We need to accept that in-work poverty is real and exists in plentiful numbers amongst the North East workforce.

"The most recent figures from the All Party Parliamentary Group Child of the North make for sad reading. Over 900,000 children in the north of England live in poverty – that's 34% – but in parts of Newcastle that number is over 48%. Around one million households in the region were experiencing fuel poverty before fuel prices rose and the cost-of-living crisis hit. 23% of families who are food insecure miss out of school meals because, bizarrely, they earn too much to qualify.

"We know that children who grow up in poverty have far worse prospects than those who don't with lower GCSE grades, more likelihood of childhood mental health problems, and shockingly drastically reduced life expectancy – sometimes as much as 20 years less than peers.

"The cost-of-living crisis is forcing more working families into poverty, and where in-work poverty goes, child poverty follows. This isn't just about the now, it's about the future – but what can we do as business leaders?

"How many times do we refer to employees as the most valuable asset in a business? Or talk about 'our people'? Imagine what it must feel like to work hard every day but still have nothing spare after the bills to give the kids a treat? Or worse, imagine trying to pay the bills and realising despite all your hours of hard work, there's just not enough cash.

"If we want people to bring their whole selves into work and focus on the job at hand, it is on us to do what we can to make sure that these problems are not constantly on their minds.

I know some of you will be thinking that under the current circumstances, it's just not possible to pay staff substantially

more, but there are solutions beyond increasing pay and extending benefits, that we could consider. Even if you can action some of them, collectively we will all be doing much more.

- Ask your staff how they're doing – candidly, but anonymously – to get a better picture of the real pain points they're facing.
- Look at your policies and procedures and see whether they are helping or hindering? For example, how does the date you pay people or when you give bonuses fall into the assessment cycle for benefits.
- Examine your workplace culture and ask how much it costs to be at work? How many times are people asked to dip into their pockets? Are they travelling unnecessarily?
- Use your unique position to make sure that if your people need help – be it budgeting, advice in benefits, or even just how to make their food go further, they can get it easily.

"This might seem like a lot of work, but there are solutions and support out there. It is becoming ever more important that leaders educate themselves in what living with in-work poverty really means and understand the perverse situations it creates, for example, where poor people pay more for many essentials as they can't afford to buy in bulk or travel to cheaper shops.

"As some of you will know, I am connected to an amazing charity – Citizens Advice Gateshead – and their social enterprise, Society Matters CIC is working alongside North of Tyne Combined Authority to look at exactly this issue. They have a suite of solutions available including awareness raising seminars for senior leadership, staff surveying tools to gauge where your workforce is currently, support in auditing your work culture and practices and even budgeting and financial wellbeing training for staff.

"If you're based in Newcastle, North Tyneside or Northumberland all of this is fully funded by the combined authority there too.

"As businesses, and leaders, we have an important role to play in making sure that all staff, their families and the communities they live in are thriving. Why not get in touch with Society Matters and speak to them about the ways they can help you start on this all important journey."

**For more information contact Andrew on [andrew@marshbusinessstransformation.co.uk](mailto:andrew@marshbusinessstransformation.co.uk)**

**You can find more information on Society Matters CIC at [societymatterscic.com](http://societymatterscic.com)**





Peter Neal

## Wouldn't it be good if...

Experience Bank Group offers a range of services, one of them focused on continual professional development for leaders and future leaders in the region.

**Here, founder Peter Neal talks about the benefits of a peer group for existing or aspiring Non-Executive Directors, Trustees and Board Advisors.**

"It is proven that businesses that adopt formal management practices are more likely to achieve growth than competitors that don't. And in the North East, a large number of SMEs and charities are taking this on board, creating structures for their leadership and management that includes Non-Executive Directors (NEDs), Trustees and Board Advisors.

"This is creating an increased opportunity for leaders to step into board level positions, bringing their experience and knowledge to drive other businesses onto better performance and results.

"It is, of course, very satisfying to get to a position in your career when you know you are valued as a leader, especially as a NED, a Trustee or a Board Advisor. But with those positions comes considerable responsibility and there are so many things that you might need support in.

"This is the perfect time for continuous professional development, and to find a trusted network of diverse individuals that you can share challenges with, and get valuable inputs from, feeling safe amongst those who are in the same position.

"You may need to brush up or expand knowledge on the business tools and resources you can access to improve decisions to get better results. You will probably wholeheartedly welcome broader perspectives and strategies to help drive your own performance and hence the results for your clients.

"This will mean embracing new learning, especially on governance, board activity and responsibility, and more. Professional guidance, deep insights and keeping abreast of the changing obligations becomes paramount, but what is really needed alongside that is a safe place to explore issues and opportunities to become a better leader.

"Many also feel they need to increase their own value at this point, boost their confidence in a new role, and remove any imposter syndrome and increase their own visibility as an effective leader.

"So wouldn't it be good if there was such a place that you could get all of this? Guess what... there is! Our NED Peer Group Programme is a community of existing and aspiring leaders, ready to be the best they can for their boards and each other.

"Meeting once a month, the content of each session is a combination of professional guidance and a deep dive into real-time challenges and issues that help everyone gain

valued perspectives from a trusted source. Facilitated by Andrew Marsh, who brings years of experience in both NED, trustee, leader and facilitation roles, the community is built from peers from a wide range of industries and disciplines.

"We are currently recruiting new cohorts so you can sign up for a free taster session and if you join, you will go through a seamless induction, including alignment with a buddy who will support your entry into the group.

"It really is a win-win situation, and our testimonials from existing cohort members speak volumes."

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](http://www.theexperiencebank.co.uk) or call Peter on 07843 329393.**

**You can sign up for a free taster session by visiting: [theexperiencebank.co.uk/non-executive-director-board-advisor-peer-groups](http://theexperiencebank.co.uk/non-executive-director-board-advisor-peer-groups)**





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*...The digital revolution has a lot to answer for, but most of it for the better...*



# Does Excel solve everything?

Every business has an Excel aficionado. Whether it's a chart to track annual leave, budget planners or payroll information, there's always someone who lives by the mantra 'I have a spreadsheet for that!'; but is there an easier way?

## Excel is excellent

Don't get us wrong, Excel certainly has a place in our hearts and businesses.

As part of the Microsoft suite, users of all ages are taught how to use Excel as part of roles and even daily lives - anyone who loves meal planning or holiday planning can attest to this - and, as time develops, it gets used for more and more tasks.

The ability to store, read and visualise data is fantastic. Excel makes maths easy, and ultimately, it's cheap and easy to run.

Definitely benefits all round.

## Software is superior

While Excel (yes, it is software in itself) is perfectly placed for small projects or individuals' needs, when it comes to collaboration, sophisticated data reading and security, cracks become crevices.

Key goals for most businesses are to make a profit and improve efficiencies. Having duplicate, unprotected Excel spreadsheets accessed and shared, mid-managed and often compromised does not help meet those goals.

Off the shelf solutions or bespoke software on the other hand, does exactly that.

Whether an 'off the shelf' solution that is integrated into your system, or a bespoke app created to solve your specific problem, software can ensure:

- Your team spends time on what is important.
- Your systems and data are protected.
- Your business operates efficiently.
- Changes are trackable and accountable.
- Information can flow more easily between systems.
- You don't have multiple versions of the truth hidden in different departments.
- Your systems are less prone to human error (like when Tracy from accounts accidentally added an extra zero to the company forecast and they published it, true story).
- Your data is managed and curated properly.
- The right people can access your data at all times.



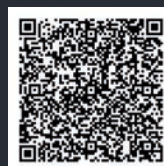
## Is software scary?

The digital revolution has a lot to answer for, but most of it for the better.

Never before have we had the opportunity to record, manage and use data in such a way, or so quickly. Like everything, making a change can be frightening and removing tried and tested methods and tools can be met with, quite frankly, chaos. But ultimately, investing in and/or creating software specific to your needs can not only provide exactly what you need isn't scary, but rather empowering.

***If you're suffering from Excel dependency, or the Software Scaries, get in touch with our Head of Bespoke Software, Mike Dent, to find out what solutions could help solve your business problem.***

***mike.dent@waterstons.com***







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We're exhibiting at the North East Expo this month and we'd love to see you there. Come along and chat to us at our exhibition stand, you'll find us on Level 2 from 9am-3pm on the 27th of April.



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Below is a summary of some of the recent transactions RG Corporate Finance has advised on

#### Enviromental Services



Provision of Corporate Finance advice to the shareholders of Naturally Wild Consultants Ltd on the sale of 100% of the business to Cura Terra, an environmental services group backed by private equity house Palatine PE.

#### Human Capital Education, Training and Skills



Provision of Corporate Finance advice to the management team and London-based Shard Credit Partners, on the MBO of N A College.

#### Staffing



Provision of financial due diligence to Gi Group, on their acquisition of Encore Personnel Services Limited.

#### Engineering



Provision of Corporate Finance and tax advice to the management team of P.D.Q. Engineering Limited, on the management buy-out of the business, as funded by NatWest.

Registered to carry on audit work in the UK and regulated for a range of investment business activities by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. Details about our audit registration can be viewed at [www.auditregister.org.uk](http://www.auditregister.org.uk), under reference number C006313267.





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**Rachel Cornick, Owner,  
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## Burnetts Solicitors appoints new chairperson

**The Partner responsible for overseeing the growth and strategy of a Newcastle law firm has now taken up the role of Chairperson.**

Richard Miller, Partner at Dean Street based Burnetts Solicitors LLP, has been appointed to the position after spending more than 18 years with the company.

He succeeds Vaughan Jones who retires from the business later this year.

Richard has previously held a number of leadership roles within the business while maintaining an active role as a Partner within the firm's nationally recognised Agribusiness team.

This new post is the latest in a long line of successes for the solicitor, who formally joined the company in 2005 following participation in the training scheme Burnetts has run since 2000.



He became the firm's youngest ever Salaried Partner in 2011 at the age of 26 and became an Equity Partner in 2014.

"I am delighted to take on this role within the firm," said Richard,

"It is a real privilege to work with extremely talented people within teams across the business and I am looking forward to utilising my new role to further advance our expansion in the North East."



## 50 years of service

**Lesley Charlton, who works as an archivist at Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors, has been with the business for 50 out of its 75-year history after joining in 1973 when she was just 16 years old.**

During this time, she has witnessed the firm go through a multitude of changes including five company names, three different offices and the business growing from 35 staff to a team of more than 100.

Starting as an office junior assisting staff across all departments, she then worked as a filing clerk before moving into archives, which housed old files, wills and title deeds.

After that, she spent time as general typist, helped former senior partner Howard Gold to draft and deal with wills, manned reception and also worked in the residential conveyancing department.

She later spent time as a fee earner in the litigation department where she handled miners' compensation and vibration white finger claims, before setting back into the archives department – which had become computerised since she had last been there.

"I've had a whole multitude of different roles over the years but it's the people who work here which have made it a place I wanted to stay and I can certainly say I have made friends for life," said Lesley.

While 50 years is an impressive milestone, Lesley is by no means an outlier at the firm, joining a number of staff members who have racked up decades of service with the business.

Howard Gold – now a consultant – has 53 years with the business under his belt, client relations manager Chris Richardson boasts 45 years' service and former head of residential conveyancing, Una Coulson, retired in 2020 after 40 years with the firm, along with legal secretary and fee earner Anne Henderson, who had been with the firm for 45 years.

Senior partner Paul Hughes, who has spent more than three decades with the firm, believes the list of longstanding staff is a testament to the culture of the business.

"Mincoffs is a fantastic place to work and there's no better evidence of this than the number of staff we have who have chosen to spend the majority of their careers here," he said.



## EMG Solicitors' Wills team take a step up...

**Lawyers at a fast-growing North East and Cumbria law firm have increased their expertise, after successfully achieving a prestigious qualification.**

Emma Etherington and Michael Cattermole, who both work in the Wills, Trusts and Probate department of EMG Solicitors, have recently become Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) TEPs – Trust and Estate Practitioners.

The STEP accreditation is a recognised standard of excellence, specialist knowledge and integrity as well as ensuring its members are experts in inheritance and succession planning.

The worldwide organisation trains professionals across a number of sectors, all of whom are involved with helping families plan for the future.

Already skilled practitioners, both Michael and Emma have enhanced their skills by completing the STEP qualification, which develops both their technical knowledge and their ability to give advice to clients, especially in more complex situations.

The award-winning Legal 500 firm, EMG Solicitors, is based across the North East and Cumbria, with offices in Durham City, Newcastle Upon Tyne, Darlington and Penrith.



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# “Fire and re-hire”: a new penalty for employers?

Jane Sinnamon is a Partner at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Jane considers the draft Code of Practice on Dismissal and Re – Engagement and what this could mean for employers.

The lack of workforce consultation prior to the sudden sacking of nearly 800 P&O Ferries workers in 2022 led to calls for greater regulation of the practice of dismissal and re – engagement. In March 2022, the Government committed to introducing a Statutory Code of Practice with a view to setting standards for all employers in a “fire and rehire” situation. The Draft Code of Practice on Dismissal and Re – engagement (“the Code”) was published on 24 January 2023.

## What situations would the Code apply to?

Based on the wording in the Code, the Government does not envisage this Code applying in “genuine redundancy” situations, but it would apply in situations where new terms are proposed to employees and the employer envisages dismissing the employees and offering them re – engagement or dismissing the employees and hiring new employees to perform their duties under the new terms. As changing terms and conditions and redundancies are often intertwined measures, such a distinction may be difficult to realise in practice.

Importantly, the Code applies regardless of the number of employees who may be affected.

## What does the Code say?

The content of the Code should not be a surprise for employers as it builds on the Acas advice that was previously published in 2021.

Unsurprisingly, “fire and rehire” is presented as an option of last resort which should only be used once an employer has exhausted alternative solutions. The Code identifies the need for employers to be aware of who they will



Jane Sinnamon

need to consult with, whilst highlighting that employers need to be wary of any collective consultation obligations outside of the Code and to avoid bypassing collective bargaining where there is a recognised trade union.

If alternatives to contractual changes cannot be achieved, the Code advocates that the employer should engage in consultation with their workforce, less as a matter of merely following procedure, but in good faith in an effort to achieve a solution. It is stressed that an employer needs to be honest if it is prepared to unilaterally force through any contractual changes, but that this should not be used as a negotiating tactic to achieve agreement where an employer does not contemplate making dismissals. The Code also guides employers on the process should changes be agreed and, alternatively, if changes cannot be agreed.

## What does this mean for employers?

The Code does not create any new legal obligations for employers, nor does it change the position that the practice of “fire and rehire” risks giving rise to various legal claims (including unfair dismissal). What has changed is that unreasonable failure to follow the Code could lead to a 25% increase in any award made

by an Employment Tribunal if an employee is successful in their legal claim. The potential liability for an employer is therefore set to increase because of the Code.

It is very easy to think that a ‘P&O – esque’ situation would not befall the majority of employers, but Acas research from 2021 indicated that the practice has become more prevalent in recent years, especially during the COVID – 19 Pandemic. As we enter uncertain economic waters, employers may find themselves facing a situation where contractual changes, even at the cost of dismissals, become a reality.

The Code is still in draft form and employers have until 18 April 2023 to submit responses using the address: [www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-code-of-practice-on-dismissal-and-re-engagement](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-code-of-practice-on-dismissal-and-re-engagement)

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Wayne Lynn



# Solicitor of the month...

## Wayne Lynn

Partner, Silk Family Law

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

Other than the unrealistic thought of becoming an astronaut as a young child I didn't really have any firm career ambitions until I took my options at 14. Maths and Science were not my forte, but I really enjoyed English and History. My English teacher, Peter Fairhurst suggested that I may be suited to a career in the law, but it was not until I had work experience at Richmond, Anderson and Goudie Solicitors that I realised that this was the career that was suited to me, as I witnessed first-hand what a difference a good lawyer can make to peoples' lives when they need the law on their side. It has always been great to help people who need it and make a difference.

### Tell us about about your career path so far?

I trained at Smith & Graham Solicitors based in Hartlepool in the early 1990s, before qualifying into their Family and Criminal Justice team. I realised that Family Law was the area that I wished to become the centre of my practice, and became the Head of Family in the late 90s before joining Dickinson Dees where I began to specialise in more complex and diverse cases. In 2010 the partners in the family law team started Silk Family Law and I joined the firm from the beginning. Silk has gone from strength to strength and I became a partner in 2015.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

I have been involved in some really important and high profile cases over the years, which gives me great personal satisfaction, but my proudest achievement is seeing young lawyers that I have trained and mentored achieving success in their own careers. I was fortunate enough to have had some exceptional mentors during my career and feel a sense of duty to help lawyers to go on to achieve their potential is really satisfying.

### What are you currently working on?

Client confidentiality is sacred, but It is fair to say no two cases are ever the same. I am currently handling a variety of different cases, ranging from complex multi-million pound divorces, to the preparation of prenuptial agreements as well as cases involving children's living arrangements. I also act for a lot of unmarried clients in dispute with their partners. However, the common thread is that treating clients professionally and compassionately is key.

### Tell us about your team?

As well as my fellow partners Ian, Kim and Margaret I work daily with associates Katie Machin and Ellie Lowes and legal assistants Eve Bentley, Elliot Anderson and Jenny McKinney. I am fortunate to work with exceptional lawyers and all play a pivotal part in the work and success of the firm.

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

Value every member of your team! The sum is always greater than the parts.



### Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

My parents, who always believed in me when I doubted myself, as well as my former English Teacher, Peter Fairhurst, who sparked my passion of English language and literature and encouraged my chosen career path.

### Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Hopefully having overseen our young lawyers of today become the new partners and mentors of the next generation after them. I also hope that I am able to get the work/life balance right. As we get older, time with our loved ones becomes increasingly precious.

### Who are your four ideal dinner guests alive or dead?

Billy Connolly for his unique take on life. Dr.Martin Luther King, whose wisdom, grace and dignity set an example to us all, regardless of race, colour or creed. Stephen Fry for his intelligence on a range of subjects and finally Jesus as I would love to know the answers to some deep questions. I think there would be quite a conversation at the dinner table!

### How do you unwind?

Trying to reduce my current golf handicap, watching Newcastle United and spending quality time in the company of family and good friends.

### What is your favourite book and boxset?

Choosing just one of each is very difficult as I have a broad taste. However, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle is one that I often return to. As for box sets, *Only Fools and Horses*. I must have seen every episode of this many times and it never fails to make me laugh. Absolutely timeless stuff.

[www.silkfamilylaw.co.uk](http://www.silkfamilylaw.co.uk)



# Debt recovery and protecting business cashflow: a lawyer's top tips



Matthew Brady

Whether you're running a small business or heading up a PLC finance team, good credit control is key to business success. A clear, effective credit control strategy lays out how to keep cash flow problems to a minimum, chase slow payers and minimise bad debt – ultimately allowing your business to grow.

**But what if businesses don't pay promptly? Solicitor and debt recovery expert Matthew Brady shares his top tips on recovering debt and protecting cashflow.**

A study by Barclays found that last year, 58% of UK SMEs were waiting on late payments, and for medium size enterprises (50 to 249 staff), that rose to 94%\*.

When a client doesn't pay on time, resources are often diverted to chasing unpaid invoices, risking productivity.

For small businesses, more than a week each year is spent chasing money owed. According to Intuit, that translates to 56.4 million hours, worth £6.3bn to the economy\*\*.

How to avoid losing time and money to debtors

## 1. Create and maintain a cashflow forecast

Creating and maintaining a cashflow forecast gives you an estimate of revenue: a rough idea of what's coming in and if it's enough to cover outgoings. Once created, be sure to keep the cashflow forecast up to date.

## 2. Make it easy for clients to pay

Sometimes clients have trouble paying, but you can minimise potential problems by making it easy to get paid by cheque, BACS, credit and debit cards, or cash.

Lay out your payment options up front and remind clients of their options if their invoice goes unpaid.

## 3. Create a clear credit control process

This sets out the process of monitoring and managing invoices that have been sent to customers but haven't been paid – also known as accounts receivable.

Every team member needs to be clear on their part in the credit control process, which should include:

- Credit terms.
- The importance of prompt payment.
- A timetable of actions, including reminders when the payment is due, when it's overdue, and every seven days it remains overdue.
- When to pass the overdue invoice to a debt recovery solution tool.

## 4. Make invoice recovery part of your policy

If invoice recovery is a part of your process, debtor days are reduced. It's easier to manage client expectations from the outset and

pass late payment concerns to your debt recovery solution team, saving your business time and money and circumventing difficult conversations.

Third-party legal expertise can make recovering late payments fast, efficient, and compliant. The right legal team can quickly assess outstanding invoices, make recommendations and help you apply compensation, late fees and interest to the debt (where applicable). They'll seek recovery of your outstanding debts without the heavy-handed approach that risks damaging important client relationships.

## What is Muckle Collect debt recovery?

Muckle Collect is a debt recovery solution from legal experts designed to help businesses of all shapes and sizes recover unpaid invoices.

Combining innovative technology with careful relationship management, the Muckle Collect team assesses your debts and creates a recovery strategy.

Each unpaid invoice is fully trackable through the Muckle Collect online portal; it's not an automated service – you'll hear from real people giving advice at every stage of the debt recovery.

It's free to register with Muckle Collect. Sign up and start uploading the invoices you need to recover.

**For more information, contact Matthew using 0191 211 7838 or [matthew.brady@muckle-llp.com](mailto:matthew.brady@muckle-llp.com).**

**Visit [www.muckle-llp.com/collect](http://www.muckle-llp.com/collect)**

\*Barclays ([home.barclays/news/press-releases/2022/01/three-in-five-uk-businesses-are-owed-money-from-late-payments--f](https://home.barclays/news/press-releases/2022/01/three-in-five-uk-businesses-are-owed-money-from-late-payments--f))

\*\* Intuit ([quickbooks.intuit.com/uk/press/smb-chase-late-payments](https://quickbooks.intuit.com/uk/press/smb-chase-late-payments))



# Protect your cashflow, time and profit with **debt recovery** from Muckle LLP.



Easy-access debt recovery by legal experts. Muckle Collect helps businesses of any size collect unpaid invoices in a few simple steps, for a fixed fee.

**Recognised as top tier in Legal 500 for over 12 years, our team provides a personal and professional approach to debt recovery that doesn't damage client relationships.**

Find out more and get started



muckle<sup>LLP</sup>

Call **0191 211 7777** email **[collect@muckle-llp.com](mailto:collect@muckle-llp.com)** to learn more



# The need for a Lasting Power of Attorney

Jacqueline Emmerson, Managing Director of Emmersons Solicitors, reflects upon the Wills and Private Client work that she has been involved with over many years.

**“I was first taught to draft wills when I worked at a large City firm. I can still remember going out to visit clients at their homes and businesses to take instructions. In those days Lasting Powers of Attorney didn’t exist. It is therefore unsurprising that many people know about the need to draft a Will but know very little about the importance of a Lasting Power of Attorney.”**

Jacqueline has given many talks to members of the public, charities and the business community about the need to make a Lasting Power of Attorney. Here she sets out some of the important highlights from those talks...

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A WILL AND A LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY

Many of our clients become confused about the role of an Attorney and an Executor. When you appoint an Attorney under a Lasting Power of Attorney you are doing so so that they can assist you during your lifetime. They may become involved in sorting out your banking, utility bills, applying for welfare benefits, sorting out house insurance, paying for care home fees or selling your home on your behalf.

It is important to remember that your Power of Attorney ceases when you die. There is no further role for your Attorney. That is because all of your assets then immediately fall to your estate.

This is different to your Will under which you appoint Executors. Your Executors are responsible for sorting out all of your assets and debts after your death. They manage your Estate. They will need to see the records kept by your Attorney if they managed your affairs before your death but otherwise your Estate is separate from your Power of Attorney.

## THE BUSINESS OWNER’S LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY

Many of you reading this article will be business owners. You are the signatories on your business bank accounts, you may own business property such as offices, factories and houses. You may employ dozens of staff. But what will happen if you become ill, who will run the business, sign the cheques, manage the banking. Have you made a list of your business assets and loans/mortgages? Have you made a list of important contacts such as your bank manager, accountant, financial advisor?

Depending upon the size of your business it may be prudent to make two Lasting Powers of Attorney in relation to your finances. The first being to appoint attorneys who could successfully manage your business on your behalf either until you regain your health or perhaps until the business can be sold. Selling the business as a going concern may be more valuable than simply disposing of its assets.

You will need to choose business attorneys carefully. You may wish to appoint your spouse or partner and perhaps your accountant. That way your spouse continues to be involved and will have an understanding of your ongoing affairs. Or do you work with a trusted business advisor who could be appointed.

If you need a separate business-related lasting Power of Attorney then don’t forget your personal LPA. In this case it is often prudent to appoint your spouse or partner together with another family member or friend. It is better to have more than one attorney in case one of them dies or becomes unable to act themselves because of serious ill health.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR FAMILY?

You may have noticed one of your relatives, perhaps your parent, starting to struggle. Are they becoming confused by everyday tasks? Is dealing with their bank or utility bills becoming far too much for them to cope with? Are they struggling to get out of the house so that going to the bank or dealing with any type of officialdom becomes a real issue. Maybe now is the time to have a conversation about appointing attorneys to help them. A LPA is not just to be used for people who lack mental capacity. It can also be used when someone is simply frail. It can also be a very useful source of help for your friends and family who have cancer. They may be exhausted from ongoing treatment and therefore unable to deal with their financial affairs. There is nothing worse than being kept on hold to a bank or insurance company for long periods of time.

## HOW CAN WE HELP YOU?

At Emmersons Solicitors, our award winning Private Client Team are trained to assist those who are struggling. Or clients who simply wish to plan ahead to help those who will help them later. We are very sympathetic and can usually spot when a client needs extra support. Our aim is to be kind and to guide our client through the process with dignity.

Many of our clients and their families feel a great sense of relief once they have been to see us; we also offer telephone appointments or even just a brief chat if that is all that is required. Many times we have helped the adult children of an older person. We can quickly provide a plan of action during a brief telephone conversation. Including how to have the Lasting Power of Attorney conversation and suggestions as to who the attorneys should be.

## WHAT HAPPENS IF MY RELATIVE HAS ALREADY LOST MENTAL CAPACITY?

It depends upon the severity of the situation. Some clients with early stage Dementia are still able to make a LPA. The law states that they must know what they are doing both when they give instructions and when they sign the relevant documents.

If it is clear that your relative would not understand a LPA then you can apply to the Court of Protection to become their Deputy. This is a more onerous process than the drafting of a LPA and is worthy of a proper conversation with our Team.

***If you need help please don’t hesitate to contact us at [enquiries@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk) or call 0191 284 6989.***



**emmersons**  
solicitors





“

*...Our aim is  
to be kind and  
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client through  
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with dignity...*

Jacqueline Emmerson



# An evening with Vice-Chancellors past and present - the 20th Event of Newcastle Business & Property Courts Forum

Coinciding with the five year anniversary of the Business and Property Court opening in Newcastle, the 20th Forum event took place at Northumbria University Law School attracting lawyers, law students and members of the judiciary.

## Unparalleled legal event

13th February 2023 was a day on which Newcastle hosted a legal event unparalleled in any other part of the country. Not just one, but four of the most senior judges of the Business and Property Courts (BPC) past and present, took part in a lively “chat show” styled event chaired by His Honour Judge Kramer, the Newcastle specialist BPC Judge.

The event marked 5 years since the launch of the BPC in Newcastle. More than 160 guests gathered at Northumbria Law School, including the Chancellor of the High Court, Sir Julian Flaux, the Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear, Lucy Winskill OBE and the Recorder of Newcastle, His Honour Judge Sloan K.C., for “An Evening with Vice Chancellors Past and Present”.

Questioned by Judge Kramer, the Vice Chancellor and supervising Judge for BPC work in the North, Mr Justice Fancourt, together with his predecessors Lord Justice Snowden, Sir Gerald Barling and Sir Alastair Norris spoke about their careers in the law, giving the audience a unique insight into some of their cases which had a wider significance to society and the impact the BPC has had on local dispute resolution.

## Meeting students – tomorrow’s lawyers

Prior to the main event, the Judges together with Sir Julian Flaux, the Chancellor of the High Court, met with students from local universities for a question and answer session, covering topics as diverse as the use of artificial intelligence to resolve legal disputes, and the funding of the Court system. The students were enthusiastic about the opportunities the BPC offered for them to develop their careers in the North East.

## Business and Property Court for the Region

The BPC in Newcastle was launched in February 2017, with the intention that individuals and businesses with high value and/or complex disputes should not have to travel out of the region in order to access high quality dispute resolution. It provides a speedy and cost effective service to those who wish to avoid the time and cost of litigating in London.

The BPC deals with a wide range of cases, including commercial disputes, those relating to land, trusts, wills and intellectual property, corporate and personal insolvency and construction and technical disputes, such as those relating to software.

Judge Kramer is the specialist Circuit Judge in charge of the Court, and he is supported by three specialist District Judges: Michelle Temple, David Hamblen and Terence Phillips. Judge Kramer regularly sits as a deputy judge of the High Court, but where a case needs a full time High Court judge, arrangements are made for one to come to Newcastle rather than the parties having to go to London.

Judge Kramer sits at the Moot Hall. He also chairs the Newcastle BPC Forum, which holds quarterly talks bringing together the lawyers, and other professionals who use the BPC, and students, to exchange ideas and hear speakers on contemporary topics of interest to the local business community.

## Centre of excellence for dispute resolution

Closing the event, Sir Julian underlined the resounding success of the Court, noting that the BPC in Newcastle had established itself under Judge Kramer as a centre of excellence for dispute resolution. The original aspiration for the Court has been met and



Seated, left to right: Sir Alastair Norris, Sir Julian Flaux, His Honour Judge Kramer, Mr Justice Fancourt and Lord Justice Snowden.





exceeded, and it is hoped that in due course a further permanent Judge will be appointed to deal with the increasing workload.

Speaking after the event, Judge Kramer said: "The evening followed a chat show format. As the host, I now realise that the success of such an event depends upon having good guests, which made it easy for me. I was encouraged by the large turnout and the chance to convey to a wider audience the work of the BPC. It is a constant source of frustration to me that the public are by and large unaware that we have a court in Newcastle dealing with High Court BPC claims on a daily basis and of the type of work undertaken.

Many members of the public do not realise that they can sit in on hearings to see for themselves how cases are dealt with and the myriad nature of the disputes with which we deal. Courts are generally open to the public and they are welcome to visit the Moot Hall and watch cases from the ample public gallery in what must be one of the most attractive and functional courts in the country."

Trinity Chambers' Simon Goldberg K.C., a member of the Forum who was appointed the region's first business and property K.C. in 2022, said: "The launch of the BPC in Newcastle in 2017 was an important moment in this region's legal history. The Court under Judge Kramer's leadership has exceeded all expectations. Work which was previously lost to London is now being litigated locally, which can only be of benefit to Court users, the local legal community and the local economy."

**To find out more about the Forum and the work of the Newcastle BPC, visit [www.newcastle-bpcf.org.uk](http://www.newcastle-bpcf.org.uk)**







Damien Todd



# Impact of the Building Safety Act 2022 on the Residential Conveyancing Sector

The Building Safety Act 2022 (“the Act”) came as a direct response to the 2017 Grenfell Tower tragedy in which 72 people lost their lives as a result of unsafe building practices.

**Following the Grenfell disaster, it was recognised that allocating responsibility for remedial works to make buildings safe needed legislation leading to the Building Safety Act 2022. The Act defines who should foot the bill to remediate both historical cladding defects and historical non-cladding defects of higher risk buildings.**

Damien Todd, Partner, and Head of the Residential Conveyancing team at Sweeney Miller Law’s Sunderland office, discusses the implications of the Act on the conveyancing sector.

## The Act at a glance

Following recommendations from Dame Judith Hackett’s review of the building industry after Grenfell, the Building Safety Act 2022 introduces a new, stricter, regulatory regime for design, construction, and maintenance of buildings.

The Act covers properties considered to be ‘high risk’ which includes standing at least 11 metres or five storeys high; however, if the enfranchisement process has occurred resulting in the building effectively being owned by the tenants, the Act does not apply.

In essence, under the Act, if on 14th February 2022, a property was occupied as the owner’s only or principal residence, and on that date the owner owned no more than two dwellings in the UK (in addition to the property, so three in total) then the landlord must cover the cost of any historical cladding remedial works. It is important to note that this cannot be recovered by way of billed service charge to the owner and the lease is referred to as a ‘qualifying lease’.

If the lease is a ‘non-qualifying lease’, namely the owner of the property owns more than three dwellings in the UK on 14th February 2022, then the required cladding remedial work costs can usually be recovered through service charge. However, the exception to this is where the building is still owned by the original developer or an associated company, in which case the costs should be paid at the expense of the building owner.

The reason for this, as stated in the official guidance, is that “the Act eradicates the idea that leaseholders should be the first port of call to pay for historical safety defects”.

Application of the Act can be complex and differs slightly depending on if the historical remedial works are cladding or non-cladding and whether the lease is a ‘qualifying lease’ or a ‘non-qualifying lease’.

## Responsibilities for ‘qualifying lease’ owners

As of 14th February, qualifying lease owners must obtain the value of the subject property if historical remedial works are non-cladding – for those with a value of under £175,000 (or £325,000 in Greater London) the qualifying lease owner is not liable for non-cladding remediation costs.

If the value is equal to or over that value, the ‘qualifying lease’ owner may be liable for a portion of the costs depending on a number of factors:

- Whether the landlord is or has a connection with the entity that caused the defect.
- Whether the landlord has a group net worth of more than £2m per relevant building.

If the ‘qualifying lease’ is liable for costs, they must be capped and spread over 10 years, with any costs paid since 28th June 2017 contributing towards the cap amount.

## Deeds of Certificate (DOCs)

If you own a flat within a building that falls within the remit of the Act, you need to serve a ‘Leaseholders Deed of Certificate’ (“Leaseholder DOC”) on your landlord. A Leaseholder DOC is designed to determine whether the lease is a ‘qualifying lease’ or not and ascertaining this distinction is critical.

Within four weeks of receipt of the Leaseholders DOC, the landlord must serve the ‘Landlords Deed of Certificate’ (“Landlords DOC”) which should establish the following:

- If there are any remediation works due on the building.
- If the landlord has a connection with the entity that caused the defects.
- Whether the landlord has a group net worth of more than £2m per relevant building.

Many landlords have already begun the process of determining liability by sending flat owners the Leaseholders DOC that must be completed and returned within a pre-determined timescale of a minimum of 8 weeks. If you receive a DOC and do not return it in time, the lease may be treated as a ‘non-qualifying lease’ and you will therefore not be afforded the protections offered by the Act.

Solicitors acting on behalf of those purchasing a flat that falls under the parameters of the Act will most likely ask to see both the Leaseholder’s and Landlord’s DOCs to ascertain the level of costs associated with any historical remedial works and confirm who is responsible to cover them.

## What this means for the conveyancing industry

Commenting on the implications of the Act on the conveyancing sector, Damien Todd, said: “We are already seeing delays caused by the Act having an impact on conveyancing transactions. We would advise flat owners who fall within the Act’s parameters to complete and serve a completed Leasehold DOC to their landlord to begin the process as soon as possible and reduce any potential delays. It is worth speaking to a specialist solicitor to understand lender requirements, leaseholder and landlord DOCs, and to understand your rights and responsibilities under the Act.”

## Expert team

**At Sweeney Miller Law our expert property team has extensive experience in dealing with all types of conveyancing transactions for both individuals and landlords. If you have any queries relating to the Act or any aspect of residential conveyancing, please get in touch by emailing, [enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk), calling 0345 900 5401 or visit [www.sweeneymiller.co.uk](http://www.sweeneymiller.co.uk)**





## How to navigate family holidays as a separated parent

Emily Cannell, Head of Family at Mincoffs Solicitors, advises separated parents to plan early and think ahead when it comes to organising a trip away with children.

**As we creep closer to spring and summer, many families are starting to think about holidays.**

While planning a trip can be an exciting time, it can also be a stressful one for separated parents who need to navigate their rights and

responsibilities on taking their children on holiday.

Without an existing Child Arrangements Order in place, it is up to parents to agree holiday arrangements for their children and so it is advisable to discuss arrangements with the other parent as early as possible.

Where both parents have parental responsibility for a child, consent will be needed from the other parent before taking a child outside of the country.

It is also wise to travel with a document setting out the arrangements for the holiday with signed consent to travel outside of the country from the other parent.

When discussing holiday arrangements and obtaining consent to take a child abroad, it is best practise to give as much detail about the proposed holiday as possible.

This means sharing the destinations, dates, airline information, contact details for the accommodation and who else will be going on the trip.

Often parents can feel this is an invasion of privacy and that the information is not relevant or required by the other parent, but in our experience the more transparency about the arrangements the better.

The only exception to requiring consent by the other parent is if the other parent does not have parental responsibility for your child, you have a court order that states the child lives with you

(in which case you can take them abroad for up to 28 days without the other parent's consent) or you have a Child Arrangements Order in place that specifies the dates that you are permitted to travel abroad with the child and the holiday is in accordance with the terms of the Order.

Taking a child abroad without a court order or the consent of all parties with parental responsibility is a criminal offence of child abduction.

If consent to a holiday abroad is refused by the other parent then it is advisable to seek legal advice as soon as possible.

In some cases, consent can ultimately be agreed if the issues relating to the withholding of consent can be addressed.

If not, the parent wishing to take the child abroad would need to seek permission of the court to do so by applying for a Specific Issues Order, which will ultimately determine whether the holiday goes ahead or not.

If an application to the Court is required, it can take weeks or months for the application to be determined; it is therefore important to discuss your options with a solicitor as soon as possible.

**For confidential, trusted advice about arrangements with children, contact Family Partner, Emily Cannell, on [ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk](mailto:ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk) or visit [www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law](http://www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law)**



# Details of property co-ownership can't be taken on trust

*By Claire Simmons, Partner in the specialist Residential Property Team at North East law firm Hay & Kilner*

Buying a house has always been one of the major landmarks that married couples reached as part of their life together.

**But with the most recent official figures showing that almost a quarter of co-habiting couples are now not actually married, there is an increasing need for partners who haven't yet walked down the aisle and/or have no plans to do so to think about how their individual investments in what is likely to be the biggest purchase of their lives are properly managed and protected.**

This is especially important if one party is making a larger contribution to the purchase than the other, or if, in these days of high property prices, The Bank of Mum and Dad has provided some of the capital required to one or both of the purchasers to enable them to buy their new home.

Unfortunately, we've been asked to help with a number of cases where a failure to complete all the required documentation in advance has led to financial and emotional complications further down the line.

But by proactively addressing this issue as part of the purchase process and getting the right kind of legal advice, these difficulties can be avoided.

If a couple gets married or enters a civil partnership, and then some time later splits

up, the court will consider all their assets when deciding on the divorce settlement, including any property that they jointly own – but for unmarried couples, this is not necessarily the case.

When a property is owned jointly, the legal title to it cannot be severed, and if one partner passes away, the whole title automatically passes to the surviving partner, regardless of any outside contribution to the purchase price. That investment would simply be lost to the family members that made it, which, depending on the position with the co-owners' relationship at the time, may or may not be a problem to them.

In order to make sure everything is in order with the property co-ownership and to avoid potential future problems, a Declaration of Trust should be made, with the help of the appropriate legal advice, which details exactly what each of the co-owners have contributed to the purchase.

If there are any third parties benefitting from this declaration of trust, it would also now need to be registered with the Trust Registration Service, which was introduced as part of anti-money laundering legislation and requires that information is provided about a trust, its assets and all relevant parties such as trustees and its beneficiaries.

It should also be clarified whether any parental or family contribution has been made as a gift

or a loan, as the former may have inheritance tax and estate management implications if the person providing the money passes away before seven years have elapsed since the date of the gift.

In a related matter, any parent who has made a contribution to a property purchase should be including information on what they want to happen to their investment after they die in their will, and should make sure to keep this document up to date to reflect any changes in their wishes.

Your lawyer should be made aware of how much each co-owner has invested in the purchase, and would also factor in the different contributions that each party makes to the property's running costs, such as utility bills, mortgage payments and maintenance.

While thinking about what might happen if things go wrong is the last thing that couples buying a home together want to do, making sure that the potential implications of this happening have been properly considered as part of the purchase process could save a great deal of heartache later on.

**For further information on co-ownership of property, the Trust Registration Service or any other aspect of residential property law, please contact Claire Simmons on 0191 232 8345 or email [claire.simmons@hay-kilner.co.uk](mailto:claire.simmons@hay-kilner.co.uk)**



Claire Simmons





## It's a dog's life as Care Homes take the lead with dog companions!

**Two North East care home groups are helping to provide furry friends for isolated people in their communities as well as for their own residents in seven regional care homes.**

Solehawk and Popular Care are supporting Wag & Company to provide regular doggy visitors for their seven care homes in the region whilst at the same time helping to finance Wag & Company's unique canine home visiting service for people in the community who live on their own.

By becoming Community Friends of Wag, Solehawk and Popular Care are supporting Wag & Company's work for the elderly in their

communities whilst at the same time ensuring that all their care homes receive Wag visits. Everyone benefits, older dog lovers in the community as well as the dog loving residents in their care and nursing homes.

Steve Massey, Solehawk & Popular Care Operations Director, said: "We know the value of visits from dogs and other animals to our care homes so to support Wag & Company was an easy decision.

"Our residents will benefit greatly from the experience and to be able to share this with older people in our local communities who live alone is equally rewarding."

Diane Morton, founder, and CEO of Wag & Company said: "We're so grateful to both these care home groups for supporting our work and joining Wag as Community Friends."

## Survey shows how more screening can save lives

**Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead have revisited their extensive research looking at the importance of cancer screening and the need to attend appointments for potentially lifesaving screenings.**

Cancer screening is a test that detects early signs of cancer in people who do not have symptoms. Screening can aid in the detection of cancers at an early stage when treatment is more likely to be effective. Cervical screening is one of the best ways to protect yourself from cervical cancer.

Yvonne Probert, CEO of Tell Us North, the organisation tasked with delivering the Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle services explained some of the findings of their work: "The surveys found that there was a fear of receiving the test results, a lack of knowledge about the disease and screening processes, as well as people feeling embarrassment, and some having had feelings of being uncomfortable during pap smear tests."

Healthwatch have submitted a number of recommendations to the NHS to address some of the issues concerning why people don't have regular screenings. These include increasing accessibility to information on the disease and its prevention, more flexibility in appointment times, making



invitations more understandable for all languages in the community and the need for staff to be friendly, understanding and accommodating."

Joanne Smith CEO of Fighting All Cancers Together (FACT) added: "It's so important to encourage screening as it can eliminate the worry when something is found not to be cancerous, and for all cancers diagnosed, the sooner they are identified, the better the potential outcomes of treatment."

## Brothers in Alms help The People's Kitchen

**Two County Durham youngsters have given up their cosy beds to brave freezing cold temperatures by sleeping overnight in a church to raise funds for The People's Kitchen.**

Henry Spencer (12) and his brother Dylan (9) decided to help The People's Kitchen as they were concerned about how vulnerable people coped in the ice-cold winter snap. The boys' father, Simon is the curate of Holy Trinity and St Paul's Church in Pelton and he suggested that they may like to spend the night in the church to raise sponsorship for The Kitchen.

Henry said: "When we slept in the church, we kept ourselves warm with blankets, but it was

minus seven degrees outside at the time. It was fun to do but we know that some people feel this cold every night too."

Dylan added: "We have given £475 to The People's Kitchen so that they can help more people stay warm and not go hungry in the winter."

To say thank you, The People's Kitchen invited the family for a tour of the building where they met volunteers and saw how the meals were prepared and cooked. Trustee Jackie Boardman was delighted to show them around the facilities.

"We rely entirely on the generosity and goodwill of the public, local businesses, schools, and wider communities, who donate food and money. No government funding is received, and everyone at The Kitchen is an unpaid volunteer.



The Spencer brothers have put others before themselves and we are very grateful for their kind donation. It'll make a big difference to a lot of our "friends" who use our services," she said.

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



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**email:**  
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# Women celebrate together whilst raising money for NE Youth

International Women's Day has been going for over 100 years! It's taken some time to be picked up in the UK but it's definitely a reason to celebrate. NE Youth have been putting on events for the past eight years and this year there were two ways to get involved.

The 'This Girl Can' 5km walk/run/jog event takes part at Exhibition Park every year on the evening of International Women's Day. NE Youth took a group of 30 girls to take part in the event, all of them wore an IWD t-shirt which was supported by Arian EMS. They also had a stall at the marketplace to promote their services that keep young people active.

Across in wonderful Wylam there was a IWD supper club at The Wood Oven hosted by Dee Macdonald and Anna Foster from BBC Newcastle. There was fizz, pizza, live music by Channy and a fabulous raffle which raised over £1300. The night was supported by David Gray Solicitors who have been involved with NE Youth's IWD events since they started in 2015.

Money raised will be used to provide a series of wellbeing sessions for girls supported by NE Youth across the region.

**#strongertogether** learn more at [www.neyouth.org.uk](http://www.neyouth.org.uk)







## Free tech skills courses on offer at Sunderland Women's Centre

Dozens of Wearside women will be getting the chance to improve both their tech skills and their confidence thanks to a new project set up by a Sunderland charity.

Sunderland Women's Centre is using a £6,880 grant from the Newcastle Building Society Community Fund at the Community Foundation to launch a series of free ten-week computer skills courses at its Green Terrace offices in the city centre.

The courses will cover the basics of computing, including how to use word processing packages and the internet, while it will also look at practical issues including recognising online scams, using social media and keeping in touch online with family and friends.

Computers are also made available at the Centre to enable students to practice their skills between classes, as well as to ensure they have access to the technologies they need to complete online tasks like job searches and application forms.

Students will also be able to access the Centre's on-site creche to ensure their children are being looked after while they're learning.

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.

## Northumberland care home celebrate new status

Staff and management at a Northumberland care home are celebrating, after the Care Quality Commission gave them a new, improved rating.

Birkinshaw Manor at Front Street, Bedlington was saved from closure in late 2021 when it was taken over by Vital Care Services, which pledged to improve its "inadequate" status and secure its future. And that pledge has now been fulfilled, following a recent CQC inspection which has rated the home "good" across all domains.

Formerly Baedling Manor, the struggling home was in real danger of shutting down before it was saved, protecting jobs and securing a much-needed service for the local community.

The CQC report took into account comments from residents and their families who praised the new regime and the level of care that was now on offer. The findings praised the home, saying that "the service was consistently managed and well-led. Leaders and the culture they created



## The Colour Purple

In celebration of the amazing success of 70 years, the Percy Hedley Foundation are asking those across the North East to get creative with the colour purple. The event, called Paint the Toon Purple, takes place 19th May 2023, and could mean anything from wearing purple clothes to having a purple themed event like a bake sale.

Every penny raised will go to support the children and adults with disabilities the Foundation empowers every week.

Anyone is welcome to get involved, including schools and businesses, so spread the word to colleagues, friends and family. Put on a purple themed fashion show or host a purple picnic and raise money to help people with disabilities live their best lives.

With your help on 19th May, we'll paint the toon purple.

You can find more details, and ideas on what you could do by signing up and downloading the Paint the Toon Purple Pack at [www.percyhedley.org.uk/paintthetoon](http://www.percyhedley.org.uk/paintthetoon)



promoted high-quality, person-centred care."

Geetika Mutch, director of Vital Care Services, is delighted with the news and praised the team at the home for their hard work. "This is an outstanding success," she said.

"It's down to the hard work of everyone involved that we have been able to turn the home around, in what is really a very short space of time."

"We are absolutely delighted with this outcome and I want to thank all the staff, residents and their families for their continued support."

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# Charity of the month...



## Oasis Community Housing

A charity reigniting hope and a future for everyone facing homelessness.

### Why was the charity founded?

In 1984 a group of young Christians recognised that there was nowhere for young homeless people to go in the North East, if they wanted to move off the street and get back onto their feet. They set up Oasis Community Housing – or Aquila Housing Association as it was then – and three years later managed to raise enough funds to buy a property, offering supported, self-contained accommodation to five women. Now, 39 years later, we're proud to support more than 1,300 people every year.

### Which areas do you cover?

Based in Gateshead, we have 17 projects across the North East, London, and Peterborough, all tackling the root causes of homelessness. Our 'Home' project, just like that original property, provides a secure supported space for men, women, and mothers and babies to get back on their feet. Our 'Basis' service offers crisis support – from benefits advice through to being a friendly ear – for rough sleepers. 'Aspire' supports those furthest from the job market with training and skills, while through 'Empower' we support young women who have suffered domestic abuse move towards safety and independence.



### What type of fundraising events do you have?

On Friday 19 May, our Patron, BBC's Reverend Kate Bottley will be hosting our Black & Gold Ball at the Hilton in Gateshead. With our last few tables remaining there is still time to bag your place and join in the fun. We also have places available for this year's Great North Run and encourage our wonderful supporters to take on all kinds of personal fundraising challenges for us. The Oasis Cup is our annual corporate five-a-side football tournament with the next competition taking place on Friday 22 September at Gateshead International Stadium. We recently launched Challenge 100, which encourages students to come up with creative ways to raise £100 in 100 days.

### What are you currently working on?

Research shows that 94% of people facing homelessness have suffered trauma. Experiences such as child neglect, domestic abuse, family death, violence or war. Our staff hear stories of trauma every day. Trauma is a direct trigger for homelessness and keeps people trapped in its cycle.

That's why we're running a campaign called Tackling Trauma, Ending Homelessness, calling on the government to recognise and roll out trauma-informed care to help people tackle the lasting impact of their trauma and move on from their homelessness.

Visit [www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/trauma-homelessness/](http://www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/trauma-homelessness/) to pledge your support for our campaign.

### What does the future hold?

We are keen to grow and expand our work into other parts of the country and in January we opened our doors to a new project in Peterborough to provide accommodation and support to seven families of Ukrainian refugees that have had to flee their homes.

The cost of living crisis has hit people facing homelessness especially hard. People already struggling have been pushed to the brink of despair. It is more important than ever that we continue to be there for the people who need it most. We are committed to stepping up and doing what we do best to play our part, whatever the future holds.

### How do you get involved?

There are many ways for you and your company to get involved and invest in a future where no one is homeless. From financial support, which enables us to be there and keep many of our projects running around the clock, to the gift of time – delivering advice and training to those struggling with unemployment, personal finances or wellbeing – and thoughtful donations of warm clothes or food.

**If you would like to talk to us about how your workplace can support Oasis Community Housing and how we can support you to meet your goals, speak to our Corporate Relationships Manager, Hazel Ditchburn on 07869283728 or email [hazel.ditchburn@oasiscommunityhousing.org](mailto:hazel.ditchburn@oasiscommunityhousing.org)**

**To find out more about other ways you can support Oasis Community Housing visit [www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/get-involved](http://www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/get-involved).**





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# Black & Gold Ball

**A LIGHT SHINING IN THE DARKNESS**

Friday 19 May 2023

Hilton Newcastle Gateshead



Join celebrity host, BBC's Reverend Kate Bottley for a spectacular evening of fun and celebration. Help to shine a light for people facing homelessness across the North East.

Table packages from £900 and individual tickets £95; includes welcome reception, three course dinner and dancing until late.

Book now and bring hope, not homelessness to your community.

Visit [www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/blackandgold](http://www.oasiscommunityhousing.org/blackandgold)

Contact Hazel Ditchburn on 07869283728 or

[hazel.ditchburn@oasiscommunityhousing.org](mailto:hazel.ditchburn@oasiscommunityhousing.org)



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# Can we reverse the decline in apprenticeships and make the North East ‘apprentice ready’?



Newcastle Building Society HR Director, Karen Anderson, and Customer Adviser, Callum Parkinson

**Apprenticeships can help solve businesses' recruitment challenges and can open the door to careers including law, journalism and banking. So why are the numbers of young people choosing apprenticeships falling?**

work. They can help increase social mobility and reduce the number of young people who are not in employment, education or training. And yet there's been a steady decline in numbers of young people starting apprenticeships since 2015/16.

It would be easy to blame the pandemic, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy and other external factors for the decline, and to take comfort in the fact that we're not the only region seeing this decline. But the reality is, as a region, this pre-dates the pandemic; we have the lowest number of apprenticeships starts, accounting for just 6% of the total starts nationally, with the share of starts for under 19s continuing to fall. However, on the positive side, we know that when people start an apprenticeship 92% progress onto a positive outcome such as sustaining a job, progressing into a job with higher training very

much on a par with national performance.

The decline is a big problem which also provides a big opportunity for change. And we're no longer relying on anecdotal evidence; thanks to this research we now have a real picture of what the apprenticeship landscape looks like in our region.

Our research has highlighted a number of recommendations and that this is not just an issue for schools to solve, or for businesses to solve, it's an issue for everybody. We can work to increase demand for apprenticeships through dispelling myths around apprenticeships amongst young people, but we also need those vacancies – at both lower and higher levels – to be there and to be tailored to the needs of our young people and our businesses.

To translate the recommendations into action, we are working with stakeholders, nationally and locally to implement an apprenticeReady framework.

We've delivered training for secondary schools across the North East to make teachers aware of apprenticeship opportunities. We're working with the Department for Education to help improve the Find an Apprenticeship website for both jobseekers and employers and we're working with New College Durham to support a new regional project for SMEs wanting to deliver apprenticeships.

For me, holding February's event was about not shying away from the fact that we need to do more, and that being apprentice ready is everybody's business.

It will be a collaborative effort to make successful apprenticeships a reality for the North East and the results will benefit us all.

**To read the research, visit the North East Evidence Hub at [evidencehub.northeastlep.co.uk](https://evidencehub.northeastlep.co.uk), and to access information and resources on apprenticeships, visit [northeastgrowthhub.co.uk](https://northeastgrowthhub.co.uk). To find out how you can get involved in the apprenticeReady framework development please email [goodcareers@nelep.co.uk](mailto:goodcareers@nelep.co.uk)**

**In February the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (North East LEP), the Federation of Small Businesses and the North East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network shared findings from new research, with the aim of reversing the decline in young people starting apprenticeships in our region. Kim Smith, the North East LEP's Regional Lead for Education and Enterprise, explains more.**

Earlier this year, we were joined by more than 100 businesses, training providers and government representatives to urgently address the decline in 16 to 18 year olds who are benefiting from apprenticeships in our region.

The event was chaired by Lucy Winskell OBE, who is the Chair of the North East LEP, and I think her opening words, and the welcome address by Robert Halfon MP, Minister of State at the Department for Education, highlighted just how important apprenticeships are for the North East. They can help businesses recruit and retain a skilled, future-proofed workforce. They give young people their first steps into



Matthew Clay, Group Qualifications Manager, and Kirsty Pickering, Apprentice Technician at Lookers Plc





L-R: Cllr Sandra Graham, Shaun Simmons TT2 COO, Fiona Bootle Tyne Tunnels Manager, Cllr Paul Dean and Tobyn Hughes MD of Transport North East

# Tyne Tunnels makes electric move to cut carbon

Tyne Tunnels operator, TT2, is switching its diesel fleet to electric vehicles (EV) to make the river crossing more sustainable, improve air quality and reduce emissions.

**Following a successful trial of their first EV, the firm has replaced its diesel-powered vehicles with Vauxhall Vivaro-E Elite vans – which will reduce its yearly carbon emissions by approximately 20 tonnes.**

The EVs will be operational vehicles, which are used for escorting tankers and abnormal loads, general operations and security on the Tyne Tunnels site.

To celebrate the launch of its all-new EV fleet, local school children are being offered the chance to name the three TT2 EV vehicles.

This follows the tunnels' switch to open-road-tolling which has seen CO2 emissions slashed by a staggering 90 percent, which is equivalent to eliminating the carbon created by over 31,200 return passenger flights from Newcastle to New York, every year.

Chief Operating Officer, Shaun Simmons said: "The operations team travel around 60,000 miles a year carrying out escorts and general operational movements, so the switch to electric will make a significant impact on our mission to reduce emissions in the local area."

TT2 was certified as carbon neutral by the Carbon Trust by ensuring its emissions from owned or controlled sources are offset and has introduced a raft of sustainability initiatives. These include on-site composting for its 150 employees; three beehives in the TT2 team garden; as well as beginning a project with local charities to restore 45,000 square metres of forest that sits directly above the Northbound tunnel, in Wallsend.

Shaun Simmons added: "Reducing emissions has a positive effect on air quality for those who live and work near the tunnels and we are determined to do everything we possibly can to increase sustainability."

TT2 has installed LED lighting in the tunnels and all of its electricity is generated from certifiable renewable sources.

**For Tyne Tunnels information visit [www.tt2.co.uk](http://www.tt2.co.uk)**





## The North East Automotive Alliance Annual Awards 2023

The North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA) Annual Awards 2023 provided clear evidence as to the world class status of the region's automotive supply chain.

Demonstrating the depth of the sector, guests congratulated apprentice and graduate winners Lily Turner and Nathaniel Cutler who aspire to be future industry leaders, while also showing their gratitude and respect to Kevin Fitzpatrick CBE who was presented with an Outstanding Achievement Award as he retires after five decades in the automotive sector, starting as one of 22 supervisors hired to oversee the start of production at Nissan Sunderland Plant, before taking international leadership roles for the business.

Guests also heard the NEAA, via its sponsors, have raised over £60,000 for schools' STEM projects from four awards events.











## A change of tact

The UK recruitment market is currently experiencing a significant imbalance between the number of available job vacancies and the number of people seeking employment.

**According to the Office for National Statistics, the unemployment rate stood at 3.7 per cent, or 1.3 million people, in the three months to December 2022. In contrast, the number of job vacancies in the UK was 1.1 million in the three months to January 2023, a reflection of the economic pressures and the uncertainties that come with that.**

To attract and retain talent, businesses are adopting innovative strategies, including flexible and hybrid working arrangements. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development is urging employers to continue to develop and embed new ways of working, with data suggesting that more than three-quarters of organisations have embraced hybrid working through a mix of formal and informal

arrangements.

The start of March saw the end of the world's largest trial of a four-day week, involving 61 companies and lasting for six-months. It gave staff at those companies the opportunity to remain on their existing salary but work across four days instead of five and forms part of a wider push by non-for profit organisation, 4-Day Week Campaign, to urge politicians to give all workers in the UK a 32-hour week.

Of the 61 companies that completed the trial, 56 have chosen to extend it, while 18 have made the change permanent. The question is whether a four-day working week would be suitable for all types of businesses.

Larger companies, of course, have the

infrastructure and people to be able to implement a four-day working week without too much impact on the overall running of the company. Smaller businesses, however, could struggle to provide that cover for a colleagues non-working day to ensure that their quality and values are sustained.

There are other changes, however, that firms have been putting in place to ensure that their people are content and have a balanced working environment - measures to improve employee wellbeing, including relaxation spaces, mental health support and wellbeing days, are great examples.

A study by Westfield Health found that 75 per cent of UK workers believe employers should be responsible for their wellbeing, with many companies offering employee assistance programmes (EAPs) and on-site mental health support.

The methods by which businesses choose to recruit the talent they need is also evolving. LinkedIn is now the go-to platform for recruitment, which is perhaps not surprising. What has changed, however, is the way in which those firms are engaging across social media, using it to promote their brand values and showcase company culture, with Instagram and TikTok becoming popular platforms for companies to reach younger, tech-savvy jobseekers.

The end of the four day working week trial, which has been hailed as a huge success, is further evidence of the evolving business landscape and highlights the importance of remaining competitive in the war for talent.

***Talentheads can help you promote your employee-benefits to ensure you attract the right talent into your business. Find out more at [www.talentheads.co.uk](http://www.talentheads.co.uk) or [hello@talentheads.co.uk](mailto:hello@talentheads.co.uk)***





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Annabel Graham

## How you show up, is how you lead

*By Annabel Graham, Executive and Team Coach, and Director of Successful Training, Leadership & Coaching Consultancy.*

**I talk about how we show up as leaders daily as an executive coach and leadership facilitator. Leaders often have great definitions of how they want to be as a leader; read your last CV for an example. We do forget though that how people experience us, says more about who we are and what we stand for, than anything else.**

### **So, I'm going to ask you a simple question – how are you showing up?**

How we show up in our lives, with our family, in our jobs, with our teams is how other people experience us.

If we show up distracted, juggling multiple things, others will experience us as not paying attention or being present.

If we are running between back to back meetings, cancelling appointments as our diaries are too full; others will feel they don't matter and they aren't important.

If we come into the office and get stuck into work without saying hello, others will think we are in a bad mood.

### **So I ask you again – how would you like to show up?**

How we show up and how we are being is something we can choose. We sometimes feel that we have no choice, that circumstances are forcing us to be a certain way but that isn't true. We are choosing to be influenced by the circumstances around us. We are entirely in control of our response to every situation. We do though, have to recognize this, and take personal responsibility for our behaviour and our actions.

When we do that, we start to notice how we are being, what emotions we are feeling and how we are coming across. Then we can choose how we want to be and how we will respond to those frustraters around us. In doing that, we can take more control of our emotions, our day, our focus and our lives – and get much better outcomes.

*Let's look at some examples...*





**You decide to value your time, and put boundaries in place to protect it.**

**Consequence** - you shorten meetings to create space, cancel ones you don't need to go to or delegate to others. This enables you to do more meaningful work, you feel less rushed and you no longer feel overwhelmed as you have space to think.

**You decide to be positive rather than grumpy and frustrated, no matter what the situation**

**Consequence** - people experience you as positive, they want to be around you and you have great conversations. Others are more relaxed in what they say and do around you as they are no longer afraid about how you will react.

**You decide to be honest, and have difficult conversations (phrasing them tactfully)**

**Consequence** - you give feedback regularly to your everyone. This enables you to build trust and have better relationships. You are able to debate and discuss issues calmly, rather than getting frustrated by assumptions and misunderstandings. You clear the air quickly, and you are nicer to be around.

These are simply examples, you can choose any changes you want. Think about where you are not getting the responses from people you would like or expect; these are indicators you may need to adjust how you are showing up.

If you aren't sure what you want to be different, then consider what you don't want to happen. By deciding what we don't want, we can then start to choose what we would like instead. All of the things you don't want can be changed, you just have to decide what you are prepared to do differently.

**How then do you want to show up in your role? How do you want people to experience you, and what do you want them to be feeling and saying?**

Remember, the common denominator in all your interactions is you - change how you show up, you change everything else as a result.

**If you want to discuss coaching or leadership development for you or your team contact Annabel via LinkedIn, [annabel@successfultraining.co.uk](mailto:annabel@successfultraining.co.uk), or visit [www.successfultraining.co.uk](http://www.successfultraining.co.uk)**



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Nevil Tynemouth

## Spring is in the air

It's growing season, spring is in the air, and we are looking forward to everything in nature bursting into life. The spring air is full of anticipation and untapped capability.

Thinking about business, does the same apply to your firm, your teams and you?

**Are your teams ready to be nurtured and grow to achieve their full potential or are they stuck in the mud with no opportunity to flourish. It's worth pondering as there are a lot of links between growing your people and gardening:**

People, like plants react well to being in the right environment with all of the right nutrients they need. Pausing and thinking about the growing conditions for the year ahead is a great thing to do.

Sometimes the simple things done extraordinarily well can be the difference between a bumper year and a failed crop. Let's look at two key areas of your environment and your people:

**Your environment. Three key things to consider:**

**1. Do your teams have room to fail?** That is, can they make small mistakes, learn and develop from them. It's amazing that as children we

learn quickly from our mistakes and as adults, we so often encourage to get everything "right first time". Just a little space for creativity, and space to make small mistakes can help people really grow their confidence and ability. This is especially true when they are supported to learn from their mistakes.

**2. Do your teams get all the feedback and support they need?** Whenever we talk to teams about confidence one area that always gets mentioned is feedback, both positive and developmental feedback. As a rule, if the environment is right then people are really open to getting great quality feedback to help them develop and grow. Most people we speak to don't get enough feedback in their day to day environment.

**3. What opportunities to take ownership do your teams have?** Is there a safe amount of delegation and support to allow them to tackle progressively more challenging opportunities and grow within their role? By promoting ownership and incrementally developing your team you are creating a higher performing environment where everyone is growing their own abilities.

**Your People. Three things to consider:**

**1. Are your people ready to grow?** Are you close enough to them, their capabilities and development areas to know when they are ready for their stage of growth. A lot of leaders and managers we speak to are a little removed from their teams (workload, hybrid working and lack of coaching skills for managers and leaders) and struggle to identify those need more support and those ready for the next stage of development.

**2. Is everyone around you open to giving and receiving feedback?** Picking up point two from the environment piece above, while your team might be open to receiving feedback, are they

giving useful and beneficial feedback to those around them? We call great feedback "evidential feedback". This is feedback that focuses on what happened, removing the emotion, and gives the receiver of feedback the opportunity to reflect, learn, and grow.

**3. Is everyone open, honest with the ability to reflect on their development areas and their core skills?** With an increasing pace of work, do you and your team have enough reflective time to help you identify what you are doing well (and how you repeat it) and what isn't going so well (and how you improve it)? There often feels like a pressure to do more, sometimes doing a little less, with deeper reflection allows you to achieve so much more.

Great gardeners don't leave things to chance. They create the right environment. Tailor what they do for each individual part of their garden and change their approach to get the best outcomes possible. These are the simple things done well.

You can replicate all of these approaches with your team. Create the right place to work, a culture of learning, personal and professional development. Adjust and tailor your approach to teams and individuals and make them feel special.

Be ready to receive and give feedback adjusting your approach as you go. Great leaders tweak their approaches to each individual until the garden is really a thing of beauty admired by everyone who sees it.

*If you are planting seeds and needing to nurture, why not drop us a line for a chat. We can't sort your roses, but we help your people be blooming brilliant. Speak to Nevil: [nevil@newresults.co.uk](mailto:nevil@newresults.co.uk), connect with him on LinkedIn or visit the website [www.newresults.co.uk](http://www.newresults.co.uk)*





L-R: Jason Wood, Director, Brims; Rick Halton, Regional Director, Brims Teesside, Richard Wood, Director, Brims and John Wood, former Chairman and Founder of Tolent

## BRIMS steps UP to secure Teesside employment

Sunderland-based Brims Construction, working hand in hand with the former chairman of Tolent, John Wood, have come to the rescue of Tolent's Teesside employees/operations, hoping to save 150 jobs after the building contractor went into administration on Monday 13th February.

**The move will see Tolent's previous Teesside management team re-employed by Brims, along with staff, operatives and members of the supply chain, whose aim will be to ensure minimum disruption to clients, with some sites having already returned to work on Monday 20th February.**

Brims will not be taking on responsibility for reimbursing any of Tolent's creditors.

Brims, who were already forecasting a turnover of £38m this year to the end of March (excluding any additional Teesside revenue) and employs 90 site and office staff, was established 16 years ago by Ian Clift, Jason Wood and Richard Wood. All were previously employed by Tolent, which was founded by John Wood – Jason and Richard's father. Consequently, they know the Teesside staff and business operation particularly well.

Despite the obstacles thrown in their way by Tolent's current legal and financial situation, the Brims team have worked around the clock, visiting all the current projects and talking to the clients involved to reassure them that their

projects will be in safe hands with Brims.

Commenting on the ongoing business plan Brims director, Richard Wood, said that Brims had been looking to expand further south and open an office in Teesside but had not envisaged it happening this way. He said:

"Following the announcement on the 13th February that Tolent had gone into administration with the loss of 350 jobs, we took action immediately as it is a company very close to our hearts. My father set Tolent up, but Ian, Jason and I all trained and worked there, with John only retiring three years ago as chairman.

"Its unfortunate demise has provided an opportunity for the future expansion of Brims and at the same time, we are hopeful of providing secure employment for up to 150 employees moving forward.

"The former Tolent sites will be re-badged as Brims Construction and our sole aim is to save jobs with the minimum of disruption to clients. We have spent the last few days talking to clients and reassuring them that their projects will proceed as normal, with the people they

have previously been dealing with. We are confident we can minimise any job losses by quickly stepping in this way."

Tolent's Teesside office was working on a mix of commercial projects including a rolling programme of petro-chem maintenance works. In total the value of the ongoing work is estimated to be around £15-£20 million.

Mr Wood continued: "Several clients have already recognised our new proposal is simply to provide them with the same group skillset of people but with a stronger company behind them. We have already received new orders for work, which helps save the previous workforce, for which we are all extremely grateful. We are currently dealing with the administrator, in order to buy the Tolent Teesside office building at Thornaby and it is very much our intention to put firm roots down in Teesside."

Adding his thoughts, John Wood said: "It gives me great pleasure to be able to offer my help with these proposals, especially with Brims being central to it. It keeps the construction heritage alive under the Brims name and it will hopefully salvage some of the work that Tolent was previously involved with. We are confident that we will save as many site and supply chain jobs as we can and I would encourage all existing management and site staff to feel encouraged at what we are doing.

"It is great news for the region. We just want to save the jobs and get work back on track."

Tolent was founded in 1983 by John Wood. By the time he retired in 2019, turnover was around £180m with a strong balance sheet and the firm was viewed as one of the region's success stories.

[brimsconstruction.com](http://brimsconstruction.com)





Phil Hancock

## In conversation with...

### Phil Hancock

*Relationships and partnerships specialist at the North East Procurement Organisation (NEPO)*

#### Can you tell us about your role at NEPO?

I am a relationships and partnerships specialist. I manage engagement activity for NEPRO and take ownership of the outward-facing aspects of delivery. Procured by NEPO and delivered by Bloom Procurement Services, NEPRO provides the UK public sector with a fully managed service to appoint and manage specialist professional services.

NEPRO is used by over 400 public sector organisations across the UK and it's my job to make sure those stakeholders get the most out of NEPRO. I also cultivate relationships with suppliers, for example we are currently working with the Department for Transport to hold an SME networking event for North East businesses interested in working with public sector organisations.

#### Why did you want to work at NEPO?

Prior to joining the team at NEPO I have always worked within the private sector with national organisations. I wanted to give something back at a local level and saw the job opportunity at NEPO and it sparked my interest. I wanted the opportunity to see what working with the public sector would be like and the team at NEPO were really engaging and welcoming.

I was attracted to the strong culture and progression routes that the organisation could offer.

#### Who is in your team?

I work within the corporate services team reporting into Michael Murray, NEPRO lead. I also work closely with Nick McDonald, procurement coordinator and Joy Stafford, solution performance coordinator.

#### How has the industry changed since you began your career?

Since covid, the working environment has changed dramatically. The option of home working means that time can be spent more efficiently with many organisations benefitting from a mixture of both online and in-person meetings.

Having previously worked within a buying role the environment was perhaps a little more rigid. Working with the team at NEPO has opened my eyes to the benefits of flexible working.

#### What do you think are the opportunities going forward?

On a personal level, the role of relationships and partnerships specialist, is a newly created position at NEPO. Working with an agile and focused team means that I have the opportunity to really shape the role and put my own stamp on it. In terms of personal progression that was one of the plus factors in wanting to join the team.

#### How do you like to unwind outside of work?

Weekends often involve either running, playing golf, or long walks with my wife and our dog. We are also big movie fans, so a film is often on the cards.

[www.nepo.org](http://www.nepo.org)



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Louise Kennedy

## Shining the spotlight on Stress Awareness Month

April is Stress Awareness Month and Oculus HR are all too aware of the implications of employers not having the right mechanisms in place to proactively manage stress in the workplace given their portfolio of clients across the UK.

**Louise Kennedy, Founder and Managing Director, Oculus HR said: “Care, consideration and communication are key when supporting employees with stress related problems. Employers have a duty of care to staff, and it is therefore vital to have the right mechanisms in place to provide the right support and create a culture that nurtures open communication.”**

Unfortunately, we see all too often the issues that arise when employers don't have the right mechanisms in place.”

The team at Oculus HR are committed to supporting clients through an array of platforms, their recent dip into the podcast market has seen a very successful series of leading industry experts take to the airwaves. One such guest included John Devitt Founder and CEO at Recovery 4 Life. John is a highly disruptive, multi-disciplinary specialist

Occupational Health provider, offering employers a comprehensive range of services addressing work-place physical/mental health, addiction and social functioning.

Louise said: “It was an absolute honour to have John hit the studio, the episode was packed with impactful advice around mental health and wellbeing. It was great to hear John talk openly and with compassion about topics.

I'm really excited to continue the relationship with John which will see him deliver a practical session regarding mental health in the workplace to a number of my clients. These are issues that all employers are increasingly faced with, and the team proactively look at wellbeing strategies that will support employers and employees alike.”

The podcast brought to light several talking points including:

- What businesses should really be doing to create a working environment that prioritises mental wellbeing (it's not free fruit or yoga)
- Addressing alcohol and drug misuse openly to provide the best support
- The two sides of breaking stigma – understanding and acceptance
- Supporting people at work and back into work whose mental health has deteriorated

The Real World HR podcast hosted by Louise has run six episodes to date and has been sharing real life stories behind HR processes – the good, the bad, the ugly, and everything in between over the last few months.

Louise added: “Everyone can take something away from listening to this episode with John – whether it's to help yourself, transform your workplace, or help a colleague or friend.”

Oculus HR provide trusted support and advice on how to deal with stress and mental health in the workplace and their employment law expert can also ensure you understand your duties and provide the knowledge to help support the process.

**To find out more about the HR support packages available contact [louise@oculus-hr.co.uk](mailto:louise@oculus-hr.co.uk) or visit [www.oculus-hr.co.uk](http://www.oculus-hr.co.uk)**



# Moody Logistics Chairman Honoured with Lifetime Achievement Award

**Alan Moody, the chairman of Moody Logistics and Storage, has been honoured with a lifetime achievement award by the Pall-Ex Group in recognition of his contribution to the freight industry.**

The 77-year-old was the second generation of the Moody family to run the business, now overseen by his daughter Caroline Moody, son Richard Moody, and son-in-law Gavin Cape, who are all directors.

As chairman, Alan is now retired but still holds the position of chairman in the Cramlington-headquartered business, which last year marked its 75th anniversary, and remains an invaluable sounding board for current managing director, Caroline.

It was Alan who had the foresight in 1999 to become one of the founding members of the Pall-Ex network, which has since grown to

become a leading provider of palletised freight distribution services across the UK and Europe. Today the Pall-Ex Group is run by a consortium of shareholder members, including Moody Logistics and Storage.

In 2018 Moody's won a Delivery Excellence award from Staples, one of Pall-Ex's largest clients, and in 2021 Pall-Ex named it regional member of the year for Scotland and the North East. That same year, Pall-Ex also presented Alan and Caroline with long service awards, in recognition of their service to the network since its inception.

Alan's latest lifetime achievement accolade comes just months after the firm announced that it is making a £1m investment to expand the fleet, which currently stands at 34, as well as increasing its warehousing facilities by 50%, having leased an additional 22,000 sq. ft warehouse in nearby Ashington.

Moody's began to diversify in the 1980's with

the decline of the mining industry and in 1990 went into partnership with British Rail as part of its overnight parcel operation in the North. That signaled the start of Moody's involvement in the overnight multi-drop market, and today 70% of its business is from within the Pall-Ex overnight distribution market.

Alan Moody said: "I'm delighted to have been recognised with this lifetime achievement award by Pall-Ex. It truly is an honour.

"Back in 1999, palletised overnight deliveries were a relatively new concept, but I saw an opportunity to grow the business and take it in a new direction, and gladly for all concerned, that proved to be the case. I'm proud to say it has made this firm both more successful and competitive within the industry and has also helped revolutionise the logistics sector."

[www.moodylogistics.co.uk](http://www.moodylogistics.co.uk)



L-R: Kevin Buchanan, Group CEO of Pall-Ex, presents Alan Moody with his lifetime achievement award

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# Sorting the People Conundrum

Finding the right people; keeping the right people. It's a People Puzzle.

**Most of you reading this will be in business, and to some extent most of you are probably coming across the same problem:**

**Staff - Employees - Team Members**

It doesn't matter whether you have one member of staff or 101 or 1001, you need to find the right people. If you already have the right people...well done...no doubt you'd like to keep them.

It's a conundrum which can be extremely difficult and time consuming to solve. Especially when your competitors are looking to poach your best people...and you've probably got a load of other things to do.

Like running a business for example.

Thankfully, help is at hand.

People Puzzles are experts at solving the people conundrum.

"Over the course of twelve months, we'll have worked closely with over 400 SME client businesses," says People Puzzles Regional Director and Business Coach, Jim Lister. "They come from every sector imaginable ranging from traditional heavy industry to hi-tech electronics and computer software. We're not sector driven at People Puzzles for the simple reason that when it comes to finding the right people, every business, no matter how small or large, faces exactly the same problem...finding the right people and keeping the best people. We can work in any arena because our work doesn't involve making widgets, we work with people and the challenges they bring, as well as all the good bits!

If I had to give you a typical business that would approach People Puzzles for help, I'd probably say that the firm will be ambitious and wants to grow. It could be a family firm or a business that's brought in a new CEO/MD who wants to take their organisation to the next level. We usually see the business is getting close to a tipping point where it needs to change its people agenda if it wants to evolve. Turnover is climbing from, say £10million to £20million and the only way they can maintain that sort of growth is to invest in its people, for example through better recruitment, retention and career development."

And it's at this point that one of the People Directors from People Puzzles can point you and your business in the right direction.

Around the UK...and now here in the North



East...there are 82 People Directors. All of them are commercially driven with impressive career backgrounds. Don't be fooled; even though it will be a single People Director who comes to your business, behind them will be 81 others who can add their experience to any situation. Everything will be tailored to you and your business; there are no off-the-shelf remedies when it comes to the people conundrum.

If you are one of those firms that Jim mentions, then you've probably already got your economic forecasts sorted. You'll have done some sums, made some predictions and now have a list of targets and ambitions. Your business strategy is in place. You'll probably have financial, operational and marketing plans.

But do you have a people strategy?

No? Well, you should because the vast majority of firms will find that around 60-80% of their expenditure will be on staffing related costs.

So, wouldn't it be a good idea to make sure that you have the right staff, performing to their fullest potential, going the extra mile?

Oh...and ensuring that you keep the good ones who're already working for you?

"Finding and keeping the right people isn't just a case of throwing some money at them," adds Jim. "The most valued employees are those who 'buy into' your brand...they believe in what you're doing and want to be part of any future success. When we work with a business, our aim is to get them onto the front foot...be ahead of the game...think differently about how people are a key resource. Get the right people and you'll be highly competitive."

As soon as your People Director arrives, a 2/3 day 'discovery' exercise will begin. It's a case of benchmarking where the gaps are and what needs to be done. Your business strategy will be

discussed as will looking at your talent, company culture, leadership team, organisational structure and of course your people processes. A People Strategy will be drawn up that begins to address the key people related priorities you face and a delivery plan put in place.

Not sure whether you need People Puzzles? Here's a great idea. Head to the People Puzzles website and hit the HR Healthcheck tab. You can then answer a series of questions which, after a couple of minutes, will help you see where you are in terms of how your business is shaping up on the people front. Or not.

And be honest with yourself when answering the questions. As the dictionary definition of 'conundrum' says... "A confusing and difficult problem or question."

Yep...that's the perfect way to define the people challenge and to start to solve it by finding and retaining great employees.

Get in touch with People Puzzles, they are here to help you.

[www.peoplepuzzles.co.uk](http://www.peoplepuzzles.co.uk)



Jim Lister



# People are dying from inequality

There are many conversations around the subject of inequality. So many days championing the cause. Huge marketing campaigns, high profile presentations and celebrations too.

**The biggest noise, however, does not represent the life limiting inequalities we face in society. They are very much centred on and led by the privileged.**

Privilege is powerful and used effectively can change the world for the better. But, when the conversation is purely focused on enhancing that privilege without acknowledging the existence of said privilege, it makes the problem worse, widening the gap in equality, creating further harm to society.

Over the course of history, the significantly underprivileged and most vulnerable have put their lives at risk to fight for equality. From the Underground Railroad to the Suffrage Movement to Pride to The Matchstick Strikes. Many of us are benefitting from their vulnerability and their fight. However, these truly life-limiting issues are still prevalent today. But the conversation feels like it has been hijacked, by the few for the few.

Peers of privilege, aloft on their platforms calling for equality that isn't for the many or for those most in need. In the UK we still have significant social disparity. Inequality of opportunity across all sectors of education, health, work and lifestyle, and it is growing rather than getting better.

Is this because the conversations are not answering the genuine call of need?

Presently, our most needed workers in society,



Michelle Jones

health workers, care workers, education providers, frontline essential workers are striking for fair and safe working conditions. In the UK, sweat shops still exist. Slavery is a modern-day problem. Communities of people are excluded from educational and employment opportunities. Individuals are unable to access quality health or living standards. We have people we depend on, living in hardship, with no choice and no voice.

People really suffering from inequality.

How authentic are the conversations we see and hear centre stage?

Can a person/company stand on the stage and demand equality in the boardroom stood in an outfit made by a child in a sweatshop?

Can a person/company advocating for a four-day week, associate with people/companies that pay their workforce less than living wage, on gruelling shift patterns?

Can a person/companies/marketing agendas demand equal rights for privileged reasons whilst ignoring or abusing the most vulnerable?

I had to stop and think.

A care worker in UK care home earns, on average, £8.50 an hour. They work long physical days, night shifts and day shifts, on 12-hour shifts, sometimes turning into 20-hour shifts. Most care home workers are women, most did not benefit from a privileged upbringing, did not receive equality in education, or health, but had experience of caring from others due to needs in their own family. Without complaint, but with sacrifice, they look after those most in need; feed them, clean them, talk with them, hold their hand and are there for them in their last moment. Let's not forget, they received very little PPE in the pandemic and get no support or remuneration from the multi-millionaires that own the care homes they work in. The same business owners that will use the equality platform for their own agenda.

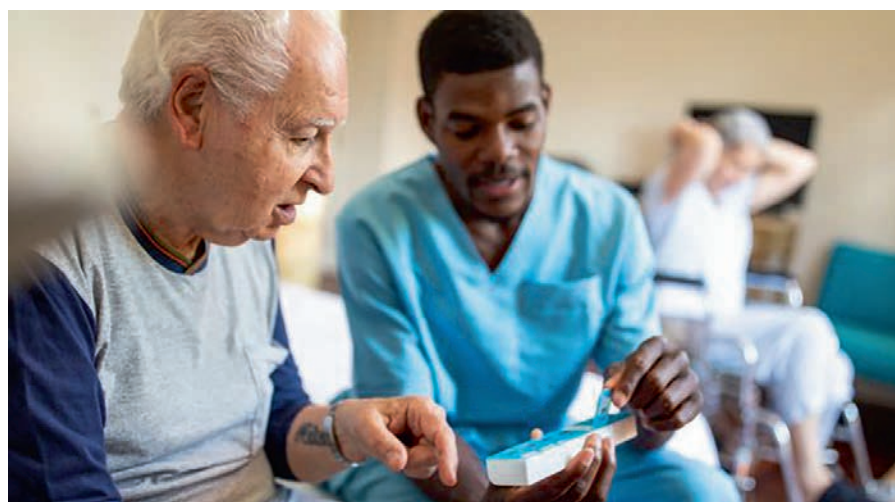
Can we call for equality for the few at the top whilst the bottom are suffering from such injustice?

Today, the time we live, can we deliver true equality that protects many lives and not just the few at the top?

What will be our equality legacy?

Kind Currency was created because the world is messed up. We believe true equality is about focusing on those in need, and starts with gratitude. It is certainly not about greed.

[michelle@kindcurrency.co.uk](mailto:michelle@kindcurrency.co.uk)  
[www.kindcurrency.co.uk](http://www.kindcurrency.co.uk)





# Keeping the humanity in a busy world

This is Gedanken's core mission, as we live in a world of increasing automation  
David Cliff explores the impact of how humans and technologies interact.

**"I found a silver needle, I put it into my arm, it did some good, did some harm"; Leonard Cohen lyrics assert. Without doubt technology is a two-edged sword. On the plus side it increases productivity, connects people in global ways that was hitherto unprecedented, informs and educates, shares trends and enhances awareness. On the other hand, it has the capability in the wrong hands of shaping and defining who we are, what we are, distort reality, create new realities and render people vulnerable to fraud and manipulation.**

Behind the hardware, is increasingly sophisticated software technologies including algorithms that as yet have little moral compass, often created by the technically gifted rather than the ethically adept to pursue the financial goals that are endemic in how the entire system of internet-based trade is based.

Jean Baudrillard talked about the notion of simulacra, wherein the story itself becomes a reality. Let's face it, with so many influencers, distractions, fake news, Meta worlds and commercial hyperbole, consciousness is shaped for many in the virtual world, against which the actual world is found wanting. Recent postings on the cosmetic face improvements created by TikTok filters, alarmed many to the potential for people using technology to self-misrepresent and attempt to gain advantage thereby.

You wouldn't give a child a circular saw plugged into the mains without a lot of supervision and instruction, yet many will throw cell phones and tablets at our children expecting them to somehow evaluate and police themselves in terms of the content they receive. The convenience of so many of these technologies continues to sell them but the less positive counter narratives are often played down until we see some tragic story on the television of how some young person was groomed to radicalism, changes of identity, affiliation or even suicide.

For many, their self-image is increasingly based on the impact of audience response, something that only people on the screen and stage experienced hitherto. Meantime, the refinement of face-to-face social skills and understanding the complexities of the long-term relationships, rarely feature in e-communication rendering relationships increasingly transactional and egocentric rather than evolving and mutual.

Stimulus response psychology has been around since the late 19th/early 20th centuries and there is much in the technology we use to condition us. Engagement with commercial enterprises involve systems of rewards, feedbacks or algorithmic reminders to encourage participation. This exploits the addictive nature of humankind when it comes to anything that affects reward centres within the brain and it's very much "be there or be square", combined with the modelled behaviours of others who never seem to be away from the screen. Indeed, IT can very easily become a 24/7 practice, interfering with the emotions, taking attention away from the physical relationships around you and leaving you with living in an increasingly virtual world that appears to require only a few button clicks, but actually requires all of you to participate.

Small wonder we have the concept of the 'digital detox' or even, abandoning platforms altogether. The off grid population has increased exponentially in the last few years as psychologically minded people realise the trade-offs that occur between the use of technology and the acknowledgement of their core humanity.

This isn't going to go away anytime soon. There is too much investment in technology to do that and we cannot dismiss its benefits. Somehow a balance has to be sought between our technologies serving us rather than ruling over us. Just as in business every strategic decision is a financial decision, so in technology every engagement has moral and ethical consequences with significant and growing corporate social responsibility for companies. Indeed, governments are catching up on the impact of technology across populations, both social, psychological and fiscal including taxation!

More recently AI such as Chat GPT, have raised new debate again as authentic, heartfelt lived experience narratives give way to 'original content'.

For all of us, we need a digital awareness and the personal discipline to use technology rather than be defined and manipulated by it. We need to ask ourselves some basic questions, here are but a few?

- Do we spend more time with technology than with humans?
- Can we switch our phones off through critical meetings, meals and at night (you shouldn't be exposed to RF radiation anyway, so keeping the phone within 10 feet of you is probably unhealthy).
- Do we actively look at our children's online behaviour and have those difficult conversations which they don't want about what real relationships are like and the skills involved in the face-to-face encounter?
- Do we encourage downtime amongst our staff where technology is not a feature, do we prioritise being present at meetings rather than simply responding to what flashes up on a screen or the call that one must take. Is there really ever a call that won't wait?
- Can we stop using technology at a certain time of night to ensure our natural human diurnal rhythms are maintained?
- When we are on public transport and other places do we screen ourselves and the people around us or do we experience what's going on in the real world instead of retreating into our favourite playlist.
- Do we cross busy roads, travel escalators et cetera, with headphones on that preclude any auditory signals of the people around us.
- Do we feel a compulsion to look at notifications?
- When we communicate well-being issues with our clients and staff, are these technology-based or are these tactile, human face to face encounters?
- How good are staff engaging with customers and stakeholders on the face-to-face encounter or is there an over use of emails with people that if asked would prefer a face-to-face encounter.

The list could go on, my purpose here is to open the debate about how do people retain their humanity in this busy world...

[www.gedanken.co.uk](http://www.gedanken.co.uk)



“

*...Somehow a balance has to be sought between our technologies serving us rather than ruling over us...*





Ben Whitfield



# A year of world-class events and we're doing it all again in 2023

By Ben Whitfield, Director of Communications, NE1 Ltd

2022 was the year that Newcastle bounced back from Covid with a stellar line up of events, from world-class sporting fixtures to home-grown events that helped put the city firmly on the global map and set the bar high for 2023 and beyond.

**This year the city has already started as it means to go on with a record-breaking, million pound Newcastle Restaurant Week in January which kick-started the 2023 events programme in style.**

Breaking all previous records, January's NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week attracted more diners, more participating restaurants, and over £1 million in income for businesses, not to mention the knock-on effect enjoyed by the wider business community.

Restaurant Week is always an important milestone in the city's calendar and capped a fantastic year of world-class events hosted in 2022. Newcastle bounced back more quickly from the pandemic than most other UK cities with footfall almost back to normal by the summer. The city was poised ready and waiting to welcome back visitors with open arms, and to host some of the UK's biggest events in the sporting and musical calendar.

Thanks to its reputation for hosting world-class sporting events, Newcastle and St. James' Park were chosen to host the Rugby League World Cup's opening game in October. A month earlier, the world's biggest half-marathon, the Great North Run made its welcome return to the official route from the Tyne Bridge to South Shields.

The whole year was punctuated with events of this calibre, and of major national and international significance. July was a busy month with Newcastle the host venue for national UK Pride, a three-day festival on the Town Moor and a launch parade through the city. Last year held extra significance as it marked the 50th anniversary of UK Pride. Hosting the national anniversary celebrations was a major accolade and fabulous that over 70,000 people got to enjoy it. This year, Northern Pride returns on the 22nd and 23rd July.

The Rugby Super League also rolled into town in July last year, with Magic Weekend returning to its adopted home of St. James' Park. A record 60,000 fans enjoyed the carnival-style atmosphere both on and off the pitch and it was so successful that the organisers have booked to return again this year on the 3rd and 4th June.

Alongside these milestone events, NE1 expanded its own Summer in the City activity programme. Old Eldon Square was transformed into an amazing family-friendly event space. Screen on the Green took up residence, offering 84 free movies and screening the Wimbledon Tennis Championships. The area also became the

first outdoor location for Play Rebellion, a free and innovative outdoor play space for children of all ages. These events were so successful that over 30,000 people visited Old Eldon Square over the school summer holidays.

NE1's Summer in the City activities also centred on the Quayside where people enjoyed semi-permanent art installations, large decorative planters and extra seating along a one-mile stretch of the riverside. Yoga, watercolour painting and story-time sessions were among the 110 free classes that brought in the crowds and gave people more reasons to visit the city.

Over the course of one calendar year, all these combined events delivered directly by NE1, or supported by us, attracted more than 257,000 visitors to the city, enough to fill St James' Park 5 times over. The success of these events is measured not just in tangible footfall figures, and economic impact, but in the atmosphere and buzz created in the city and the feelgood factor they leave behind. One of the ringing endorsements of our proactive approach to creating, hosting and partnering with other stakeholders is that the city continues to attract national and international events, many of which return to Newcastle again and again.

2023 is already shaping up to be just as successful as last year with many favourites returning to the city including Magic Weekend, Northern Pride, Screen on the Green and Restaurant Week.

Having St. James' Park in the heart of the city plays a major part in Newcastle's success. The team's current success on the pitch is matched by the club's ability to attract world-class sporting and musical events. It is a world-class team with a world-class venue and it is fitting that local hero, Sam Fender will be honouring his passion for NUFC by playing two gigs at St. James' Park in the summer. Equally good news is the announcement that plans are moving forward on the international-grade conference and events centre on Gateshead Quayside. Planned to open in 2025 this development will bring more world-class events to the city and an estimated £42 million economic impact for Newcastle. The hope is also that Newcastle will be named as one of the ten host venues for Great Britain and Ireland's Euro 2028 BID which will be another major coup for the city, decisions that are expected later this year.

Events bring vibrancy, visitors, the media spotlight, and more benefits to the city.

Newcastle and the wider region needs to be relentlessly ambitious and set its sights high on what its annual events programme might look like in the future. There is a huge opportunity if we are confident and bold enough to grasp it.

[www.newcastle1ltd.com](http://www.newcastle1ltd.com)



# 10 lessons learned in 10 years

A decade after starting Bryony Gibson Consulting, Bryony Gibson, shares the most valuable insights gained.

**Bryony Gibson Consulting turned 10 years old last month. When I look back, I'm not sure what I expected when I took the plunge. To be honest, I'm not even sure what I hoped for but it has been the best experience.**

Jumping from a senior role in a global company to working for yourself is a big change. Yes, the experience and training are something I have to thank for getting me to where I am, but everything you do when you run your own business is completely different.

After 10 years, I feel grateful and proud about many things, especially to have played a small part in changing the lives and career paths of many people, so here are my reflections on the things I believe have benefited me most. I hope they can also help you...

## 1. We all need resilience

In the face of adversity, disruption, and change, we all need the ability to recover quickly. Resilience helps you to persevere, adapt, and deal with uncertainty. Relevant in all walks of life, it's an important skill to possess, especially if you own a recruitment business.

## 2. Don't be afraid to take a step back

Often, the best way to approach the unknown is to step away and put the situation into perspective. While the devil is always in the detail, sometimes you need to remember to pause and look at the bigger picture too.

## 3. You win some, you lose some

Understanding that you can't win them all and everything isn't always perfect was a big turning point. As someone who likes to feel in control, realising that you can't - and perhaps shouldn't - influence every situation to turn out the way you want has made a lot of situations better. What will be, will be.



## 4. Clear communication solves most problems

When people have a difficult message to deliver or haven't been upfront and honest from the start, they often avoid the issue and stop communicating. In most cases, silence does more harm than the message you should deliver. The key is honesty. It's a lot easier and less painful than people seem to think.

## 5. It's all about people

You have to work at building good relationships because people prefer to do business with people they like. Get out and network. It's valuable time spent and all you need to do is listen, be honest, kind and helpful.

## 6. Keep a positive mental attitude

Very important when you work from home or on your own, your mindset is what keeps you motivated. Of course, it's okay to doubt yourself at times but don't allow yourself the luxury of wallowing. Stay optimistic.

## 7. Trust your judgement

Soak up advice, listen to those who have been

there and done it before, and absorb as much knowledge as possible but remember you know your business, so respect your expertise and trust your educated judgement.

## 8. Nothing good comes easy

You have to put in the work if you want good results. No one is going to give you a handout. Some days will be hard and some days even harder but, as I say to candidates, nothing good grows in a comfort zone.

## 9. Use your time wisely

Work, and life, can be very busy but we all get the same 24 hours every day. It's just how you use the time that makes the difference. Successful people think smartly.

## 10. Always take care of yourself first

This took a long time to learn, but no job is worth your health. Yes, when I feel down or ill, I can still ignore it and push on through but sometimes you need to read the signs and rest. Slow down to speed up. Whether it takes an hour or the entire day, the most important lesson is to remember to be kind to yourself.

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



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# Bryony Gibson Consulting Job Opportunities

## TAX & TRUSTS SENIOR

*Newcastle, £33-37,000pa plus benefits, Hybrid working*

A tax specialist accountancy firm are looking to appoint a Tax & Trusts Senior to manage and develop an existing portfolio of discretionary trusts. Working with clients direct you will be responsible for ensuring all related compliance and legislative requirements are adhered to.

Managing a portfolio of trusts and assisting with related planning aspects and opportunities, this would include completion of trust accounts and related tax returns, annual compliance meetings, ensuring TRS/CRS/FATCA requirements are met, preparation of trustee documents including resolutions/deeds of appointment/documents giving rise to changes of trustees and closures of trusts/investment policy statements.

This role welcomes those with a working knowledge of trusts, yet is also open to those holding two years personal tax compliance experience and some exposure or awareness of trusts with an interest in enhancing your knowledge. You must have strong communication skills as you will regularly liaise with third party professionals. Applicants must hold or be working towards their ATT/CTA or as a Paralegal with Trusts experience. Full study support is available. **Quote Ref: 2133**

## INDIRECT TAX SENIOR MANAGER

*Newcastle/Glasgow/Edinburgh, c£60-80,000pa plus benefits, Hybrid working*

A progressive opportunity with a national specialist team who deliver indirect tax advice to clients across the UK working with mid-market and large corporates in a fast growing market. With flexible working we are looking for an ambitious tax professional who can help clients manage their indirect tax compliance obligations as well as identify opportunities and mitigate indirect tax risks.

As Senior Manager you will be experienced in providing clients advice to help them improve their working capital and reducing both costs and error, ensuring indirect taxes are handled correctly when it comes to VAT and GST. Your experience combined with enthusiasm will enable you to create, sustain and lead effective teams to deliver high quality work. Day to day supervision, coaching and mentoring staff will be instrumental in your role as will the management of the team from a strategic and operational point of view.

Your client facing role will see you build and maintain relationships along with business development, being able to identify and convert opportunities to sell work by proactively managing existing clients. You will be following up on leads, referrals and networking to grow your client base. ACA/ACCA/CA/CTA or Tax Inspector qualified required. **Quote Ref: 2142**

## ACCOUNTS MANAGER - AGRICULTURE

*Newcastle/Northumberland, £competitive, Hybrid working*

Working in a small team of specialist professionals who service a client base of agricultural clients across Northumberland your role as Accounts Manager will be to manage the team on a day to day basis to ensure the timely delivery of accurate accounts and support the senior leadership team. This will entail work planning, mentoring, billing, preparation and review of statutory year end accounts prior to Partner review and client meeting.

Whilst existing agriculture experience would be advantageous, an ability to communicate well and forge long-lasting client relationships along with the technical expertise is far more important. Most accounts are partnership or sole trader so experience of such accounting is necessary.

We are seeking an individual (qualified or qualified by experience) who can take the initiative and lead on day to day matters in the team, freeing the Partner to manage their client work. Applicants must have experience working in an accountancy firm producing statutory accounting and some element of supervisory skills. Whilst not required, future progression to Senior Manager is readily available for those that demonstrate their readiness. **Quote Ref: 2141**

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Scope for progression with regular time for CPD and support given towards all accountancy exams is available. The team do socialise and celebrate success every quarter, making it feel a really welcome team to be part of. **Quote Ref: 2134**

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

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## Aycliffe manufacturing firm, BTS, embraces four-day working week

**Aycliffe-based manufacturing firm, BTS Facades and Fabrications, has launched a four-day working week after a successful trial period.**

BTS, a company which produces cladding and façade products for clients across the country, tested a condensed working week in October last year, and the team found productivity was not negatively impacted.

As a result, BTS' managing director, Philip Atkinson, has moved forward with plans to carry out the four-day working week, after he found the wellbeing of his team improved.

He said: "Our trial period from a 40-hour week to a 37-hour week was excellent, there was a great boost in morale and engagement among our team.

"Our staff have had the opportunity to leave early on a Friday, meaning they can get their hair cut, attend appointments, and play golf.

While the new working hours will make a difference to BTS' 52 employees,



its clients will not be affected, as the team have implemented a schedule to ensure all enquiries are handled.

The four-day working week has been on BTS' agenda since the team appointed Nigel Freeman as an operations director in February 2022.

Nigel, who specialises in LEAN, a management style which aims to improve efficiency, brought with him a number of suggestions to improve the company's working environment - including the four-day working week.

He said: "I had looked at introducing something similar in a different company and after further research, I decided that it would be a good fit for our people and our business.

"I put it forward to my team to see if it was something they might be interested in doing, as way of improving their experience at BTS, whilst bettering the business - they all loved the idea.



## Nissan provide seats for Royal Navy submarine

**Nissan and two of its major automotive suppliers who are based in Sunderland have teamed up to produce seats for a new state of the art Royal Navy submarine.**

Lear and Adient, who are both Tier 1 suppliers to Nissan Sunderland, have been working closely with the carmaker and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to provide seats for HMS Anson.

The Sunderland-affiliated nuclear-powered submarine is 97 metres long and has a displacement of 7,800 tonnes. It is the fifth of seven in the Astute class, which are recognised as the most technologically advanced attack submarines ever operated by the Royal Navy.

Nissan, who have recently announced the electrification of their Sunderland-built Juke and Qashqai models as part of a £500

million investment, provided their Zero Gravity Seats to be installed on HMS Anson which will be used for their Submarine Commander and Senior Engineer.

Nissan's specially designed Zero Gravity seats use ergonomic technology to alleviate fatigue and pursue the ideal posture, using the NASA-measured "neutral posture", to make long journeys more pleasant.

Keith Chambers, Production Control Director at Nissan Sunderland, said "We are extremely proud to provide two of our specially designed Zero Gravity car seats for the Royal Navy's new submarine HMS Anson.

"The seats are from our newly electrified Juke Hybrid and Qashqai e-POWER models.

"It's fantastic to team up with Sunderland City Council and two of our long-term local suppliers to add a flavour of our region's automotive manufacturing excellence to the development of this state of the art submarine."



## Japan calls for Komatsu Olympians

**A team of engineering Olympians will put their abilities to the test against the finest manufacturing minds in the world in a global contest later this year.**

The Komatsu UK squad will be heading to Japan after a nail-biting final at the Birtley-based firm's "Technology Olympics", a contest pitting some of the factory's brightest talents against competitors from its supply chain and representatives from European sister companies, across a range of disciplines.

It is the first time since January 2020 the global leader in construction machinery manufacturing has staged the contest, in which competitors do battle in three of the factory's main departments: welding, paint and assembly. Each task testing and showcasing employee skill, with judges assessing quality and technical knowledge.

Komatsu UK managing director, Paul Blanchard, said: "Competition in the Technology Olympics is fierce, but also friendly. The dedication, concentration and skill required just to compete is immense, but to win employees really must be at the top of their game on the day.

"We had a smaller event last autumn, but this is the first full Olympics we have staged since the pandemic, so it's not only great to see the contest in full swing again, but also a real pleasure for us to be able to welcome people back into the plant."

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TYNEXE  
COMMERCIAL





# Seven ways to develop an effective whistleblowing policy

Building trust and ensuring staff feel happy and secure at work are key elements to motivating and retaining employees. Here Joanna Lewis, MD of whistleblowing service Safecall, highlights how an effective whistleblowing policy helps promote employee confidence while minimising the risk of a corporate scandal or a tribunal.

**High profile corporate scandals and a turbulent economy have meant employees are now looking for one thing more than ever - security.**

With a rising emphasis on the importance of ethical business practices for staff, customers and the wider public, firms should be looking for ways to engender trust in their business.

Developing a culture of transparency; accountability and integrity is central to this. Your employees should feel empowered and safe to speak up against wrongdoing in the workplace.

This can be achieved by implementing an effective and impartial whistleblowing policy.

There are seven key factors to consider when creating a whistle blowing policy for your workplace:

## Impartiality

To instil the most confidence in your employees, your whistle blower policy should carry with it the assurance of impartiality. Whistleblowers should know that throughout the whistleblowing process, their disclosure will be treated fairly and with security.

The most cited reason for not coming forward with a disclosure is fear of repercussions. When the only avenues for making a protected disclosure are internal, employees may begin to question whether the whistleblowing policy their employer has in place is truly impartial.



Joanna Lewis

This concern can be mitigated by outsourcing your firm's whistle blowing process to a dedicated, specialist, external whistleblowing service provider.

## Awareness

Once your whistleblowing processes are established, it is important that your employees are aware of the whistleblowing policy you have in place. Firms must make a dedicated effort to ensure their employees understand: who they should contact; when they can speak up; and what sorts of issues are appropriate for the whistleblowing process. The best way to raise awareness of your procedures is by offering training to your employees.

## Accessibility

Your whistleblowing policy should ensure that reporting avenues are suitable and accessible for all those who may need to use it. An individual that suspects wrongdoing should be able to make a disclosure with as few barriers as possible.

Offering both written and verbal means of reporting is integral to this. This is also mandated by various regulatory legislation.

## Compliance

Make sure your whistleblower policy is compliant with any relevant regulatory legislation within the territories you operate.

Whistleblowing regulatory compliance may mandate:

- Anonymous hotline provision.
- Protection of whistleblowers from professional retaliation.
- Competence/experience of whistleblowing process handling personnel.

## Availability

If your company's avenues for making a disclosure are internal, there may be limitations to their availability to your employees. An effective whistleblowing policy should assure workers they will be able to make a protected disclosure at a time that is convenient for them.

Using an external whistleblowing hotline provider means your employees can raise a concern at any point.

## Investigative Experience

To maximise the trust your employees have in your whistleblowing policy, it is best to assure them of the reliability and impartiality of your investigation processes.

Outlining how investigations are handled, and how this may vary depending on the scope of the allegations made, improves the transparency of your whistleblowing policy.

Assuring your employees that investigations have the capacity to be outsourced to an external whistleblowing investigations provider can improve the trust your employees have in your whistleblowing policy.

## Security

Considering the sensitive and confidential nature of making a protected disclosure, and the risks considered by a whistleblower when making a report, security must be assured by your whistleblowing policy.

It is imperative that organisations put measures in place to protect the identity of whistleblowers and those whom the report concerns. EU whistleblowing law mandates that public and private organisations with 50 employees or more must offer reporting channels that ensure confidentiality.

## Your whistle blower policy should identify what sort of conduct to be reported

Listed below are examples of the types of misconduct or behaviour that could give rise to a report. This is not an exhaustive list:

- Criminal activity or offences, including fraud, theft, and embezzlement.
- Corruption, bribery, or blackmail.
- Financial malpractice, impropriety, or mismanagement.
- Facilitating tax evasion.
- Failure to comply with any legal or professional obligation or regulatory requirements.

**For more guidance or help, visit [www.safecall.co.uk/en](http://www.safecall.co.uk/en)**





ASIAN BUSINESS CONNEXIONS

# Annual Awards

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## Nominations



## Tickets & Tables



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







Ammar Mirza CBE

## Return of the Jedi

Star Wars is a religion that I could possibly subscribe to having grown up being influenced by the cult phenomenon. In fact, my claim to fame was chaperoning my younger brother when he was invited by his close school friend Anthony McPartlin – one half of Ant & Dec – to watch Return of the Jedi in 1983.

Over the last 25 years I have built up a steady and significant amount of Star Wars paraphernalia. As I am one of the hardest people to buy a gift for and someone, somewhere, had mentioned Star Wars or overheard me doing so, and so this spiralled. I could probably open up a Star Wars Museum. Although I must admit one of the coolest things I possess, is a Darth Vader lightsaber and helmet signed by Darth Vader himself.

**Star Wars, amongst numerous other interpretations, demonstrates the power of, and challenges with, inclusion. Illustrating with powerful conviction the fight between good and bad. How regardless of what you look like there is a place and space for you across the universe.**

Considering it first came to our screens in 1977, incredibly ahead of its time, Star Wars showcased little green beings that everyone loved and admired, White and Black Superior Races, hair covered 10ft Wookiee's and every unimaginable

figure you couldn't think of. Roll forward to current time, I would argue that Star Wars has never been more relevant from an inclusion perspective.

Over the last few weeks, I have been humbled by invitations to contribute to a series of women focused activities and initiatives, including speaking at an event hosted by Newcastle University as part of International Womens Day, and being shortlisted as a Levelling up Leader at the Power Women Awards in Manchester. As I am a long-term devout supporter and advocate for women, I was delighted at being asked.

**The most inspirational person in my life was my late mother, and I have been immensely fortunate to be surrounded by so many amazing women, not to mention my Sainly wife, who enables and encourages me to do all I can to help make a difference.** Consequently, I have done all I can to help tackle barriers and create platforms where women can rightly and

justly be acknowledged and appreciated for all they do.

From launching a range of inclusive programmes, to #Inclusionbydefault and Asian Women Enterprising (AWE) some Campaigns, I have found it extremely important that non-female individuals take responsibility in helping tackle inequalities.

**However, when it comes to asking or inviting people and organisations to have conversations about inclusion, it is astounding to see how uncomfortable people get.** I can somewhat understand why this is and that is why I have started to encourage the use of innovation as an approach to get out of comfort zones.

As innovation is a positive and powerful tool, everyone seems better engaged and interested in getting involved. With Yohlar – our Innovation Ignition methodology - we have a proven approach in helping fix things or make them better. The results are transformative and inspire others to join forces.

**Leading to more and better Justice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, we can all sign up to use the Innovation Force and become JEDIs. Making the world a healthier, happier and more just place.**

**May the Force be With You!**

*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.*



# Durham CCG Innovates Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) Referral Process

Durham Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) sought to improve the Same Day Emergency Care (SDEC) referral process for patients, but faced limited resources and difficulty bringing together stakeholders.

Yohlar and AHSN-NENC were called upon to help. Yohlar used its Rapid Design Sprint + Innovation Discovery Session, a one-day process for time and resource-constrained scenarios.

The session brought together key stakeholders, mapping out processes and creating tangible tools. Participants received design sprint tools and techniques and the outcome was the creation of a new patient pathway that could reduce admission time to SDEC by over 60%.

This collaboration showed the power of innovation in healthcare and the effectiveness of Yohlar's innovation process. Stakeholders are now using Yohlar-based techniques to solve other complex problems.



To find out more please scan the QR code below.



## Objective

Create a more efficient, safe, and user-friendly experience for patients.



## Rapid Discovery

1-day Rapid Discovery Workshop for healthcare stakeholders.

## Mindset



Understanding the Power of Three: how to adopt an innovative mindset.



## Stakeholders

8

Across Primary Care, Same Day Emergency Care and Clinical Lead



## Patients

3.2M

Across the North East and North Cumbria

60%



Potential to reduce admission time by 60%.

## Testimonial

"Excellent to meet with others, share solutions, and discover a way to improve patient care"

## Testimonial

"Very efficient workshop to develop a real working prototype for a complex process"



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# In conversation with...

## Kerry Benson

*Health & safety assistant and office manager at Carney Consultancy*

### What is your role at Carney Consultancy?

I am a health and safety assistant, working within the construction industry. We specialise in Quality, Safety, Health and Environmental (QSHE) training and consultancy.

I work closely with our team of consultants and advisors, who support and manage all aspects of health and safety whilst on construction sites. I help support SHEQ Management systems, SSIPS and Constructionline applications.

I also look after office management, to ensure all operations run smoothly in the office and all policies, standards and procedures are implemented effectively, supporting clients and the team.

### How has your career progressed at Carney Consultancy?

I joined the team in 2017 and my career has progressed a lot. I am currently studying for my NEBOSH construction certification which the company is supporting me through. The next step is to become a consultant. Whilst I undertake my training I will go out onsite accompanied by a member of the team, to help me learn more about the different aspects of the works Carney Consultancy undertake.

I'm also enjoying a mentoring role within the company. I work closely with Hafsa Ghaffar who is our office administrator and I am enjoying passing on my knowledge to benefit her learning journey.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

Helping with strategic decisions which have made profit for the business. I have also worked to implement processes within certain areas of the business which has helped to save customers time, resulting in happier customers and smarter working.



Kerry Benson

### How do you think the sector has changed since you first began your career?

After graduating from university in 2014 with a degree in construction management, I secured a job with Merit and Merrell, as an assistant project engineer, working on various projects throughout the UK.

I took time out to have a family and joined Carney Consultancy in 2017. If I look back over the last 10 years, the sector has become much more diverse and inclusive. Mental health and wellbeing is also a key priority for organisations to ensure their teams are looked after. I also think that women are much more accepted, particularly when out on site or within management positions.

### What are the opportunities for you moving forward?

There is so much potential for me working at Carney Consultancy and becoming a consultant is one of them. I also have the option to keep advancing my knowledge through various qualifications which the company is happy to support me with.

### How do you like to unwind outside of work?

I enjoy travelling and try to get away as much as possible. My partner and I are also in the process of renovating a barn in Yorkshire which we will then look to rent out.

[www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk](http://www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk)



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## Seaham with a sea view

By Jackie Marston

Although we live locally in the North East, there is nothing we love more than staying regionally in the beautiful seaside towns that the area has to offer.

**Seaham in Sunderland is one of mine and my husbands' favourite places to stay and when we both got some unexpected free time, we chose to stay at Apartment 7, which is part of the North Quay Apartments in Seaham and owned by Clearwater Developments. The images sold it to us, as did the description and previous reviews.**

The apartments are located directly on Seaham's sea front which is part of County Durham's Heritage Coast. There's a number of cafes and restaurants right on the doorstep, along with the Marina and beach and as we drove along, we were excitedly planning the next two days.

When you walk in the apartment itself, the first thing you notice is how bright and airy it is. It's like sunshine itself. Spotlessly clean, modern, and fully equipped with everything you could possibly need.

It's incredibly spacious. The living room area is cosy with a sofa, armchair and a flat screen TV. As we were off out exploring, I pictured myself here later, with a nice glass of wine and a book.

Our apartment had two double bedrooms, both with double beds, and more importantly, both made up with plush bedding and premium bed linens. I couldn't wait to jump in! The family bathroom has a shower, WC and wash basin. There are other apartments there too, so you can choose which one to stay in.

After a full day exploring where we saw Tommy the World War I statue, and walked along the beach looking for Sea Glass, we stopped at Downey's for fish and chips, which were

exceptional by the way, and they certainly lived up to their glowing recommendations!

The intention was to go out that night, but once you get comfortable at this apartment, with its stunning views, it takes a lot of effort to budge, so we opted for a bottle of wine and an early night, after all, tomorrow was another day and we had plans to explore some more.

I can't recommend North Quay Apartments enough, it was truly memorable for all the right reasons, and it may only be 20 minutes from our home but it felt like a proper break away.

We both said we'd definitely be back, only downside for us was that they are not dog-friendly, but it was a small price to pay, and Mia (the demanding pooch) took a little vacation of her own, at our son and his wife's house!

I said at the beginning of this review that it was the images and other reviews that sold it to us – that might have been the case, but it's the reality of staying there that will have us returning!

**For bookings at North Quay Apartments – contact Clearwater Developments on [info@clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk](mailto:info@clearwaterdevelopments.co.uk)**





# PMN: steeling time back with 'revolutionary' plastic parts

UK based and operating on a national and international scale Plastic Mouldings Northern Ltd (PMN) works with and supplies to a portfolio of industries and supply chains of leading manufacturers including Nissan, Caterpillar, JCB, Bentley and Toyota.

**Innovation and collaboration are at the heart of PMN and the team have a strong reputation for revolutionising operations with their innovative, design-led solutions saving time, resources and enhancing productivity.**

A recent project saw PMN work with Yorkshire Stainless Ltd (part of the AMEG family of companies), the leading stockholder of stainless steel Pipe, Tube, Fittings and Flanges, supplying all sectors across the UK.

Yorkshire Stainless Ltd (YSL) recently invested in 10 x Kardex Shuttles, which feature an enclosed shelf-based storage system designed to increase capacity in a more compact footprint. These Kardex Shuttles have a total of 550 metal trays for up to 500Kg of components per tray.

YSL needed a solution to enhance the operations as they had tried wooded and metal dividers, but the wood solution would leave bits in the trays potentially damaging the Kardex Shuttles, the metal was too heavy (120 kg per tray using up too much of the 500Kg capacity) and too expensive.

PMN were approached and with their reputation for the production of vacuum formed plastic parts, which sees the company supply high quality and often very intricate moulded parts to an array of industries the team at PMN were able to work

closely with YSL to find a solution.

Through the project PMN needed to utilise their innovative capabilities to supply lightweight plastic divider sets with the flexibility to have multiple configurations allowing a different set up in each tray. The solution was over 14k off 4.5mm Natural PP divider strips in eight different sizes, with slots at 107mm and 114mm centres, longest 1825mm.

The revolutionary solution led to a host of benefits including the creation of over 120 divider configurations to handle over 100k parts, the pick rate reduced from an average of 20 mins per part to less than 90 seconds and a reduced number of industrial units needed from eight to three, therefore saving on rent and rates.

YSL also benefited from better H&S as they removed FLT movement from the factory and eliminated picking from a height in traditional racking, they now use a paperless system for order picking and due to the success of the collaboration YSL stress that the introduction of the Kardex Shuttles and PMN's plastic dividers have "revolutionised" their operation.

Alongside their vacuum forming operation PMN are one of the UKs leading suppliers of plastic packaging solutions including euro containers



across a wide range of industries. Established for over 20 years the expansive site stores over 100,000 products across three acres and 65,000 square feet of indoor storage.

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# Sport and Business event 'central' for North East business success



L-R: Paul Foster, Sarah Hunter & Steve Hart

**A business event sponsorship agreement between Newcastle based independent recruitment specialists, Central Employment and Newcastle United Business Club, has demonstrated the influence sport and business can create by working together to deliver commercial success.**

**The event, 'A Day of Business and Sport' was hosted by the business club at St James' Park and sponsored by Central Employment and The Great Run Company.**

Guest speakers from both sport and business spoke at the event, including Paul Foster, Chief Executive of The Great Run Company, who shared an insight into his extensive sport & media background, including the decade he

spent as a producer at BBC Sport and the eight years as Managing Director of Film Nova.

Established in 1979, Central Employment is the oldest independent recruiter in the North East with over 40 years of industry expertise, having worked with and recruited for some of the largest businesses and brand names in the North East.

The Great Run Company have owned and operated the Great Run series since 1981, the world's biggest half marathon, the Great North Run. Every year, working with key commercial and charity partners, the Great Run Series raises millions of pounds for charity and local economies.

The event comprised of a networking lunch for members of the North East business community to meet with those in the sporting sector to collaborate and promote positive business strategies.

Steve Hart, Director, Central Employment, said: "As a local North East company and supporter of the football club, this high-profile event was a very good opportunity for us to engage with like-minded firms and in a forum that highlighted the synergies between sport and business.

"Hearing from the guest speakers and sporting personalities and their personal career paths and business success was truly inspirational and we were delighted to be the headline sponsor for this well-attended and fascinating event."

Steven McCarthy from NUFC Business Club, said: "We would like to say a huge thank you to our speakers, Central Employment and The Great Run Company for their support on this event. There was a strong turnout of North East business seeking to hear the benefits that sport and business can deliver by working together."

Paul Foster, Chief Executive of The Great Run Company, said: "It was a fantastic to be given the opportunity to speak at such a wonderful event, which blended two worlds I am extremely passionate about."

"I have been involved in both business and sport for well over a decade and being able to showcase that experience and be part of a positive discussion about two sectors that have strong synergies and close interactions."

[www.centralemployment.co.uk](http://www.centralemployment.co.uk)



# Affordable childcare is a business issue, not a women's one

As part of International Women's Day 2023, the British Chambers of Commerce published the results of a survey, which shows that tackling soaring childcare costs would positively impact the UK economy, writes Sarah Waddington CBE.

**Of the 4000 female respondents, 67% felt their career had been hampered by childcare duties and 90% believe additional support should be available.**

Shevaun Haviland, Director General of the BCC, said: "Tackling these issues is integral not only to the wellbeing of our women and workplaces, it is crucial to the functioning of any strong economy."

The study reinforces the PWC report also published in March, which shows that British women are being priced out of the workforce by childcare costs and that the 'motherhood penalty' has become the biggest driver of the gender pay gap.

However, there is one big omission; the voices of fathers, many of whom have strong views on the societal and workplace structures that impact both household earnings and career opportunities - and who recognise that their partners are disproportionately shouldering the burden.

And, although in much smaller numbers, there are also the men who have full childcare responsibilities themselves and feel like their experiences and opinions are being ignored.

As a lone parent, Steve Jackson from Northumberland, said: "As an entirely solo, male parent I am so tired of reading about childcare as a women's issue. We need to get away from that entire mindset. Women shouldn't be the default carers and men who do childcare shouldn't be overlooked."

It's rare that men's voices are marginalised, but they are frequently in this context, despite the desperate need for allyship and a united front.



Sarah Waddington CBE

## A business issue, not a women's one

Let's not forget that childcare is not a women's issue, but a business one.

Neither should women have to 'shout louder' and be better advocates for gender parity when they're the ones being oppressed by the system. (Same goes for racial inequality).

That job lies with those in power and the policy makers who have all the data at their fingertips to make affordable childcare a 'no brainer' decision and who should be focused on equity for all.

And it lies with boards and management teams who can make better decisions about who they hire, the career opportunities they provide and the support they provide as life circumstances change.

Directors, particularly in private firms, have a unique opportunity to provide a voice for those without one and to give agency to those currently without power and influence in the workplace.

## The UK economy needs women

The cost to the economy of losing women from the workplace following childbirth has been well documented.

According to the Centre for Progressive Policy, boosting mothers' employment and earnings through accessible childcare would increase their earnings by between £7.6bn and £10.9bn per annum and generate up to 28.2bn in economic output per year.

In July 2021, the Financial Reporting Council, in partnership with the London Business School Leadership Institute and SQW published Board Diversity and Effectiveness in FTSE 350 companies. This looked at the impact of board diversity post the Davies and Hampton-Alexander reviews.

## The results were stark:

"Higher levels of gender diversity of FTSE 350 boards positively correlate with better future financial performance (as measured by EBITDA margin).

"Likewise, FTSE 350 boards with well managed gender diversity contribute to higher stock returns, and are less likely to experience shareholder dissent."

Wherever you look, the data tells the story. Better business outcomes are achieved when women are able to achieve and sustain well paid work, and have access to senior positions in organisations that enable and reward the different skillsets and perspectives they can bring.

The high cost of childcare down is something the UK economy can ill afford, on multiple fronts and everyone's voice should be heard until this changes.

***If you're a business needing independent non-executive director support with diversity, equity and inclusion and change management, visit [www.sarah-waddington.co.uk](http://www.sarah-waddington.co.uk)***





## Cellular Solutions builds on successful 2022 with new recruitment plans

The Sunderland-based company, which is part of the Communications Plus Group, is targeting a 25 per cent growth in headcount across the business by the end of Quarter 2, 2023, including the recruitment of additional specialists in corporate support, business development and business landline and VoIP systems.

Cellular Solutions saw new customer acquisitions for both its unified

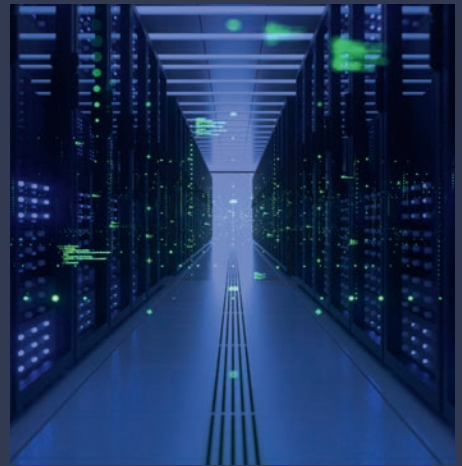
communications and business mobile services double from 2021 to 2022, and in the last three months, it has recruited five new telecommunications specialists.

Cellular Solutions was founded in 1995 and was acquired by Rainford-headquartered Communications Plus in August 2021.

Cellular Solutions specialises in business mobile packages and handsets, business phone systems – such as digital SIP trunk systems and the Horizon cloud-based system – and business broadband. The company is part of the O2 Direct Partner Network.

Since the acquisition by Communications Plus, Cellular Solutions has strengthened its regional and national customer base with client wins including: County Durham-headquartered logistics company Elldis Transport; East Yorkshire-based rural broadband provider Quickline Communications, Harrogate-based IntegraCare, which supports people with learning disabilities; and UK-wide fire and security systems provider ABCA Systems.

Privately-owned telecommunications company Communications Plus has a 230-strong team across 20 UK locations, which include O2 retail stores situated in Northern England and North Wales.



## Sunderland kickstarts listening events to help shape the cyber security landscape

It was all ears on Sunderland as the city kicked off the first of a host of listening events to better understand the cyber security landscape across the North.

Led by the Northern Cyber Clusters Collaboration project and alongside an online survey ([ukc3.co.uk/northern-cyber-clusters-collaboration-project](https://ukc3.co.uk/northern-cyber-clusters-collaboration-project)) the listening events are running across the North of England with the aim of gathering insight to support the facilitation of a stronger force on the ground for cyber security in the regions.

Together the cluster, which is built-up of CyberNorth, North West Cyber Security Cluster and Yorkshire Cyber Security Cluster have a clear mission to facilitate and level up the divide. The research project aims to gain a better understanding of cyber security assets and key cyber security players in the Northern regions, and to develop ways for them to work together to increase visibility and to elevate growth and opportunities in the sector.

A range of guests from academia, innovation to cyber business took part in the event which was hosted at the Hilton Garden Inn, Sunderland and facilitated by Danielle Phillips, Director and Principal Consultant at Inside Out Communications Consulting.

Danielle said: "It was great to launch the listening events in Sunderland, the openness and transparency across the industries was so good to see and there was so much insight gathered, with the thirst for further collaboration so prevalent within just a couple of hours.

The events are continuing across the North including Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds and it's a great chance to really shape the sector. The findings will support in the making of national recommendations and I'm really excited to see the outcome of this project."

## BGF backs North East "tech for good" business

BGF has invested £4.2m into Recite Me, a website accessibility software business based in Gateshead.

Recite Me was founded in 2010 by Ross Linnett after he was diagnosed with dyslexia when he left university. Inspiration struck when he was working on a laptop with integrated assistive technology and questioned why websites weren't already more accessible. Ross then developed a plugin toolbar for websites that opens extensive accessibility and language functionality, allowing users to customise their online experience.

The assistive technology removes online obstacles for those with disabilities, visual impairments, learning difficulties, the population of older age, as well as those who speak English as a second language.

Recite Me's technology has provided support to more than 5.4 million users across the UK, US, and Australia, over the last 12 months. This has resulted in the customisation of online experiences for all users, enabling people to read and understand content on over 34 million web pages. The company counts household brands such as Boots, Coca Cola and VW among its customers.

Commenting on the deal, CEO Ross Linnett said: "We pioneered the assistive technology sector when we launched over a decade ago and have successfully grown the business to



be a market leader, but our mission doesn't stop here as we aim to help millions of people access online content around the world. To galvanise our growth, we were looking for investment partners who shared our values and ambitions and brought their experience of scaling businesses to the next level. BGF was the obvious choice, and we look forward to working with them to invest further in our technology, team and infrastructure so our tech can benefit even more people across the world.

"It was important to us to work with an investor based in the North East, who truly understands the lay of the land and is committed to backing the businesses based here. There's a really exciting digital economy in the region and as funding options have narrowed in recent years, there's a big opportunity for BGF and the wider North East tech sector to work together to drive collective growth."



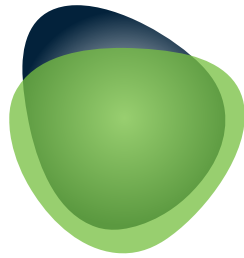
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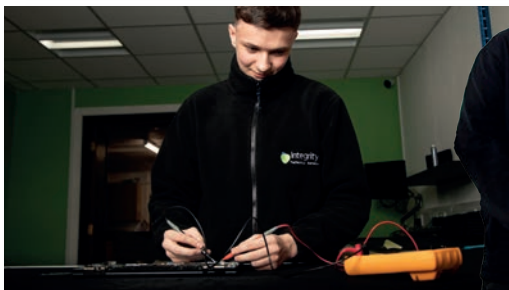
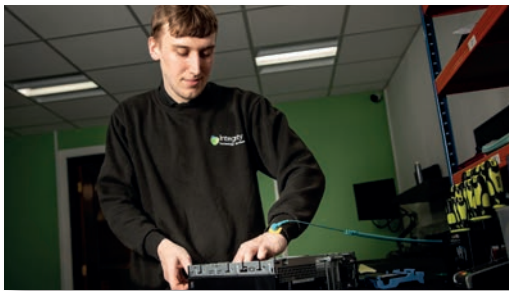
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Paul Burns



# Talking Tech and Digital

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

## Paul Burns

*Chief Technology Officer at Synergi*

### **Did you always envisage a career in the world of technology?**

I have loved technology from an early age, so it was fairly inevitable I would end up in the technology sector somewhere. At the age of around 10 or 11 I was playing, and even started writing simple computer games at home on the RM 380Z and more latterly the Sinclair ZX81. When the rubber keyed ZX Spectrum 48k came along it was a revelation!

### **What attracted you to your current role?**

My role of CTO at Synergi allows me to work alongside some exceptionally talented people developing our Managed Service capability whilst engaging with a wide variety of customers and suppliers. The role perfectly blends operational strategy, technology and engagement with people both inside and outside the organisation.

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

The technology sector today offers vast opportunities to explore different technical career paths. Enthusiasm in your role – this should be your most important focus, find an organisation with a culture that fits, a role you enjoy and then work hard to keep developing relevant skills.

### **Tell us the most exciting thing you're currently working on?**

Technology is always an exciting space and innovation is key to continued progress, as an example we have been driving the use of technologies like passwordless authentication for some time now, for me though continued service improvement is what drives me the most – how can we improve every day?

### **Tell us about your team.**

I am hugely proud of the team we have built within Synergi, exceptional customer satisfaction scores and Service Level Achievement. What always amazes me is the number of customers taking their precious time to write positively about their experience and we receive these almost every single day.

### **What's your fondest memory of a career in the industry?**

I have loved every part of my career from being a software developer in the early days, deploying accounting solutions, through to technical delivery including cabling (with a soldering iron) right through to my leadership roles. One early memory is visiting a customer on a monthly basis to open up their PC & remove the 5¼" floppy disk they had accidentally posted inside the case again! Things were a lot simpler back then!

### **What are your remaining career aspirations?**

I want to continue finding innovative, valuable technology solutions that help our customers be more secure and successful. I want to help build and develop the business alongside Peter and Justin as we keep growing, driving our continued success. Most importantly we all love spending our time working with our customers which is a real passion and I can never see that changing!

### **What piece of technology would you be lost without?**

In order of importance I would be lost without My Phone, Laptop, Smartwatch, Alexa, PS5, In Car technology, Smart speakers, Smart TV and all the other 500 gadgets I love! We have all become so connected today that taking a break can be just as important as all the tech we use during the day, so I always have a paperback book to read - SCI-FI of course!

### **Who are your heroes and mentors?**

In the world of business meeting the original founder of Datto, Austin McChord was a fantastic opportunity. Seeing someone who has a real passion for technology building his backup solution from an empty PC chassis, taping in hard disks and selling this as a service is inspirational. From day one he had a vision and a solution that worked! He built a company with a culture that was second to none. Austin founded his company back in 2007 and in 2017 it was purchased by Vista Equity partners for \$1.5 billion.

### **When not working, how do you like to relax?**

When I am not working I am usually running, skateboarding, snowboarding or playing PS5 games (I sound like a teenager!). For those who know me I love cars and can talk about them all day, and of course if there is a dance floor nearby I will be the first one on it!

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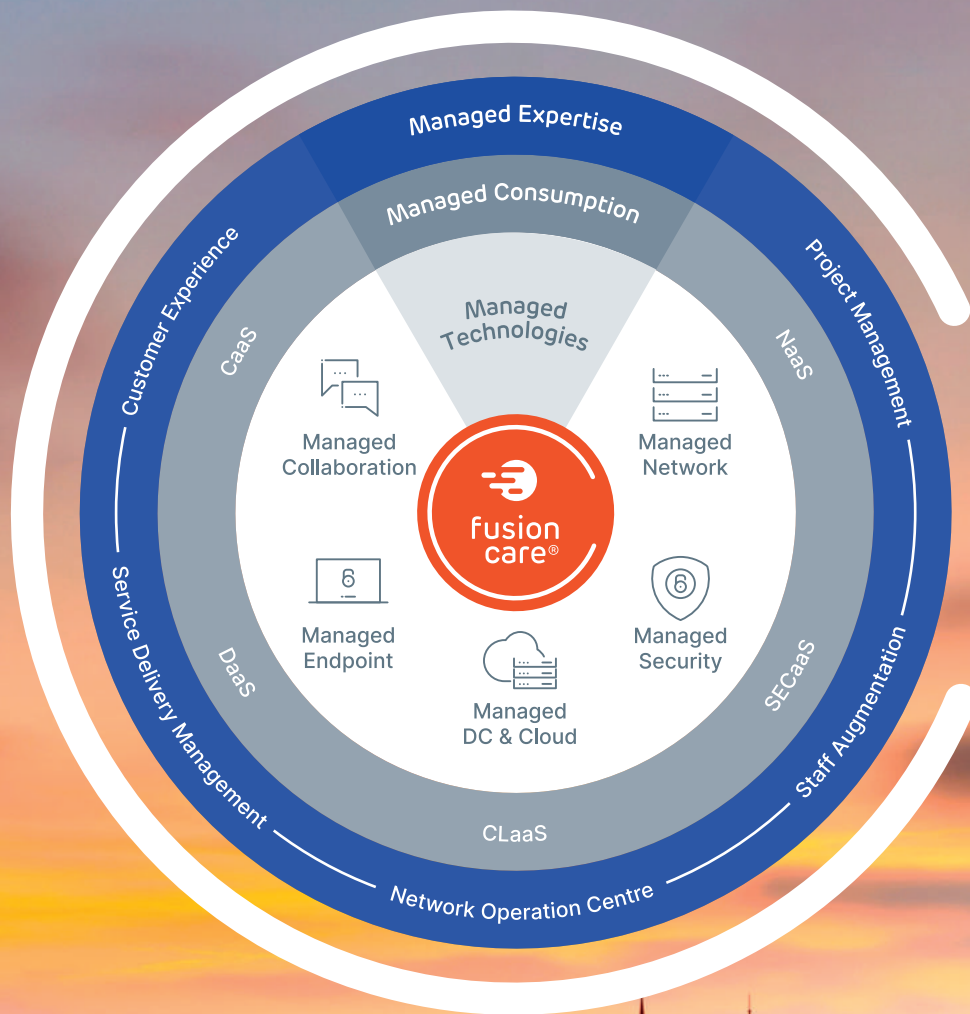






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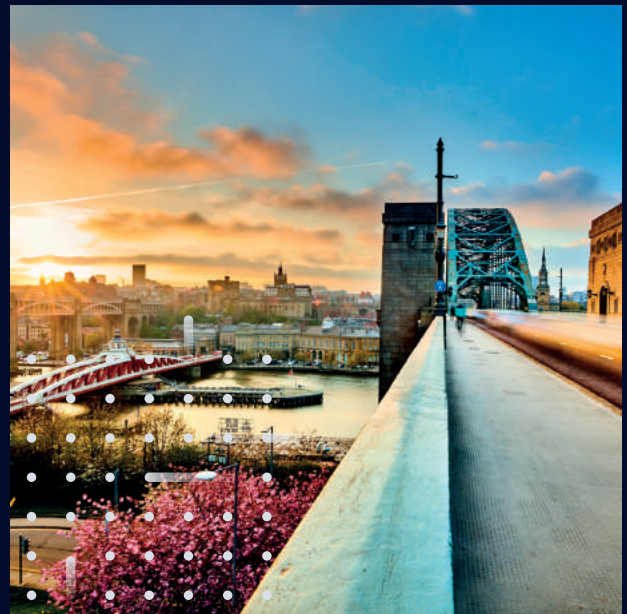
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# Why you need to get onboard with the podcast craze

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And if you pick the correct niche, it's possible to climb the charts in specific categories on podcast platforms. For example, you could create a podcast to talk specifically about HR, or whatever you specialise in.

Podcasts are incredibly shareable, and the content you record can be posted across your social channels to raise your profile. They also help to get your name in another feature on Google, boosting your SEO and helping people find you.

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- 3. Invest in equipment:** Invest in good-quality microphones, headphones, and recording software to ensure high-quality audio.



**4. Record and edit:** Record your episodes and edit them to ensure a polished final product.

**5. Publish and promote:** Publish your content on podcast platforms like Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or Google Podcasts, and promote your show using social media, email marketing, or through paid ads.

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## Hattrick of growing businesses take space at Newcastle's Generator Studios

**A significant investment to refurbish and enhance the amenities at Generator Studios, Newcastle, has paid-off as three tenants sign new office deals – including two that are taking additional space.**

Knight Frank has brokered deals with Black & White Engineering which is expanding its footprint to accommodate expansion; tech firm, Refract is also taking an additional 1,000 sq. ft., and digital design agency, Edward Robertson, has signed a lease for another five years.

The building, which has nine tenants, has been revamped to include several informal meeting and social break-out spaces, including some with standing desks; bike racks; showers; complimentary coffee; 1GB superfast broadband; and a calendar of on-site community events.

## The space age

**Spacious homes set in 1000 acres of historic woodland are proving a big hit with North East homeowners looking for a slice of the good life.**

As buyers line up to purchase properties on the second phase of Miller Homes North East's exclusive Lambton Park development at the heart of County Durham, existing owners have revealed the reasons behind their decisions to buy. Top of the list is space.

Keiran and Sarah Hewkin and their 18-month old son Freddie moved to Lambton Park having outgrown their flat in Hammersmith and wanting to return to their North East roots.

Keiran said: "First impressions of the development were amazing. The build quality and the look of the homes stood head and shoulders above all of the other developments we'd visited. We fell in love with the place the moment we saw it and knew we had to live there."

One of the perks of living at Lambton Park is exclusive access to around 11.5km of walking trails through the parks and woodlands of the Lambton Estate – home to the Earls of Durham for centuries.

Each of the house styles within the development is named after a species of tree to reflect its location and Alison and Malcolm Gittons were Lambton Park's very first homeowners, downsizing to a one-bedroom detached home called The Birch.

Along with superb transport links and local pubs and shopping available at nearby Chester-le-Street, the couple were attracted by the numerous scenic walking routes.

Alison said: "Owning a Miller home at Lambton Park is more than a home, it's a whole new lifestyle. The homes are beautiful and moving here is the best decision we have ever made."



## A new look at estate agency marks a 17-year Venture

**Venture Properties, which has branches in Darlington, Chester-le-Street, Crook and Durham, is marking its 17th year in business this year, after launching in Darlington in 2006.**

To help celebrate the occasion, the agency has also undergone a rebrand, with an overhaul of its website and new branding for its 'For Sale' boards.

Director Michael O'Connor said: "We wanted to make our branding more contemporary; however we still wanted to keep the essence there as the green and grey have become synonymous with Venture, so we didn't want to lose that element of recognition.

"We're very mindful of the fact that we need to stay current and decided to incorporate the re-brand with designing a new website as well, which we've made more user friendly.

"The two stand-outs of the re-brand come in the form of a new website and re-designed 'For Sale' and 'To Let' boards. The new website is sleek and modern, with impressive photography and videos.

"It's also much more user-friendly; requesting a viewing, valuation or a



mortgage appointment is just a click of a button away. Meanwhile, the boards have been changed to incorporate the new darker green and grey colours, making for branding that is fit for purpose in 2023."

Venture started life as a letting agent in 2006 from a Darlington living room, with one laptop. After a successful first two years in the well-established local market, the company branched out into sales and now employs over 40 members of staff across five offices.



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## Go West - for a taste of country living

Homeowners looking for a 'best of both worlds' location are increasingly heading west – to one of the Tyne Valley's most picturesque villages.

**Corbridge's picture postcard streets, independent shops, excellent schools and facilities have long made it a desirable choice for buyers.**

And now a new development on the northern edge of the village has become the estate of choice for people wanting to downsize or buy a second home or investment property in a highly desirable location.

More than 90 per cent of the three, four and five bedroomed homes at Miller Homes North East's Roman Fields – just off the A69 have already been snapped up, many by those who have escaped to the country.

Retired engineer Bill Campbell and his wife Susan, who recently gave up her role as a scientific officer for DEFRA, Campbell moved to Roman Fields just before Christmas, from Hartford Hall near Bedlington.

"We were considering places like York and Keswick or even Scotland," said Bill.

"There was no reason we had to stay in the North East so we were looking at somewhere completely different."

That all changed when the couple saw online the Miller Homes development in Corbridge which they went to see a few days later.

The beautiful village, the sense of community and the range of independent shops, restaurants and bars on the doorstep meant the Campbells fell instantly in love with the area – and their potential new home.

"We knew straight away this was the place for us," said Bill.

"It was everything we wanted. It's also so close to the village square that we can walk there. It really is perfect."

Bill, who has previously had a number of health

problems, said the couple were looking for somewhere which offered "peace and quiet."

"Corbridge is such a beautiful village and everyone is really friendly," he said.

"And the build quality of the property is of such a high standard it was a fantastic experience from beginning to end.

With just a handful of properties left on the estate, Miller Homes is offering a range of incentives, such as Assisted Move - where they sell your existing home for you and cover the costs - or the option of a cash lump sum of up to £15k or a five per cent deposit contribution.

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**Banks Homes**, Durham City, something very special is Coming Soon. Watch this space.

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# Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Reforms to national planning policy

*Kevan Carrick, co-founder of JK Property Consultants LLP, comments on the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill which is out for consultation.*

**The proposed changes must have a profound impact on the delivery of economic growth and regeneration in the North East.**

To achieve this profound impact, a change to the national planning policy is required. It has long been acknowledged that speeding up the planning process is essential to allow the necessary development to achieve the effective delivery of levelling-up and economic regeneration.

As I and many others operating within the property sector see it, two important limbs need to change.

In policy terms, to ensure the economic strategy for the region can be implemented through the planning policy. For too long, planning has not adopted an approach that ensures the number of houses are built to meet the planned increase in economic activity. Building a greater number of houses for sale and rent will help to stabilise the market, maintain affordable housing and avoid the ongoing increases in prices and rents that are becoming so much of a burden for the individual to afford.

In terms of delivery, to provide adequate and much needed resources to allow the planning professionals in the local councils to act.



Kevan Carrick

Planning applications are taking too long in the decision process, increasing costs and risk. Development of property is carried out in a cyclical economy. Delay in the planning process risks frustrating much needed development.

In England, the Bill provides for new devolution structures and simplifies existing arrangements for devolving power, which are complicated and burdensome. It delivers models that will allow all parts of the North East – not just major cities – to benefit from bespoke devolution deals, giving local leaders the powers to meet their communities' needs. Providing these opportunities for all communities, will increase innovation and enhance local accountability, leading to more joined up services and decision making, greater flexibility over funding and more inward investment. Alongside these new

powers, the Bill includes measures to increase the accountability and transparency of local leaders to their communities.

The Bill strengthens and adds to the tools that can be used to deliver regeneration and make good use of previously developed land. It will allow the reinvigoration of high streets by making changes allowing local authorities to fill vacant commercial property, such as shops, through high street rental auctions. It will enhance compulsory purchase powers, make it easier to establish locally led development corporations and improve transparency about the ownership and control of land.

It is hoped that the government will press ahead with the much-needed change to allow the region to grow the economy and bring greater prosperity to all.

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Neil Turner

but some manufacturers are changing this with darker colours and more discreet covers. On the continent they have used them far longer and are better at hiding them in the design of buildings, so we need all housebuilders to think a little harder about where they should sit and build them into the design, not just as an afterthought and bolted on outside.

Am I better just insulating my house? Any boiler will have to work harder if the house is poorly insulated. I would advise everyone to do this first, so even a heat pump will be more inefficient if the house is poorly insulated.

In essence, I am a convert to heat pumps, but I just wish we could make them more affordable for everyone which ultimately, will help homeowners with their energy costs and the country with its carbon footprint.

**Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email [n.turner@hlpuk.com](mailto:n.turner@hlpuk.com) [www.howarthlitchfield.com](http://www.howarthlitchfield.com)**

## Pump up the volume – heat pumps

By Neil Turner, director,  
Howarth Litchfield

I wrote in late 2021 about a more environmental future and why we need to invest in new technologies. This was of course before the energy crisis, which has further heightened our awareness of going green and the cost of fossil fuels.

**Gas boilers will be outlawed in new houses by 2025 as greater carbon reduction targets are sought and eventually, at some date in the 2030s, existing housing stock will need to find green alternatives. Hydrogen alternatives to gas are still years away, so what alternatives are there?**

Well, there are several alternatives - most notably heat pumps - in the form of ground source and air source heat pumps, drawing energy from the ground and the air respectively.

Yet I have seen a number of negative articles in the press about them which is a real shame. So why are people being 'luddites' about this technology. They have been around since the 19th century and surely all technologies which reduce our carbon footprint are a good thing?

But of course, it's not that simple. One of the major factors is the cost and they do cost more than an equivalent gas boiler. I have previously written that the old renewable heat incentive (RHI) was far better than the current boiler upgrade system. A gas replacement boiler costs between £1500 to £3000 and is much cheaper than spending £10k on an air source pump (a

ground source system is even more expensive). So, a grant of £5000 is not going to make up the difference.

The government programme has been a failure with only 7,000 vouchers issued from a target of 90,000. We do need to see the products get cheaper and Octopus and British Gas are launching cheaper products this year. For the moment we need greater financial incentives from central government to make them more affordable for the average family.

There have been reports that heat pumps don't save that much money. Clearly this will depend on what they are replacing and the size of the property they are in. I installed one myself a number of years ago and I can vouch that it is highly economic to run.

Do they work? Again, reports have said they are slower and not as warm. A normal gas boiler heats water to the radiators at around 60-70C whereas as a heat pump heats water to a lower temperature of 45-50C, so a heat pump may need bigger radiators and larger pipes to work effectively. However, when combined with under floor heating which requires heat at a lower temperature, it's ideal and the benefits are maximised.

Are they noisy? They do emit some noise as an air pump needs to be outside to let the air pass over it. However, ground pumps can be placed inside so there is no outside noise and air pumps are advancing all the time.

Are they Ugly? They do look like AC units, often finished in white (I never understand why white)



A ground source heat pump now hidden under a meadow



A screen of cobbles hides the plant equipment



An Austrian house where the air source heat pump is hidden behind a timber screen



dunwoodieswift  
architects

evolution





Fiona Roe



Teresa Sargeant

## North of England, a Landlords dream?

With plenty of opportunities for high yielding buy to let properties, should you be investing in the North of England? We ask youngsRPS' Residential Lettings Experts, Fiona Roe and Teresa Sargeant.

**The buy-to-let market has been subject to much speculation in recent months, with experts suggesting that high mortgage rates, tenancy reforms and an impending cut to the capital gains tax-free allowance will drive many landlords out of the industry. However, buying a home still remains out of reach for many with rental property remaining their only option and with recent data from Goodlord showing that potential yields for buy-to-let properties are highest here in the North East, now seems to be the time to invest.**

Fiona Roe, Lettings Manager for youngsRPS Northallerton comments, "With mortgage rates stabilising somewhat, prospective landlords in the north of England have much better odds of achieving good rental yields than those in the south of the country. There is still huge tenant demand for rental properties across the country but with significantly lower property prices here than in the south there is still lots of potential

to achieve huge returns on your investment. Areas like Northallerton are booming in popularity of tenants looking for the country life with easy access to commutable cities."

Of course, rental yield is not the only factor to consider when investing in property. Short-term profits are appealing, but investors also want their properties to grow in value over time and this will vary hugely depending on the levels of borrowing and the yield generated.

According to the Office for National Statistics 75% of renters stay in their properties for longer periods of time, good news for landlords looking for a steady long term income stream.

Teresa Sargeant, Lettings Manager at youngsRPS Hexham advises, "demand for rentals remains extremely high across the board, ranging from flats and apartments to larger family homes and retirement relocations. Those Landlords looking to expand their property portfolio should be assessing the market to spot the gaps and making this their focus, all things that we advise on. It is crucial that choosing the right style of property, the right location, and of course the right price is vital to any prospective Landlords considerations."

Will new legislation impact Landlords profits?

The recent Rent Reform Act, newly introduced energy efficiency requirements and other private residential rental sector developments due in 2023 will most likely impact on short term profits, but efficient property management can ensure this don't become an issue.

Teresa continues, "We understand that whilst legislation is vital when protecting tenants, it can be difficult to keep up with, and that's why we keep up to date for you."

**To learn more about our Lettings Team visit [www.youngsrps.com](http://www.youngsrps.com)**



# In conversation with...



L-R: Andrew Dawson, managing director at Castle Building Services with Ken Williamson, chief operating officer at Pragmatic Semiconductor.

## Andrew Dawson

*Managing Director, Castle Building Services*

### Tell us about Castle Building Services and the areas you operate in.

Castle Building Services is one of the UK's leading providers of building services. We employ in excess of over 130 staff and operatives from our headquarters in Tyne & Wear and regional offices in Teesside, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

We provide design, supply, installation, commissioning, construction services and building works including specialist fit out, mechanical, electrical, public health and renewable technology services.

In a strategic move, we have diversified into the role of principal and specialist fit out contractor, working directly for private and public sector organisations. An example being our appointment as principal contractor for the state-of-the-art Pragmatic Park electronics facility in Durham, which is expected to create 500 skilled jobs and produce a product that is unique across the complex world of semi-conductor technologies.

### Can you tell us about your role?

I am managing director with overall responsibility for overseeing all operational, health and safety, commercial and financial aspects of the business, as well as, managing clients and stakeholder relationships.

### How has your career progressed at the company?

I joined Castle Building Services 13 years ago as a mechanical estimator and the senior team at the time identified a strong career progression route for me within the company. By building on my knowledge and skills, I had the drive to move through the ranks to senior estimator, commercial director and to my current position as managing director.

At Castle Building Services, we offer strong career routes and also encourage employees to pursue individual pursuits and champion industry causes. An example being our support for the North East construction sector's OneVoice strategy. It aims to build a successful, sustainable and inclusive construction industry, equipped with the people and technology to deliver a carbon neutral-built environment by 2050.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

Steering the business through difficult periods such as Covid and Brexit. This was a challenging time.

I am also very proud of the team that we have at Castle. We have developed a strong senior management team and mentoring system which will help to future proof the business.

Another proud moment was helping to establish Castle Green Services, an innovative subsidiary and natural extension of Castle Building Services. Together it forms one of the UK's leading, privately owned, specialist providers of integrated Green Building solutions.

### How has the industry changed since you began your career?

In many ways. There is a better working environment which is more diverse and also inclusive. Health and safety and the wellbeing of employees is also at the forefront of activity. It also goes without saying that digital technologies have vastly improved as has the industry's commitment to the environment.

### What do you think are the opportunities going forward?

At Castle Building Services, we are excited about the opportunities presenting themselves in principal contractor roles and have invested in the appropriate staff, training and software, to enable us to operate across multi discipline projects. We have the expertise to take on the role of principal contractor on wider carbon reduction schemes.

[castlebs.co.uk](http://castlebs.co.uk)





## Radio sends out SOS

**Community radio station, Radio Northumberland has been on air since January 2012 providing 24/7 community radio programming targeted specifically at Northumberland. Many of their shows are recorded at home studios as well as at their base in Bedlington.**

The station has an eclectic mix of shows ranging from local history to business and punk to heavy metal. Their typical demographics indicate that their audience is aged 30 plus living in the region. Business owners are tuning in regularly thanks to shows such as the North Tyneside Business Forum show.

With the ever-increasing use of technology and the ability to get their programming into homes all over the world via the internet, volunteers at the station have found themselves stretched and in need of more help.

Director Keith Newman said: "We are now looking for people to add value either side of the microphone. As well as presenters, we are looking for people with sales and marketing skills who can help us raise funds for new tech and our licences. We're also looking for people to help with outside broadcasts and events.

"It's great fun volunteering and anyone interested can get in touch with me on 07814 397951 for a no obligation chat."



## Lights, Action, Camera!

**The Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum has dipped her toes again into the world of TV and the media by representing some of her member's views on the recent Budget.**

Karen Goldfinch was approached by the BBC to appear on the Sunday morning Politics North Show on BBC1. Her brief was to feedback the concerns and opinions of some of the 1800 members of the Business Forum regarding the cost-of-living crisis and the Budget.

"It was a very enjoyable experience going into the BBC studio in Newcastle and meeting Richard Moss the presenter, the other guests, and the production crew.

"My main contribution was about the Government's decision to increase child care provision which is very good news for working parents but may cause issues for childcare providers due to the current lack of trained staff. It will be a challenge for providers to recruit new staff before the new changes come into effect next year," said Karen.

"It was good to see what goes into the making of a television programme, seeing the work behind the scenes and being able to let the viewers know how businesses in North Tyneside reacted to the budget."

The Forum is FREE to join and is for any business with a trading address in North Tyneside.

E: [business.forum@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:business.forum@northtyneside.gov.uk)  
[www.northtynesidebusinessforum.org.uk](http://www.northtynesidebusinessforum.org.uk)  
 T:0191 643 6000

## It's time for a change

**As JAM enters its 20th year (it was our birthday in February 23), then we thought we should mark the changes and get ourselves a new logo.**

JAM Prints & Marketing's joint owners Geeta Patel-Ral and founder Jackie Marston have had a bit of a rebrand of their logo, which now encompasses the versatility of work they do.

A full-service marketing agency, established in 2004, the business prides itself on the service they supply and the longevity of the clients they serve.

Jackie told us: "We thought it was time for a little change of our logo and to mark moving into 20-years of trading, so have gone for a fun, clean logo this time, but it still has the paw print on it, which serves as a nod towards our dog-friendly offices and the fact that our pooches come to work with us, daily (and keeping us sane!)"

Geeta said: "We love our new logo, and we hope our clients love it too!"

For anyone wanting a re-brand or any of the many other marketing services we offer, then please feel free to contact the Jammy Dodgers on 0191 917 0819 or email [info@jamprintsmarketing.co.uk](mailto:info@jamprintsmarketing.co.uk)



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Claire Pickersgill



## It's all a glow at House of Hype & Co

House of Hype & Co. are celebrating a strong start to 2023 with a number of high-profile campaigns alongside an awards nomination as the PR agency celebrates one year in business.

**The agency based in Sunderland operates across the UK to help businesses to develop their brand presence and achieve their goals through PR, social media and building strong personal brand profiles of founders and business owners.**

The agency works with SMEs across a diverse client portfolio from authors, manufacturing charities to fitness and the team founded by Managing Director Claire Pickersgill work closely with clients to help shine the spotlight on their business. The portfolio of businesses encompasses Hype That PR, Hype That Social and Hype That Profile and sit under the House of Hype & Co. with additional bases in London & Dublin.

The team have recently hit 2023 with a number of contract wins including the account to support globally famous brand Fake Bake with their UK PR alongside their UK Distributer

French Beauty Expert. Fresh out of tanning the red-carpet ready celebs at the National TV Awards, the BRIT Awards and the official tanning sponsor of Dancing on Ice 2023, Fake Bake know a thing or two about getting the glow on.

News has also just recently landed that House of Hype & Co. are Finalists in the StartUp Awards 2023 for Business, Consulting and Management StartUp of the Year – North East, Yorkshire and the Humber.

Claire Pickersgill, Founder and Managing Director at House of Hype & Co. said: "As we hit 2023 it has been a bit of a whirlwind and we are really excited with the momentum and diversity of contracts coming in across the agency. I love building relations and working with both new and existing clients to help elevate their business and it's such a vibrant time. Collaborations are at the heart of activities here at House of Hype & Co. and I'm really excited to see these grow even further in the coming months."

Claire's background at the Sunderland Empire

theatre saw her manage regional communications campaigns for some of the biggest international touring theatre productions. She also led the theatre's poignant post-Covid 19 reopening PR campaign which received ground-breaking coverage and social stats. This campaign also saw the theatre pick up the accolade for highest ranking PR reopening coverage across all the UK theatres under the theatre groups portfolio.

Claire added: "We have a track record of creating campaigns with hype and impact and we are really looking forward to working on an array of campaigns. I'm a strong believer that people buy from people and through our innovative and impactful campaigns we shine the light on businesses through the people. The power of personal branding is immense and when done in the right way it can be one of your most powerful assets."

**To find out more visit: [www.hypeco.co.uk](http://www.hypeco.co.uk) or [claire@hypeco.co.uk](mailto:claire@hypeco.co.uk)**

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**House of Hype & Co.**

[www.startupawards.uk](http://www.startupawards.uk)

HOUSE OF HYPE & CO.





## Mediaworks partners with Newcastle SEN school to improve pupil facilities

**Mediaworks, the award-winning digital marketing agency, has attended Hadrian School as part of its ongoing support of the specialist education facility in Newcastle's West End.**

The Gateshead-based business approached Hadrian School in Benwell as part of its commitment to create a world of opportunities for future generations, and launch its newly introduced volunteering initiative which allows all Mediaworks staff time out of the office to support charitable schemes.

Members from the Mediaworks team took a day away from their desks to help transform both indoor and outdoor spaces at the school, painting classrooms, collecting leaves and tidying outdoor play areas, building a tyre wall around unsafe areas and tidying and pruning the Willow Caterpillar Garden.

Hadrian School caters for the additional needs of pupils aged between two and 11 years who have a range of severe, complex learning difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Chris Rollings, head teacher at Hadrian School, said: "We are blown away by the support and commitment from Mediaworks to help our children and staff.

"Our school motto is 'Together we make a difference'; and by working in partnership with local businesses, such as Mediaworks, we can make an even bigger difference to the lives of our pupils and their families."



## Aubergine shortlisted for PRMoment Award 2023

**Leeds PR and content agency, Aubergine, has been shortlisted for an award at this year's PRmoment Awards for the North.**

The virtual team which specialises in food, tech, health and sustainability, is up for Media Relations Campaign of the Year.

Winner of PRMoment's New Agency of the Year in 2019, Aubergine has thrived in a challenging climate. Set up for remote working before the pandemic hit, the team of expert consultants has levelled up its client base.

The agency has carved a niche within sustainability and has created head-turning campaigns which consistently beat KPI's and contribute to the growth of its global clients. In the last year, Aubergine has grown turnover by 50% and makes a six-figure profit thanks to low overheads. The team has employed its first full time employee who is joining a roster of experienced freelancers.

To earn the Media Relations Award nomination, the team created a powerful campaign for the new eco pregnancy test company Hoopsy. Aubergine was tasked with launching the brand's eco 99% paper pregnancy test to the UK market, creating a launch product release which was followed up with a series of emotive founder interviews, profiles and newsjacking.

The campaign achieved coverage with a circulation of 378 million in 77 titles including Women's Health, Mail Online, the Mirror and Marie Claire. The coverage and media attention has opened doors for national retail listings such as Superdrug and Whitworths Chemists, and funding for the startup.

Aubergine previously picked up the same accolade at the 2020 awards for a campaign for a health drink.

## Marriott Communications' CEO, Samuel Marriott-Dowding, wins 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year'

**Sunderland-based digital communications agency, Marriott Communications, has announced that their CEO, Samuel Marriott-Dowding, has been awarded 'Young Entrepreneur of the Year' at the 2023 FSB Celebrating Small Business Awards.**

This win is the latest commendation for the agency following other North East shortlists and wins, including for Marketer of the Year at the Prolific North Awards and the win of Agency of the Year at the Northern Enterprise Awards.

Marriott Communications' CEO, Samuel Marriott-Dowding, said: "This award is incredibly special to me and I am so grateful to the FSB for this recognition. I started Marriott Communications from zero and to be able to see its growth and development over the past two years has been such a



privilege. A special thank you to all of our partners, clients, and supporters - without who our agency would not have seen the growth and success that it has. The team and I have a lot of exciting projects and developments happening over the next year, and I can not wait to see and share where our next chapter as a digital agency takes us."



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L-R: Andrew Young  
and Harvey Trent,  
Founders and  
Directors of  
The Pulse Rooms

# Benefits of aligning marketing and sales in B2B environments

By Andrew Young - Founder and Director of The Pulse Rooms

It is common for marketing and sales teams in B2B organisations to work in separate silos. However, aligning these two core functions can positively impact your organisation's bottom line.

**At The Pulse Rooms, understanding the frontline sales environment is a core starting point when working with clients to develop a growth marketing strategy. It helps us to uncover insightful customer needs, identify potential barriers to purchase, and ensure any marketing activities move prospects along the funnel to close the deal.**

Here are some benefits B2B organisations can expect when effectively aligning marketing and sales efforts.

## **Deliver greater value to your customers**

Your sales team constantly communicates and interacts with existing and prospective customers. This is the perfect time to gather direct feedback - uncovering pain points and the motivation for purchasing a particular product or service. You can use these insights to refine your product or service offering,

ensuring it meets customer needs and wants continuously. By enhancing the value offered, your organisation is more likely to retain its existing customers, as well as attract new ones at the same time.

## **Create more effective marketing assets that help to close the sale**

In our experience, when sales and marketing teams aren't effectively aligned, sales reps struggle to know which collateral they should send to prospects. This means that the content created by the marketing team often goes to waste. By bringing the two functions closer together, you can create assets, such as product sheets and white papers, that your sales reps can use to move prospects quickly along the funnel and close the deal. As your sales team works directly with customers, it's always beneficial to involve them in developing new marketing campaigns and content.

## **Understand what's needed beyond the sale**

Selling a product or service in a B2B context often isn't just a simple one-off transaction. Customers might go through numerous stages before, during and after purchase. Mapping out an agreed customer journey in its entirety can help you to identify the different forms of marketing required at each point. Determining what's needed to close the deal can take up much of your focus and energy, but you must also consider how marketing can support post-sale interactions.

This is crucial to retaining customers and driving repeat purchases. The marketing channel you use to do this doesn't have to be overly complicated. For example, arranging a quarterly event for loyal customers might be a great way to keep the interaction going and make them feel valued.

## **Enjoy higher retention rates and win rates**

At a foundational level, any business wants to retain and attract new customers, which is how they grow. Research by Aberdeen Group has shown that when organisations align sales and marketing functions, they enjoy 36% higher customer retention rates and 38% higher win rates.

**To find out how The Pulse Rooms can support your B2B organisation to develop a growth strategy that aligns marketing and sales, email [hello@thepulserooms.com](mailto:hello@thepulserooms.com) or go to [www.thepulserooms.com](http://www.thepulserooms.com)**



“

*...being a  
great friend  
but a terrible  
enemy...*

Bernice Saltzer



# Marketing and Media Matters

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

## Bernice Saltzer

Owner, Sorted PR

### Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

I can honestly say I never wanted to have any other kind of job. I used to love to write stories and poems as a child so writing was really second nature to me, so when I discovered there was a job where I could do that for a living, it was a bit of a no-brainer.

I remember being extremely determined, even when at school it was suggested journalism was too difficult to get into. I was told by a careers' adviser that there were few jobs compared to the number of people who wanted them – which made me all the more determined.

### What has been your career path so far?

After school I went on the National Council for the Training of Journalists' pre-entry course. In those days it was really the only way into the industry, there were no university courses. You had to do the one year training and then try and get a job so you could then finish your training.

I did that and then worked at newspapers in the region for about 20 years, before deciding to move into public relations and setting up on my own.

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

As someone who is quite “old school” dealing with the rapidly changing face of the media and news in general. At Sorted PR we do operate in quite a traditional fashion but it doesn't seem to do us any harm – luckily we're very busy and have some amazing clients, many of whom we've had for years.

### Who do you most respect in your industry?

The person I most respect is my colleague, Emma Walker. Like me she's from a journalistic background so understands the media. She's a brilliant writer, utterly trustworthy and is also one of my best friends. I couldn't function without her!

### Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

Definitely Carrie Bradshaw!

### What is your biggest weakness?

I don't suffer fools and I probably have quite a low tolerance level. I was once described as “being a great friend but a terrible enemy.” Sadly that's probably true!

### What is your greatest strength?

I'd like to think I go above and beyond. Reputation is really important and it doesn't matter if I'm working for myself or when I worked for other people, I have a really strong work ethic. Someone once said to me that the worst thing anyone could say to me was that I didn't do a good job – and they were probably right!

I also think at Sorted PR we are really good at thinking outside of the box and coming up with newsworthy ideas.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

There have been so many over the years – winning contracts when we've been pitched against big London companies, stories which have been picked up internationally – too many to mention really.

### What are your future career aspirations?

I'm not sure I have any aspirations left – I just want to keep doing what I do and sticking to the way we do it for as long as possible.

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

I imagine in the next decade it will change beyond recognition, but I hope that it will still retain some of the old fashioned values and a commitment to real news.

### How do you like to unwind?

I love to cook and we like to entertain a lot at home. I'm a great theatre fan but our greatest love is to travel – we've just come back from a trip to India and I'm working through my bucket list of places I want to go to.

**[bernice@sortedpr.com](mailto:bernice@sortedpr.com)**  
**07977 860183**



# ...April showers our clients with...

*Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what they give their customers above and beyond the norm.*



I work with a lot of businesses large and small, and many seek my advice as they have come to a crossroads in their business. One of the most important things is to listen to them and guide them to where they need to be. I make sure I'm there to facilitate them and support them on their journey.

**Karen Goldfinch** *Your Business Pilot* [www.yourbusinesspilot.co.uk](http://www.yourbusinesspilot.co.uk)



My parent company, UW, has won Growth Company of the Year at the Shares Magazine Awards. We're helping record numbers of people to save and make money by making people's bills cheaper. If you'd like to know how to get involved, get in touch.

**James Palmer**, *Utility Warehouse* 07960 121068



MINT Business Club members are taken through a training philosophy - The Six Pillars of MINT. We focus on Developing Confidence in themselves, Business Foundations, Money, Marketing, Sales, and Business Growth. These are the things that I wished someone had been on hand to work with me in my self-employment 15 years ago!

And, as an added benefit, we stock the products of 75 of our members in our headquarters in Consett, selling their products in the HUB.

**Nicola Jayne Little** [www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk](http://www.mintbusinessclub.co.uk)

We take the hassle and stress out of video production and live streaming. We work with our clients on an initial brief then can go off and organise everything from locations, studios, props and more. We also deal with risk assessments and other permissions for land use and drone operations to ensure our clients have a smooth run of production."

**Daniel Wilkinson** *DW Media*  
[www.thedwmedia.co.uk](http://www.thedwmedia.co.uk)



People think PR is expensive and it can be, but the trick is using the right people, with the right skills and the right ideas. My RADAR package is incredible value as for the cost of a couple of coffees a week, your business gets exposed to the media. There are other benefits too such as featuring in this page in Northern Insight Magazine.

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**Keith Newman**  
[www.highlightspr.co.uk](http://www.highlightspr.co.uk)  
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I teach my learners French - but they get oh so much more than that when they come to one of my classes. They gain in confidence when they communicate on their holidays or in work situations. It's such a privilege to see them develop not only their language but their ability to communicate with confidence. And that doesn't even mention the workout that your brain gets when you learn and more especially when you learn a language.

*If you'd like to join one of my classes just get in touch [barbara@linguaforme.co.uk](mailto:barbara@linguaforme.co.uk) [www.linguaforme.co.uk](http://www.linguaforme.co.uk)*

Off The Grid works with a wide range of clients and funders to create bespoke activity-based solutions for organisations, communities, and families in our target areas. Funders and families love our delivery style which is why we get a lot of repeat referrals and bookings. All of our work is designed by clients for clients so it's as engaging as possible. Our holiday activity programmes for example are all designed by our young advisor group, and this has helped us to be one of the best organisations around to work with as our clients often tell us! Please get in touch for an informal chat If you have an idea that we may be able to help with!

*Paul Kirkpatrick  
[www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk](http://www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk)*



We always give 150% and do what we say we're going to do. We're proud of our work in the community and our valuable reputation for delivering with our partners.

The young people we work with have been able to access a lot of experiences and opportunities and they tell us that they're more work ready because of the social and life skills we've been able to provide them with.

*Lyn Horton, CEO Leading Link  
[www.leadinglink.co.uk](http://www.leadinglink.co.uk)*

*Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact [keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk) or call Keith on 07814 397951.*

## Are you on the media's RADAR?

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**Contact Keith Newman for more details.**

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**07814 397951**

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Veronica Swindale

## Marketing plays a crucial role in acquisition success

Veronica Swindale, nesma MD, has been following the progress of Sterling Pharma Solutions and its international acquisition trail and talks to Emma Greenwood, Marketing Director at Sterling Pharma Solutions, about managing teams whilst executing successful marketing strategies during intense change.

### What are your main challenges as Marketing Director when taking on new companies?

I don't see them as challenges; they are more opportunities to spread the word about Sterling and our work. Acquisitions are hard work for everyone involved, but they are exciting to work on and offer our team considerable rewards in terms of personal development.



### How difficult is it to adapt the branding, culture and behaviours to the Sterling way of doing things?

I think it is more difficult for employees of the company we are acquiring; it can be an unsettling process, especially for those who have been with the business for many years. People are a key focus, and we ensure mechanisms are in place to support our future employees. Consistent, regular two-way communication is vital.

Sterling has been built on strong values. They are used to guide behaviours and decisions at board level down. We are clear about our values from the outset and ensure new employees can see our values being lived daily, which makes a real difference. During acquisitions and times of cultural change, if you do what you say you will do, then you can build trust.

### How do your team support you in overcoming these challenges?

We are a team, so we work together, playing on each other's strengths and providing learning opportunities where we can. Planning is vital, so we all have many checklists and spreadsheets!

People may forget that amid an acquisition, we still have to continue with other internal comms, events, and other external comms. So, we tag team; whilst one person is immersed in acquisition comms, another will concentrate on our other responsibilities. It's like juggling plates a lot of the time!

### What skills stand out most in your team to achieve this?

They all have many skills, but I think the one thing that honestly makes a difference is that they care; they want things to go well, they want to achieve, they want to be supportive of each other and their colleagues, and they care about outcomes, people and the business.

Other than this, it is probably being able to see the bigger picture, understanding strategy, business and why we do the things we do. Not forgetting attention to detail – this must be the key skill in everything we do!

### How do you ensure your team members are up to the job demanded of them?

I think the CIM qualifications do just that; they give people a grounding in what marketing means and how it can impact businesses, aside from the more obvious marketing skills. Studying whilst working is tough, but it does help as well, as you have real-life examples right in front of you to use in coursework and in class.

### What do you think are the main traits of an effective Marketing Director?

I think a marketing director needs to be commercially and financially astute, a strategic thinker, creative, and have the ability to challenge the status quo; to innovate and think differently in a way that motivates and inspires. Marketing is a department that works across the business, with every department and every level of employee, so building relationships is vital. I think this can only be achieved through mutual respect of everybody's role.

### And what did your team say when you asked them the same question?

They said, 'An effective marketing director empowers their team to make decisions, take responsibility, innovate and test new ideas. They are so much more than a manager, but a mentor, supporting growth and development, guiding their team towards their career goals. They effectively coordinate projects; they can take control and challenge ideas to achieve business objectives whilst looking out for their team's best interests'.

*If you are interested in CIM qualifications to advance your team's performance, nesma has a new term starting in April.*



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# North of England creative agency wins prestigious broadcast awards



L-R: Gill Hunter (Square One Law), Claire Knight (The Traveller and the Bear), Deb Ions (Square One Law), Katie Thornton (The Traveller and the Bear), Antonio Bachini (The Traveller and the Bear)

Square One Law's Newcastle-based creative agency, The Traveller and the Bear, has been recognised by winning two Royal Television Society (RTS) Awards for the North East and Borders for the 'Fearlessly Solving' campaign it created for the disruptive Northern Law firm.

**The Traveller and the Bear devised the campaign to articulate how Square One Law, which has offices in Newcastle, Leeds and Darlington, differentiates its expertise and experience in the market.**

The 'Fearlessly Solving' video features a jazz drummer and a spoken poet who tells an impactful story that being fearless is not only about breaking from tradition, standing apart and solving problems creatively, but also encouraging people to act with integrity, watch their clients' backs and help drive the business forward.

The campaign brought together North East musician Ed Smith, who has played with Geordie rock star Sam Fender, and spoken poetry performer Lerato Azula, originally from Newcastle.

The RTS Awards have national and regional centres which award the very best in television production from their area and are the gold standard of achievement in the television community. Each year the awards recognise excellence across the entire range of programme making and broadcasting skills.

Gill Hunter, the managing partner at Square One Law, said: "Together with The Traveller and the Bear, we have taken a unique approach to demonstrate how Square One Law works with their clients.

"Our firm has a distinctive culture where our people are actively encouraged to be authentic, creative and fearless.

"Television is about conveying a message and we are exceptionally proud that the RTS has recognised how we have utilised the medium to

bring a new perspective to how lawyers can help their clients."

"The team at The Traveller and the Bear just 'got us' and what we do for our clients. They are a fantastic team and I am delighted that their amazing work has been recognised."

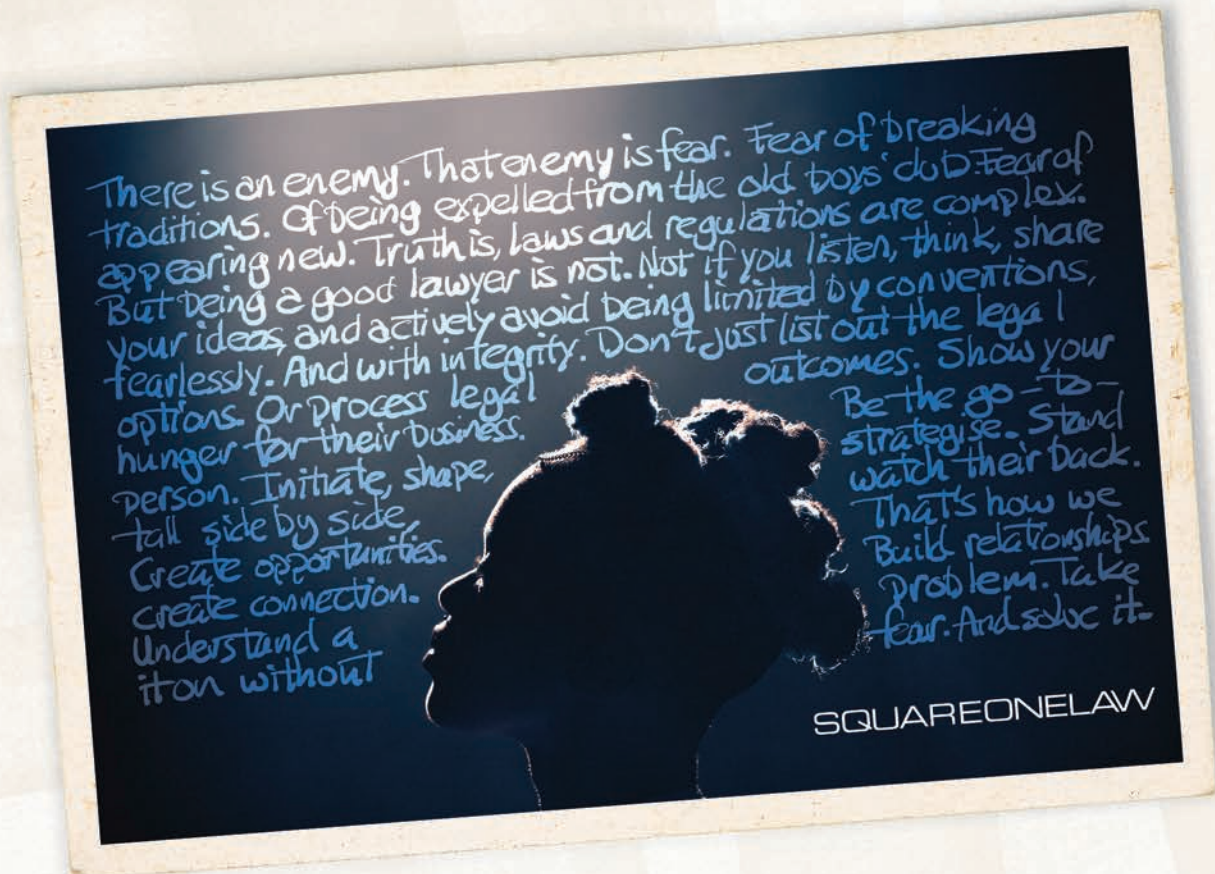
Claire Knight, co-founder and Managing Director of The Traveller and the Bear said: "From the very beginning we could see that Square One Law had a unique approach to law - and their clients - and we wanted to reflect that. The film and campaign convey the fearless approach Square One Law has to solving their clients' issues in a way that is right for the client but also supportive and authentic.

"We knew there was a better approach that would bring emotion and feeling into a hard, serious and very traditional industry. By using a spoken word poet and dancer together with a jazz drummer to tell a story of fearlessness, integrity and the conviction to stand up for what you believe in we were able to achieve just that.

The project was quite something, we thoroughly enjoyed working on it and to win two RTS Awards is just absolutely amazing."

[www.thetravellerandthebear.com](http://www.thetravellerandthebear.com)





Square One Law, Fearlessly Solving campaign.  
Winner of a Royal Television Society Award 2023.  
Not once, but twice.

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## The right place for accessibility

Jackie Latham, founder of Jackdaw Web Design, is an expert in accessibility for websites. And here she airs a recent bug bear from speaking to people about improving their website.

**“Accessibility is something that is applicable to every website. In a world that is moving forward driven by diversity, engagement and inclusion, it is ludicrous to not make your website accessible.**

“However, you would be surprised how many companies I have been speaking to that respond they are not bothered about adding accessibility to their website, as ‘that’s not our target audience’.

“Accessibility isn’t just for a ‘target audience’ though. It is for everyone. It’s not just about alt-text on images, or about screen readers for the poor of sight.

“Applied correctly accessibility can, for example, allow visitors to your site to navigate it using a keyboard, which is very handy if you’ve broken your wrist. Or if you add subtitles to videos it doesn’t just help the hard of hearing, but also anyone trying to watch your video whilst travelling on a train.

“In a nutshell, by making your website accessible, you are committing to best practice and ensuring that all of your visitors, not just people with disabilities, have a decent user experience, allowing everyone to easily access all the content and information – and, more importantly, to click that BUY button!



Jackie Latham

“Older people, those with temporary incapacities, those in rural areas, or those not able to connect with the digital era due to lack of knowledge can be helped by accessibility features. People on the move or travelling, even people multi-tasking such as parents with noisy children, can all benefit too.

“Text to speech features and speech recognition allow people to use websites and control actions with their voice – great for people who have been in an accident or who are multi-tasking.

“The benefits are massive. Its implementation will increase audience reach, improve SEO

ranking you higher in Google, increase site usability, avoid potential complaints and gain a competitive edge over competitors.

“Most importantly, morally and ethically, it is quite simply the right thing to do. It highlights you as a good business, and makes for a better design of website. In fact in some cases, it is becoming a legislative requirement, which I will talk about in my next article on my website.”

**For further information please visit [www.jackdawwebdesign.co.uk/accessible-web-design](http://www.jackdawwebdesign.co.uk/accessible-web-design)**



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# Leading mental health charity renames to reflect integration of care

National mental health organisations, Mental Health Concern and Insight IAPT, are making strides to simplify the delivery of care to the people they support, with the announcement of their new, single brand Everyturn Mental Health.

**Everyturn Mental Health provides a variety of non-profit services, including crisis support; dementia care; supported housing; nursing care; and NHS talking therapies for common issues such as low mood, stress, and anxiety.**

Moving to a single brand will make it easier for people across the country to access the full range of specialist mental health and wellbeing services, which are delivered on behalf of the NHS and local authorities.

This rebrand forms a significant part of Everyturn's ongoing 'Shaping Our Future' strategy, focusing on integrated care and a person-centred approach to meet each person's needs, ensuring no one struggles alone.

Adam Crampsie, CEO of Everyturn Mental Health said: "I am incredibly proud to announce the



*Sarah Dewar, Chief People Officer at Everyturn Mental Health & Adam Crampsie, CEO of Everyturn Mental Health*

launch of our new brand, bringing together the best parts of both of our organisations under one name, helping us to continue the great work that our teams have been carrying out across the country for nearly 40 years.

"Mental health services are crucial, now more than ever, given the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the pressures on our health system, so we're proud to partner with the NHS to bring people the support they need. By becoming a single brand, we're simplifying access to the

support we provide, helping to ensure there is no wrong 'front door' to getting help."

The development of the new brand has been delivered in partnership with the creative agency, Altogether; the marketing agency, Karol Marketing; and the web development agency, Cargo.

**For more information, visit:**  
[www.everyturn.org](http://www.everyturn.org)

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## Dragons' Den star Sara Davies delivers empowering talk to North East students and pitches her own plans for Crafter's Companion



**Dragons' Den star Sara Davies gave an empowering talk to the next generation of business leaders and entrepreneurs from her home region.**

The TV business guru and founder of multi-million pound global enterprise Crafter's Companion told pupils in Newcastle of her plans to be the ultimate 'voice of authority' on crafting.

The County Durham-born Strictly star, who famously set up her craft venture from her university bedroom at just 21 years old, said Crafter's Companion will invest £500,000 in technology to bolster Sara's presence online.

Sara explained: "If you want to learn how to make a Victoria sandwich and search recipes online you choose the Mary Berry one because you trust that if she says it's the best, then it's the best."

"When people want to learn about craft and start searching online, I want to be that voice of authority. I want to be the Mary Berry of the crafting world!"

She shared her vision with a 250-strong audience at Dame Allan's Schools as she gave an inspirational lecture about her own transformative schooldays and her 'drive, determination and passion' to succeed.



## Nurturing future stars of hospitality

**University joins forces with some of the most successful hoteliers in the North East to help students make their way in the hospitality industry.**

Students at the University of Sunderland are being given a unique insight into the hospitality industry as part of a new bespoke mentorship scheme by some of the region's top hoteliers.

The Hospitality Mentor programme – which has launched at the University in partnership with The North East Hotels Association (NEHA) – is designed to connect tourism, hospitality and events students with experienced hoteliers from some of the North East's most prestigious hotels, including the Crowne Plaza Newcastle and Seaham Hall.

The hoteliers, or mentors, will share their expertise and wisdom which they have gained throughout their careers, providing students with an insight into exciting industry opportunities as they transition from education into employment.

Serkan Uzunogullari, Programme Leader for BSc (Hons) International Tourism and Hospitality Management at the University of Sunderland, said: "The Hospitality Mentor programme is a testament to our University's commitment to producing graduates who are equipped with the practical knowledge and experience needed to excel in their careers."

"By collaborating with the North East Hotels Association, we can provide our students with a unique opportunity to network with leaders in the hospitality industry, learn about different career paths, and gain practical skills that they can apply in their future roles. This partnership will undoubtedly play a significant role in helping our students stand out in the competitive job market."



## Award-winning essays land pupils a meeting with the King

**Pupils from a Peterlee secondary school joined His Majesty The King, The Queen Consort and 750 school children and young people from across the UK to celebrate Commonwealth Day at Westminster Abbey.**

St Bede's Catholic School and Byron Sixth Form, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was invited to attend the Royal event, after several pupils won awards in the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition.

Last June, the school entered a significant number of pupils into the Queen's Commonwealth Essay Competition, the oldest international writing competition for schools and youth groups.

There were a fantastic 27 winners altogether from the secondary school, including one gold and several silver and bronze.

"The pupils wrote wonderful essays about inspirational leaders and people in their lives," said Lucy Morris, English teacher at St Bede's.

"This was an incredible achievement which was recognised by an invitation to attend the Commonwealth Day Service.

"We had a fantastic time with some pupils visiting London for the first time. The pupils commented on how surreal it was to see the King, Prince William and Princess of Wales."



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## It's game on for Sunderland's new esports campus



**Plans for a state-of-the-art esports performance and education campus on the banks of the River Wear were outlined at a special event this month (3 March).**

Around 80 business and education leaders attended a Professionals Lunch at City Bistro at Sunderland College – catered for by students – and organised by Sunderland BID.

And guest speaker Chester King, CEO and founder of British Esports - the national body for esports - revealed its plans for the multi- million-pound development adjacent to the city's Stadium of Light.

Esports - electronic sports - refers to organised competitive video gaming, in which teams and individual players pit their skills against one another online and often in front of large live audiences to win trophies and cash prizes.

British Esports plans to establish a National Esports Performance Campus

(NEPC) at the Riverside site, which will become a centre of excellence, with a 17x3M screen, 100+ seats for spectators, HD broadcasting capability, classrooms and performance rooms.

The campus will also incorporate a large garden with exercise spaces for table tennis and basketball and British Esports has also purchased three team houses in Sunniside to house national and pro esports teams while they train and compete in the city.

"This is simply going to be huge for the city," said Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive of Sunderland BID, which holds Professional Lunches twice a year.

"It will bring jobs and visitors to the city and support Sunderland, the North East and the UK to become a globally-recognised esports hub and the event was a fantastic way of enabling all the city's key players to find out more about it."

## School choir blows away guests with performance at wind farm opening

**A South Shields primary school choir sang at the official opening of the operations and maintenance base for Dogger Bank Wind Farm at the Port of Tyne.**

SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, attended the opening on behalf of the borough.

Jenny Parker, deputy headteacher and music lead at the primary school, said: "As a school situated in Tyne Dock, it has been wonderful to be involved in such an exciting event taking place on our doorstep and to raise the profile of Dogger Bank Wind Farm, which will be the world's largest offshore wind farm upon completion.



"To be there at the opening has sparked interest in the children to find out more about renewable energy and the positive impact it has on our world."

The choir comprises 29 pupils from Years 4, 5 and 6. They sang four songs to the guests as they arrived in the warehouse: Something Just Like This by Coldplay and The Chainsmokers,

Rainbow by Kacey Musgraves, Fight Song by Rachel Platten and concluded with Big River by Jimmy Nail.

"The choir sang beautifully, and we received lots of compliments about their performance, particularly their rendition of Big River, which everyone loved," added Mrs Parker.



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# Choosing a School that's right for your child

By Tony Jackson, Headmaster at Barnard Castle School

Choosing a school for your child is one of the most challenging and important decisions you will have to make, and we do not underestimate the magnitude of such a judgement.



**We place enormous emphasis on ensuring each and every pupil feels a sense of belonging at 'Barney'; only then will they come close to maximising their potential.**

It is important your child flourishes whilst at school, which are the most important and formative years of their lives. At Barney, our students exceed their academic potential as a result of inspiring teaching, delivered in an easy, open and respectful environment at the heart of which are the caring relationships that exist between the teachers and students.

The achievements of Barney in recent times are as a direct consequence of the teachers and wider ancillary staff who spend every day inspiring, supporting and guiding our young people. Barney has always possessed a wonderful environment, with happy children and staff at its heart.

Whilst we are extremely proud of what our students achieve academically, we also recognise the vital importance of preparing the next generation for an ever-changing and increasingly competitive and global marketplace.

We expect our pupils to work as hard as they can, and do as well as they can. However, we tell them that academic success will only open a door; it is what they do when they walk through that door that counts.

As such, we pride ourselves on our co-curricular activities because it is in these environments that most life lessons are learned. We want our young people to problem-solve, work in a team, demonstrate leadership and have emotional intelligence.

Beyond the traditional spheres of music, drama and sport, we currently offer more than 100 activities to our students, which includes a bespoke 'Mind, Body and Soul' programme for Year 7 and 8s.

We want Barnardians to be the types of people who light up a room when they enter it. This requires confidence, resilience and compassion, all built up over a period of time, and in a variety of ways, both within and beyond the classroom. No leader can achieve anything major without the influence of the staff who make it happen. This is especially the case in our school.

We tell our parents that our collective role, as parents and teachers, is to arm our children with the tools with which to clear the path ahead of them, not to clear the path for them. This means we have to allow them to fail at times, in a supportive environment. If we do that together, we are doing our best to prepare our young people for the challenges ahead.

Situated on the outskirts of Barnard Castle, we run an extensive transport service from across the North East to Barney. We also provide full or flexible boarding options in our friendly, welcoming boarding houses.

If you are interested in hearing more about what makes a Barney education so special, we are hosting an Open Morning across our entire School on Saturday 13th May 2023. To register your interest, please get in touch with a member of our Admissions Team on 01833 696030 or [admissions@barneyschool.org.uk](mailto:admissions@barneyschool.org.uk)

Alternatively, should you not be able to attend this date, we are delighted to offer private visits for prospective pupils and their families, and our welcoming Admissions Team would be happy to arrange a date and time at your convenience.

We look forward to welcoming you to Barney.

[www.barnardcastleschool.org.uk](http://www.barnardcastleschool.org.uk)







“

*...We want  
Barnardians to  
be the types of  
people who light  
up a room when  
they enter it...*

Tony Jackson



## April Fool!

As a child, I didn't like pranks, so April Fools' Day always left me cold, and I never succumbed to the general silliness that this day entailed. I was always glad that the 'day' only lasted until noon, and that, after this, the perpetrators of pranks were, themselves, the April Fools. Yes, I know that I must have been a barrel of laughs to be around...

**Now as a mature woman, I still hate practical jokes, and I am pleased that I will be on my Easter holidays abroad by the time April 1st comes around. However, from an historical view, it is very interesting to try and find out the origins of this date. As with many rituals and folklore, there does not seem to be one single point of agreement about it, but it is fascinating to see how the custom might have evolved.**

Some historians have linked April Fools' Day to the festival of Hilaria- I thought that was Alec Baldwin's wife- which was celebrated in ancient Rome at the end of March by those who venerated the cult of Cybele. It entailed people dressing up in disguise and mocking fellow citizens and local dignitaries, and this act possibly goes back even further to an Egyptian custom relating to the stories surrounding Isis, Osiris and Seth. Another speculation is that the custom was linked to the vernal equinox in the Northern Hemisphere, when Mother Nature fooled people with changing, unpredictable weather- this makes some sense, given the strange weather patterns of the last few weeks...

According to some British cultural historians, April Fools' Day is associated with the town of Gotham in Nottinghamshire and an event from the 13th century. Legend has it that the

notoriously wicked King John decided to purloin some of the land of Gotham for a hunting lodge. Understandably, this was not a popular plan with the good people of the town, so it was decided that they would concoct a plan to deter the king. Therefore, they decided to 'play the fool' when the king's representatives came to town, to convince them that the town was possessed by madmen. Such pranks included trying to drown fish in the pond, and it was said that their antics were enough for the king's counsellors to decide that the king could not live amongst such lunatics, so they advised him to move elsewhere. Ever since then, according to myth, April Fools' Day has celebrated their trickery and victory over the corrupt monarch.

Yet another popular theory is that the concept of April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France changed from the Julian Calendar to the Gregorian calendar: in the Julian calendar, New Year began around April 1st. Rumour has it

that as news did not spread so quickly in those days, some people were slow to get the news or failed to recognise the change and continued to celebrate New Year during the last week of March to 1st April. These people became the butt of jokes and were called April Fools. Some of the pranks played upon these people were to have paper fish put on their backs and to be called poisson d'avril- April Fish- symbolising a young easily caught fish and thus a gullible person.

Whatever the origins, it highlights a need within human nature to debase others, albeit within a safe space of a prank. Just think, if this trait didn't exist, those of us alive in the 1980s would not have had to endure *Game for a Laugh* on a Saturday night. Now, there's a thought...

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Simone Niblock



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# Celebrating all forms of diversity

by Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, RGS Newcastle

One of the joys being part of the Royal Grammar School Newcastle is how diverse it is as a community. It is so important for our young people to grow up with the experience of living and studying alongside people who are not alike and learning how to work with others.

**This means that they can understand how to be allies and to support peers because everyone recognises the value that difference can bring. Every year, we welcome a large number of new students, and staff too, each of them bringing with them a vast range of prior experiences and backgrounds. New members of our community are clear about our expectations with regards to supporting diversity in all its forms, and provide appropriate challenge to maintain this culture where everyone is celebrated.**

To that end, this academic year we have substantially expanded the role of Head of Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education in our pastoral team and committed significantly more time to educating and supporting pupils in matters relating to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI). In parallel, our new Deputy Head, Academic, has been working with our teachers to review how EDI is represented within the curriculum. These discussions help us both with the everyday good practice of embracing diversity, whilst also introducing a range of initiatives that move the dialogue forward in a positive way.

As someone who went to a single sex school myself, I particularly value the fact that the school is now co-educational and on International Women's Day we were fortunate to have Claris D'Cruz address the whole school, sharing her experience as a charity lawyer advising the RGS on its move to co-education over 20 years ago. Claris subsequently served as a governor and has also been an RGS parent of children coming through the school, which meant that she was able to reflect from a position of real understanding both on the challenges of the transition and on the benefits that it has brought. Not only has the school grown following the introduction of girls leading to economies of

scale but, far more importantly, girls have also substantially changed the culture of the school for the good.

Another area of diversity that we have consciously been evolving has been our approach to neurodiversity. Indeed, I know from the experience of my own family, there are many high performing individuals with dyslexia and other educational needs, who thrive within the inclusive learning environment that we offer at RGS. For that reason, we have recently restructured our special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) provision to ensure the best possible academic support for all students. By giving our SEND team a prominent, purposely redesigned, location in the heart of the school we have sent a very clear message about the importance of promoting strengths and focusing on what each individual can do, rather than cannot do. These collective and conscious efforts at RGS have re-energised our staff with training initiatives behind the scenes and has also helped us to be much more communal about celebrating difference, for example during the recent neurodiversity week.







Like many organisations, we are not complacent and strive to continue to do better. In particular, our staff body at all levels of the organisation still needs to be more ethnically diverse if it is to provide appropriately diverse role models for our pupils. This is something we are working on and it has been encouraging to see more diverse candidates both applying for and appearing in short lists for jobs. However, the teaching profession as a whole has a lot to do to attract high quality candidates, in the meantime, recent anti-racist awareness training for all staff has been aimed at ensuring that we can all act as allies.

In all of the above we are aiming to ensure that all pupils, from whatever background, have the best possible experience of school and are well equipped to make a positive contribution to society.

[www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk)







# Human connection in a digital world

With a remote and hybrid workforce, North East based educational charity NCFE is embracing different ways to build supportive and collaborative relationships amongst its colleagues, with a particular focus on human connection. We went along to one of its new Connection Days to discover more about this interesting initiative.

**The first NCFE Connection Day took place in January and these face-to-face gatherings are now being piloted monthly at its head office in Newcastle.**

This initiative marks an opportunity for colleagues to get together to collaborate, socialise and learn more about the different functions and projects across the business. What's more, Teams meetings are limited throughout the day to ensure people can spend quality time with each other.

"We're listening to our people and enabling a more connected and rejuvenated workforce," explains Helen Ketteringham, Executive Director of People at NCFE.

"We are learning how to strike the right balance.

Some colleagues enjoy being home-based and really benefit from it, while others prefer to work together in-person. We are taking a person-centric, agile approach by offering different opportunities and empowering leaders and their teams to experiment with what works best for them.

"The atmosphere on each Connection Day has been fantastic and they have been really well attended so far. Where there's a desire from our people to come together, it's our job as an employer to help facilitate that and measure the value. So far, the value is evident; we are re-energising colleagues, broadening learning opportunities and co-creating some new and innovative solutions for the future."

NCFE's Connection Days have been filled with talks, interactive sessions, and mini events to help people make the most of their time in the office. These have included brunch to help fuel the day and encourage networking, opportunities to meet with the Executive team over a coffee and cake, and drop-in sessions with the organisation's mental health first aiders, coaches, and the careers and talent teams.

Colleagues have the choice over how they schedule their day and everyone is encouraged to organise and host events, with recent examples being a masterclass on a specific topic, a support group, a business area overview, and a project feedback session.

Across the first three Connection Days in 2023, more than 700 colleagues have attended and enjoyed the opportunity to get to know their teams and others across the organisation. Dawn Newman, CACHE Alumni Communities Manager at NCFE, loves the idea of prioritising people.

She said: "I like the designated day for feeling like the work is actually doing the connection bit. It feels genuinely useful in terms of finding information out that I didn't know and making useful links with other teams and projects. I really enjoy them."

The Connection Days were created as a result of NCFE listening to feedback from its colleagues

across a variety of channels – a process that continues regularly to help inform new policy ideas and initiatives.

Helen Ketteringham added: "Over the past year, we've invited colleagues to complete regular engagement surveys to share their feedback and contribute ideas. We've used these insights to inform our priorities and have implemented a number of new people initiatives already as a result.

"Colleague responses have been invaluable and have helped us gain insight into their experience working at NCFE, and how we could make it even better. The Connection Days are a good example of this in action and we're keen to build further momentum.

"In addition to this, we've recently introduced a Long Service initiative and the Executive team has been having one-to-one conversations with all colleagues who have been with us longer than five years – the ideas sparked from these conversations have been phenomenal.

"It's so important to tap into the unique experience of this cohort of colleagues to find out what has made them stay at NCFE and how we can ensure they'll be part of our future! It's heart-warming to see how connected our people feel to our charitable purpose and each other."

The Connection Days look set to continue and there are already plans afoot to bring in new ideas, including the possibility of 'remote connection' sessions and looking at hosting Connection Days in different regions, to be as inclusive as possible to the organisation's diverse colleague base.

By being receptive to new ways of working, actively listening to colleagues and responding to feedback, NCFE is a good example of a leading North East employer adapting to the evolving needs of the workforce, shaping change, and exploring innovative solutions for the future.

[ncfe.org.uk](https://ncfe.org.uk)



# 'The Lectures' from Dame Allan's Schools, inspires the next generation

An inspiring series of talks delivered by some of the most engaging and motivational speakers on the lecture circuit has been held at Dame Allan's Schools this academic year, with such success it has been renewed for another year.

'The Lectures', welcomed keynote speakers, including Dragons' Den star Sara Davies MBE, economist Roger Martin-Fagg, physicist Ruth Gregory, and award-winning international speaker, Marcus Child, to speak to pupils, parents and alumni.

The range of individuals who have spoken as part of this series have introduced pupils to new ways of thinking, potential new career paths and broadened their understanding of certain concepts.

The Lectures programme is backed by former pupil Mark Dolder, CEO of Northumberland-based Bazaar Group, who feels inspired to 'give back' following his own success in business.

He said: "If anyone in the audience thinks bigger, aims higher, or exceeds the expectations they have set for themselves as a result of hearing our speakers, then the project will have been a success!"

The series opened with Marcus Child whose talk focused on how our choices and behaviours directly influence our growth, our experiences and our outcomes. He spoke to pupils about



instilling self-belief, maintaining a positive outlook and setting goals, encouraging pupils to 'dream big.'

This was followed by Roger Martin-Fagg, leading economist and author who spoke about the impact younger generations will have on the UK's economy.

"If we are going to innovate and get productivity up, we need to tap into where the real talent is... and I'm looking at it," he told the audience. "It's your future; you are the future."

In February entrepreneur Sara Davies MBE and founder of global, multi-million pound business Crafter's Companion, visited the school to speak to a 250-strong audience. Sara reflected on her transformative school days during an empowering

talk to Dame Allan's Schools pupils and gave them some tips for success:

- **The harder you work, the luckier you are**
- **Be the best you can be, and you'll find that fulfilling**
- **You are a product of the people you surround yourself with**

The final talk of the series was from physicist Ruth Gregory. Currently Professor of Theoretical Physics at King's College, London, she teaches advanced physics to students as well as conducts research into how the universe came into being. She spoke to the audience about her career, why these deep questions are what motivates her, and what makes her job endlessly fascinating.

Principal Will Scott said: "We are exceptionally fortunate, with Mark's generous support, to host such an exciting programme of high calibre speakers, and feel proud to be creating a space for them to share their expertise with and inspire our pupils. It will bring immeasurable benefits to those who attend and encourage pupils to think about just what they can achieve."

To find out more visit: [dameallans.co.uk](http://dameallans.co.uk)



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SUNDAY TIMES PARENT POWER 2023





# Northumbria University apprenticeships enabling career progression and furthering growth in the region



Katie Withers

**Higher and Degree Apprenticeships can offer the best of both worlds – combining university study and practical workplace learning to attain a full undergraduate or postgraduate degree qualification.**

**For businesses, this route to training and developing staff is both tailored and affordable as programmes are shaped in consultation with employers and costs are funded, or heavily subsidised, by Government.**

For the apprentice, it provides practical and relevant skills and knowledge that can be applied immediately in the workplace and an opportunity to attain a degree qualification, at no cost; apprentices are paid a salary whilst completing the programme.

Times Higher Education (THE) University of the Year, Northumbria University, is a leading Higher and Degree Apprenticeship training provider and was one of the first UK universities to offer the programmes.

We spoke to Katie Withers, Road and Street Works Professional Assistant at Durham County Council, who is currently completing a Civil Engineering Degree Apprenticeship with

Northumbria University, to find out more about her experience.

## **Why did you decide to undertake a degree apprenticeship?**

It is a bit of an unusual story! I went to university and trained as a dentist but unfortunately, after qualifying and practising for three years, I realised I didn't enjoy it. It was a turning point in my life where I decided to walk away from dentistry and find a new career path.

I considered various options, but I had financial commitments so going back to studying full time wasn't an option. I came across degree apprenticeships which allowed me to work and study at the same time, which seemed ideal.

It was important to me to qualify in a new profession that had a clear career path. In this respect, I found civil engineering really appealing. As a civil engineer you are working across the entire built environment so there are lots of options and routes to choose from. I am now in my second year and thoroughly enjoying it – it's the best decision I ever made.

## **What have you gained from the programme so far?**

I would say that the programme has shaped me into a very well-rounded person. I have picked up lots of new skills, but I have also been able to apply my transferable skills from dentistry, which is the best of both worlds.

With this degree apprenticeship, I am learning something that I can see a future in; I can picture the path through my degree, followed by the

professional route to move through my career.

The modules and lecturers are great, as well as the evaluation method that combines written assignments and exams. The programme offers an excellent mix of practical work and theory, which is brilliant.

## **What have been your highlights?**

I would say winning the Apprentice of the Year award at the Durham County Council Inspiring People Awards and being shortlisted for Apprentice of the Year at the national Highways Awards have definitely been key highlights.

I put myself forward for the latter and it was a lovely surprise finding out that I had been shortlisted. I saw the awards advertised in Highways magazine and they were looking for apprentices who had perhaps taken a sidestep from a different career, just like I did. It felt nice to be recognised even though I didn't win.

I am thrilled to have achieved my first step on the professional engineering ladder with EngTech registration and recently, I have registered as a STEM ambassador too.

## **What advice would you give to someone considering a degree apprenticeship?**

I would highly recommend it, especially to someone who is just leaving school, as the degree combines an excellent academic programme with real professional training.

It's also an amazing alternative for people like me, who want to retrain or change careers, but can't take the financial hit of returning to full time education.

**For more information about Higher and Degree Apprenticeships at Northumbria University, visit:**  
[www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/engage-with-us/degree-apprenticeships](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/business-services/engage-with-us/degree-apprenticeships)



# My weekend

## Chris Johnson

*Operations and Finance Manager at Northumberland charity Leading Link*

The charity works with schools and the community and has helped thousands of young people by supporting them to identify and achieve their aspirations. Here he tells us about his weekends.

### Do you ever have to work weekends?

Sometimes! It's probably more than I would like to think it is. Like a lot of other charities, much of our work can be project focussed. Some of this can include a weekend, it's just the nature of the job really – that's what makes it so much fun!

### Are most weekends the same?

Definitely not! I am always busy doing something. If there is nothing happening at work then I will be out and about seeing friends, drinking coffee and generally relaxing. Occasionally I'll be talked into helping a friend with his business. I say occasionally – he seems to know better than me on when I am available to help him out.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

Yes. I have to make a conscious decision to do it – although I am very easily talked into doing something else that keeps my mind occupied!

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

I like to go swimming, running and I have a gym membership which I make the most of – is a sentence I have never been able to say with a straight face!

### Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I don't understand those words to be honest – they don't usually go together in my life. I prefer to be active and busy. The people in my life have no filters when it comes to messaging me or ringing me at any time of the day or night – so whatever was planned, will rarely happen!



Chris Johnson

### Prefer big night out or a night in the house?

A big night in – every time. My days of being out clubbing are a distant memory now. I've been tempted a few times to head out and paint the town red – but I always find an excuse not to do it.

### Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I've never really been into sports of any kind. I've never found the "hook". I've been to a couple of matches at St James' Park lately – a great atmosphere and good craic – but it's more of a ticky box exercise rather than a need to engage.

### Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

We are really lucky in this area that we have such a wide range of amazing places to eat – with some fabulous venues offering such a range of cuisine. If it's a coffee and a light lunch, I would pop over to Nurtch in Ashington – it's a newly opened coffee house that's just awesome!

If it was evening food, I fancied then an Indian it would have to be – Shampin in Whitley

Bay, or more local to me would be La Torre in Bedlington. Saying that my mate Jo is a great cook – so if ever I can't decide where to eat, I just rock up at his house!

### How important is the weekend to you?

That's a really difficult question – I lead a really busy life, which I enjoy, but I don't think a weekend feels any different to me. Although saying that a Saturday night with Strictly and a Sunday night with Vera is always a highlight! I appreciate how sad that sounds now I have written it!

### Of a weekend, you'll usually find me most happy..?

In good company, with a decent coffee, watching the world go by – but not for too long or I'll get bored!

**To find out more about the work of Leading Link checkout [www.leadinglink.co.uk](http://www.leadinglink.co.uk)**





## A beast of a number of books written by Consett author

**Simon Robson from Consett who writes under the pen name S Rob created his company Werevamp Ltd as a means to promote his research and books about the paranormal.**

He is a world authority on magick and the paranormal and is known internationally for his work researching occultism which he practices helping people with difficulties in their lives.

"People assume that occultism is all about going down the path of evil, but I've found that when used correctly, it can help people to improve their situation in life. It's really about self-improvement, protecting yourself from negative influences and internally making yourself feel better," said Simon. "The magick I write about does transform people and helps the reader target things that they might need to change themselves in a positive way.

"Since I started writing, my concentration levels are better and I'm more confident too. Sometimes when you have experienced hard times, there doesn't seem to be a conventional option, but I want to give people the choice to look at things differently and use the ancient toolset I provide to help them."

He is now celebrating writing his 666th book - a landmark number in the paranormal world. The book is called Summoning Solar Deities and it is about sun gods and sun goddesses. It looks at how magick works in tandem with the sun all over the world from Australia and New Zealand to Africa and Egypt.

"I know occultism isn't everyone's first choice in reading, but the fact is that I have sold many, many thousands of books and I've also just finished book 666 which indicates that there is a growing audience for my work and if it helps just one person, then my job as a specialist author has been worthwhile."



## Liberty X and 911 to Play Blyth Live Festival

**This summer, Blyth beach will play host to the ever-popular Blyth Live Festival and once again some of the nation's top bands will perform.**

Funded by Blyth Town Council, The Blyth Live Festival on June 17th is headlined by Liberty X and 911.

After appearing on TV show "Popstars," Liberty X had their first single 'Thinking It Over' in the Top Five in the charts and set the pace for a hugely successful debut album selling over a million copies worldwide.

911 are an English pop band who released their debut single, Night To Remember in 1996.

They then went on to record Love Sensation and have had nine successive UK Top 10 hits, sold 10 million singles and six million albums around the world.

Mayor of Blyth Town Council Cllr Warren Taylor said: "This is a great opportunity for families in Blyth to come down to the festival and have a really good day out. We are once again expecting around 15,000 people coming to watch the event and it will be a great advert for Blyth as we will be welcoming both residents and visitors to the town which will be good for local shops, hotels, and our hospitality businesses."

As well as the musical attractions, the festival will have street theatre, superb food and a family activity area which will keep all ages entertained. More acts will be announced in due course.

## Two's Company for Fiddler on the Roof

**The Victorian, world-renowned Tyne Theatre and Opera House will be offering a relaxed performance of the iconic 1964 musical Fiddler on the Roof performed by award winning WEOS Musical Productions in April this year, offering individuals requiring a carer one free ticket for the accompanying adult**

The relaxed performance will feature a reduced intensity of sound, lighting, and special effects used by the production. The scheduled matinee performance of Fiddler on the Roof on Thursday 13h April at 2pm is ideal for people with learning disabilities, autism, or anyone who would benefit from being in a more relaxed environment while they enjoy the show. Movement will not be restricted, and the

audience can exit and re-enter the auditorium and make use of a quiet space if required.

In addition to the performance changes highlighted above, there will be Makaton signing throughout the performance by Alisar Taylor, founder of the charity True Colours. The storyline will also be introduced by a member of the cast prior to the show commencing and tickets will be on sale for this performance for a saving of £9.

The Tyne Theatre and Opera House's Theatre Director Jo Johnson said: "We are delighted that WEOS Musical Productions will be offering a relaxed performance for Fiddler on the Roof. We endeavour to host signed, relaxed performances where possible, to ensure that shows held at our Theatre are available for everyone to come and enjoy. It's great that we can make this increasingly commonplace at our venue."



Tickets can be bought direct from the box office at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House's website: [www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk/events/weos-musical-productions-present-fiddler-on-the-roof/](http://www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk/events/weos-musical-productions-present-fiddler-on-the-roof/) (tickets for the Matinee cost £15) or by contacting [westendoperaticsociety@gmail.com](mailto:westendoperaticsociety@gmail.com)

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Bethany Ainsley



## How to avoid burnout as an entrepreneur *By Bethany Ainsley*

Life as an entrepreneur can feel like 100-miles an hour. There is always something else to be done to keep the business thriving, and the constant pressure to perform well can become overwhelming and stressful. Many business owners avoid taking time away from work to recharge in fear that their business will suffer in their absence.

**I'm a corporate wellbeing specialist, coach and entrepreneur, and throughout my career I have seen the effects of stress on people of all backgrounds and sectors, but most tangibly in entrepreneurs. For more than fifteen years my team and I have committed to providing services that have helped thousands of people improve their health and wellbeing and escape the creep of stress and burnout, and we have won several awards for it. Currently I am CEO of OptiMe, a software solution to support businesses with employee mental health and wellbeing.**

If you can relate to the feeling of stress drawing you to overcommit to work, it's important to remember that fatigue can lead to poor decision making, low mood, irritability and illness, which

can ultimately have a negative effect on both work and home life.

The way that stress can creep up on you is incredibly dangerous. It can be all too easy to get used to being stressed as it starts to become familiar and even normal. The worrying thing is that you might not even notice how much it's affecting you and the heavy toll it's taking. That's why it's important to take stock and recognise any warning signs and symptoms of stress overload.

The signs and symptoms of stress can present themselves physically, mentally, emotionally and in how we behave. Begin by taking notice of what your signs and symptoms are. When you're feeling stressed it's important to understand what the route cause could be.

A heavy workload, long hours, poor work-life balance, feeling a lack of control or dealing with a situation that's emotionally draining are a few examples. The next stage is identifying what these are and how these can be addressed.

My new book, *Don't Burn Out, Stand Out*, explores the PROSPER model, the seven key components needed for balancing health, wellbeing, and work. Incorporating reflective practices and referencing a variety of wellbeing theories and techniques, the book will guide you towards achieving enhanced wellbeing for greater productivity and overall happiness, steering you away from potential burnout. If you'd like to achieve your greatest ambition without the sacrifice of your health, wellbeing or relationships then this book is for you.

By the end of the book, you will feel emboldened and empowered to structure your working day and week in the most efficient way, enabling you to reap the rewards for your business, but also for your health, wellbeing and relationships – no longer will 'burnout' be a barrier to your success!

***Don't Burn Out, Stand Out* is available on Amazon and in all good bookstores.**



A portrait of Eric Bibb, a man with a grey beard and a wide-brimmed hat, wearing a light-colored blazer over a button-down shirt. He is holding a dark acoustic guitar. The background is dark.

# Eric Bibb Ridin' Tour

**Playhouse Whitley Bay • Monday 22nd May 2023/7.30pm**

**Two-time Grammy Award nominee Eric Bibb will come ridon' on to UK shores in May 2023, the world-renowned Blues Troubadour and his band will perform the classics he is known forthcoming album, Ridin', which is due for release in Spring 2023.**

Ridin' follows on from the multiple award-winning, critically acclaimed album Dear America; a wonderful continuation of the vision that informs Eric Bibb's artistry as a modern-day bluesman. Grounded in blues and folk tradition with contemporary sensibilities, Bibb's music continues to reflect his thoughts on current world events and his own lived experiences, whilst remaining entertaining, uplifting, inspirational and relevant.

As Blues Brother actor Dan Aykroyd famously declared to Eric, "You are what the blues in the new century should be about".

*2023's UK Ridin' tour will include performances with a full live band nationwide. An Eric Bibb show always promises a remarkable experience – not one to be missed!*

**[www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk](http://www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk)**







## The Artist's year

By Mary Ann Rogers

One of the early signs of spring here at Leam Cottage is the appearance of snowdrops and aconites under trees, on the banks and pathways also clumps on the lawn under the washing line to dodge around.

**Pure white and perfectly formed. None of the fancy frilly varieties here, just simple three petals with a single petticoat, marked with fresh green crescents.**

The otter obsession continues daily. Now we have a trail camera, we have been leaving it in suitable spots by the river every evening, but although the otter sightings continue, we have yet to capture any action on the camera. The only things we have on film are one rook and a fleeting night-time view of a fox.

The hills and fields are currently full of plump pregnant ewes, who are fed daily to ensure they are fit and healthy enough to bring forth and feed healthy lambs very soon. The markings on the rump of the sheep in the closest field indicate that they are expecting twins. For the non-initiated, all the ewes are scanned in November so that the twins are put on the best grazing and fed extra.







Taking advantage of this relatively quiet time, the studio and gallery have been completely repainted, for the first time since it was built in 2006/7. I had misjudged how much work would be involved, and it's been a bit like moving house, then back into the same one.

Pop in and browse the new paintings while taking in the distant aroma of fresh paint!

**Gallery open... Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri 10am-4pm also Sun 2-5pm**  
**Mary Ann Rogers Gallery, West Woodburn, Hexham NE48 2SE**  
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## Places to go... Arbroath

First up is news that the £2 single maximum bus fare referred to last month has been extended to the end of June. Great news for bus passengers, and as it helps reduce congestion and carbon emissions, it meets many policy objectives whilst reducing costs for cash-strapped households.

My journey this month involved an early 0845 Sunday train from Newcastle, but no buses to get there. The car parking was rather expensive at £14. I was making a day trip to Arbroath, the largest town between Dundee and Aberdeen on Scotland's North Sea Coast. It has a population of 24,000. Formerly known as Aberbrothock, Arbroath is best known for the "Smokie", made in the town since the award of Protected Geographical Indication in 2004, which limits their production to within 8 km (5.0 mi) of Arbroath Town House. Smokies are made from haddock by traditional methods. However, my wife cannot abide the smell so I did not purchase any, nor could I on a Sunday under local trading laws.

On arrival at 1230, I headed first for the Abbey, founded in 1178 by King William the Lion for monks of the Tironensian order. It was consecrated in 1197 with an unusual dedication to Saint Thomas Becket, the English martyr, and completed in 1233. On 6 April 1320 the Scottish Parliament met at Arbroath Abbey and addressed to the Pope the Declaration of Arbroath. This detailed the services which their "lord and sovereign" Robert the Bruce had rendered to Scotland and eloquently affirmed Scots independence. It was therefore the sensible place for the Stone of Destiny, stolen by four students from Westminster Abbey at Christmas 1950, to return it to public view. It is now held at Edinburgh Castle, but is expected to travel temporarily to Westminster Abbey for the Coronation of Charles III on 6th May. Ian Hamilton, the last of the students to die in October 2022, was responsible for the resurgence of Scottish nationalism, and I enjoyed reading his book on the return journey south.

Unfortunately I had arrived at the Abbey during their lunch break, and had to repair to The Pageant for an enjoyable scampi and chips, one of the few pubs open in the High Street. On return I enjoyed the video in the two floor visitor centre, run by Historic Scotland. It was around 1430 when I left the Abbey, which did not give me much time before my return train at 1758 to sample the town's other attractions. I need not have worried, as my next port of call was closed on Sundays. The signal station is Arbroath's only museum, open Thursday to Saturdays (surely the best days to visit the

town) from 1000-1600, admission free. It was the shore station for the Bell Rock lighthouse and achieves great reviews. It was completed in 1813 and has been a museum since 1974.

Along the coastal strip were Pleasureland and amusement and parks, but the delightful miniature railway was being dismantled as the owning Kerr family have expanded their interests in Cleethorpes and Scarborough. I walked along the coast until spotting a bridge over the main line railway beyond Asda and headed inland beyond the retail park to Hospitalfields for a coffee in the café just before they closed. The arts centre had been open earlier in a gorgeous Scottish baronial mansion and I took the express bus back into Arbroath for only £1.60. Clearly this excursion would have worked better on Thursday, Friday or Saturday to give more time in this historic Scottish town with no need for a car park in Newcastle.

Alex@nationalrail.com

For a copy of the UK rail map, extract below, visit [www.railmap.org.uk](http://www.railmap.org.uk)

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# Exploring Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky

By Stuart Forster

Cincinnati, on the Ohio River's northern bank, is ideally placed as a gateway to exploring northern Kentucky. And after discovering the joy of sipping bourbon and mixing cocktails with America's native spirit during the lockdown, I'm looking forward to visiting a handful of Kentucky's distilleries.



**But first I plan on checking out the highlights in and around this largely overlooked US destination.**

Home to approximately 310,000 urban residents, Cincinnati's population size is similar to Newcastle's. But rather than just one neighbour, the American city has two on the far side of the waterway it overlooks. The Ohio River marks the Ohio-Kentucky state border and, historically, that also demarcated the boundary between the USA's slave-owning southern states and slave-free northern states.

The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center introduces the history of slavery plus the secret network of escape routes and safehouses, known as the Underground Railroad, that helped people to flee enslavement before America's Civil War. From the building's second floor, I gaze across the river towards Covington.

Today the cities are connected by the John A. Roebling Suspension Bridge, which was the longest structure of its type in the world when it opened in 1866. Anyone who has visited New York City may think the landmark looks familiar. Roebling expanded on his design to draw up the blueprints for the Brooklyn Bridge. It also features in the 1988 film *Rain Man*, starring Tom Cruise and Dustin Hoffman. Rather than zipping across the bridge in an open-topped car, I stroll over while admiring murals depicting facets of the region's history on Covington's riverfront floodwall.

Covington and Newport, also on the southern bank of the Ohio River, are separated by the narrow Licking River – named after the salt licks which attracted bison before the vast herds that once roamed North America were hunted to the point of extinction. Outside Gangsters Dueling Piano Bar I meet with Martin, from American Legacy Tours, to participate in a Newport Gangster Tour. "This was Vegas before Vegas," he explains at the outset of a 90-minute walking tour of a city once famed for its casinos and connections with infamous Prohibition-era mobsters including Dutch Schultz.

Near the waterfront, Martin points out a grand house once owned by brigadier general John T. Thompson, the man who designed the submachine gun favoured by many hitmen in the 1920s and 1930s. The weapon was better known as the Tommy Gun. I learn that there were many mob kills in Newport over the half-century during which the Kentucky city was a popular hub for gambling and other forms of adult entertainment.

Before returning to Cincinnati, I join a tour of the Newport-based New Riff Distilling, which opened in 2014. Grover guides a group of us through the premises, explaining that bourbon can be made anywhere in the USA, not just Kentucky, so long as corn accounts for at least 51 per cent of the ingredients which go into the mash. It must enter a new, charred barrel at between 80 and 125 proof for maturation and nothing can be added other than water, should the spirit need to be diluted. He shares tots of rye whiskeys and bourbons during the tasting at the tour's end.

## Travel information

*British Airways ([britishairways.com](http://britishairways.com)) begins operating direct flights between London Heathrow and Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport on 5 June 2023.*

*United Airways ([united.com](http://united.com)) flies between Heathrow and Cincinnati via hubs such as Newark Liberty and Washington Dulles International Airports. United Club lounges offer space to work and relax between flights.*

*The [visitcincy.com](http://visitcincy.com) and [meetnky.com](http://meetnky.com) websites provide information about attractions in Cincinnati and neighbouring northern Kentucky.*

*The 21C Museum Hotel Cincinnati ([21cmuseumhotels.com](http://21cmuseumhotels.com); 609 Walnut Street; Tel: +1-513-578-6600) offers sizable, stylish bedrooms in a downtown property whose lower two levels function as an art gallery.*

*The Hilton Netherland Plaza Cincinnati ([hilton.com](http://hilton.com); 35 West Fifth Street; Tel: +1-513-421-9100) is a grand, Art Deco hotel with 561 rooms in the heart of the city.*





Cincinnati's cultured reputation resulted in it becoming known as 'the Queen City' as settlers poured westward in the early 19th century. Germans later settled the area that became known as the Over-the-Rhine district. The resurgent neighbourhood is the site of the popular Findlay Market. It's there – at Eckerlin Meats, a business that opened in 1855 – that I sample goetta, a minced pork and oat-based delicacy that reminds me of haggis.

I discover that Cincinnati became a hub for the pork business and consequently won another, less flattering nickname – Porkopolis. The animals were transported in barges along the river. Seen on vessels shrouded in the morning mist, it's said the live cargo would look like it was flying.

This explains imagery depicting flying pigs around the city, including at a concession stand at Great American Ball Park, the home of the Cincinnati Reds. To find out more about America's oldest baseball club I tour the Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame and Museum and learn that a Sheffield-born man, Harry Wright, played a key role in establishing professional baseball.

I mull on that over a pint at the nearby Moerlein Brewery and consider where to head next. A tour of the Cincinnati Bengals' Paycor Stadium or a trip to the American Sign Museum?







## Spring menu launch

**Jesmond Dene House is pleased to announce the launch of its new spring menu, as well as upgraded amenities for children staying at the hotel.**

Jesmond Dene's chefs have created a fresh spring menu featuring the finest local produce and seasonal ingredients.

Highlights include Whitby Crab, Watermelon and Isle of Wight Cherry Tomatoes, Lamb Rump, Dauphinoise Potato, Lettuce, Garden Peas & Bacon Vanilla Crème Brûlée with Shortbread.

Jesmond Dene House has also enhanced its family-friendly amenities, including child-size robes and toiletries, books and activities, milk and cookies at turndown and sweet treats on arrival. The hotel's team will also provide recommendations for local family activities.

"We are committed to making Jesmond Dene House a wonderful place for families to stay," said General Manager Joanne Thornton.

"With our spacious family rooms and suites, beautiful gardens, Jesmond Dene on our doorstep with Pets Corner and the new children's amenities, we aim to create lifelong memories for our youngest guests and their parents."

Jesmond Dene House is located in Newcastle upon Tyne and set within nine acres of woodland gardens. The hotel offers 40 bedrooms, an award-winning restaurant and extensive banqueting and conference facilities.



## Restaurant Week serves up success for Sunderland

**Sunderland's food scene served up a large portion of success – with a record breaking Restaurant Week for the city.**

More than 50 restaurants, bars and cafes took part in the nine day event which took place from 4 to 12 March and was organised by Sunderland BID and supported by Sunderland City Council.

Sunderland Restaurant Week, which is sponsored by Bradley Hall and offers menus priced at £10, £15 and £20, is held twice yearly and has become a firm fixture on the city's calendar.

Among those taking part for the first time this year were Good Apple Café and Roma Italian, along with recently opened Buddha Beat, whose owner Andy Drape said: "What a great week to help us show off our tapas at a great price. This has inspired us to continue a similar deal for pre theatre, match days and early evenings mid-week."

"We like to give back to the local community and show support and this means everything to us. We hope that Buddha Beat will help to inspire the new wave of food that is starting to appear in Sunderland city centre."

Spent Grain, at John Street, also took part and owner Nathan Outhwaite was delighted with the response.

"Restaurant week has been great not just for us but for the whole Sunderland food scene," he said. "It's wonderful for people to get out and try new places for a great price."

Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive of Sunderland BID, said she was delighted that "once again Sunderland has proved itself to be a big hit with food lovers."

"The standard and variety of our food outlets are really making the city a must visit destination," she said, "and I'm very grateful to all the businesses and customers who made this event such a stand out success."

## The Inn Collection Group re-openings set to create 1,000 jobs


**A leading UK hospitality operator is embarking on an expansion of its head count in 2023, as the re-opening of 12 prime sites triggers a recruitment drive that will create almost 1,000 additional jobs across its estate.**

The Inn Collection Group has seen rapid growth since 2019 and is set to see its trading premises grow by almost a third this calendar year, as extensive refurbishments complete across venues in Cumbria, Lancashire, North Wales, North Yorkshire and Tyne & Wear.

Already employing 900 people across its network of pub with rooms properties, filling the resultant positions created by these re-openings will see the company that was named best pub employer at the 2019 and 2020 Publican Awards grow its headcount to almost 2,000 people.



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## A Touch of Class

*By Michael Grahamslaw*

One of the true joys of eating out is visiting restaurants which consistently update their offering.

One such eatery is Dobson & Parnell, which since opening in 2016, continues to push the boundaries of Modern British and European cuisine on Newcastle's Quayside. With an AA Rosette and a host of awards, the restaurant is also featured in the Michelin, Good Food and Harden's Guides - after a visit you'll find out why.





The restaurant derives its name from pre-eminent Victorian architects, John Dobson, and William Parnell, who originally designed the building back in 1863. Set on the City's Queen Street, you might say it's the perfect destination for a restaurant.

I had the pleasure of visiting one Friday night with my son Jack and found a seasonal spring menu in full swing.

Inside, the dining area simply oozes class and is a neat fusion of old and new. The building retains some of its Victorian period features with pendant lighting, exposed original brickwork and cast-iron columns combining with sage green leather and dark timber flooring. Perhaps, most striking of all is some dazzling white tiling which evokes the grandeur of yesteryear.

We were greeted warmly on arrival and shown to our snug corner booth. The restaurant's early evening menu, available 5.30pm - 7pm Wednesday - Friday and 5pm-6pm Saturday, offers some good value with two courses available for £24 and three for £29 or you can opt for their five or seven course taster menus which are very reasonably priced.

Cocktails are an art at Dobson & Parnell but instead we opted for a very agreeable bottle of Chenin Blanc as recommended by our server.

To kick off, Jack chose the seasonal skrei cod, dill cured and artfully presented with tasty honey mustard and wispy rye crispbread. I opted for the equally inviting cauliflower soup with toasted hazelnuts and a signature of orange oil.



“

*...the dining area simply oozes class and is a neat fusion of old and new...*

Following on Chef Patron, Troy Terrington, appeared to be at the peak of his powers in serving up the slow cooked ox cheek, well butchered and paired with roast artichoke, bone marrow and black truffle. A supplementary glass of good house red set this off perfectly.

Yours truly meanwhile picked out an absolute blinder in the form of line-caught hake on a bed of kale in a chilli grab sauce. A real feast for the eyes and the tastebuds.

Throughout our meal, the service was highly attentive while the dining area packed a buoyant atmosphere, particularly as the evening wore on.

All that was left to round off in style with a sharing slab of cheesecake, singing with lemon and ginger goodness.

With a rotating seasonal set menu month-on-month and an excellent choice of Tasting Menus, Dobson & Parnell remains a class act and a real must-visit for foodies.

**For more information, visit [www.dobsonandparnell.co.uk](http://www.dobsonandparnell.co.uk)**







## Eye-wateringly delicious!

By Jackie Marston

If you haven't visited Six at Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art yet, then you're literally missing a trick.

**It's pre-pandemic since we last went, and it was always a favourite place of ours, but post-pandemic, some of the places have fallen off our radar and this is one of them.**

It's on the top floor and the views are absolutely spectacular, especially at night when everything is lit up. The lift that takes you to the restaurant is fast mind, it felt like we were in a rocket being zoomed to outer space, but it gets you there in no time at all.

We arrived and were immediately warmly greeted by a lovely lady with a beaming smile. She took our name, ushered us to our table, took our coats and left us with the food and drink menus.

There's a good choice of drinks, so after ordering water, we chose a cocktail each, mine was an Espresso Martini, as I was quite tired, and this always picks me up. As a non-caffeine drinker, this well and truly hit the spot and I was wired for the rest of the night! My companion had a Sangria Spritz and she commented that it reminded her of holidays and, in her words; tremendous.

For starters I opted for the soup, which was Jerusalem artichoke, candied pancetta, Bay cream, with sunflower seed pesto. It looked and tasted delicious. Now with soup, I'm often left disappointed, as it can often come just lukewarm, which I personally don't like. This was piping hot, seasoned perfectly and the dish deliciously light and tasty. I'd order it again in a heartbeat. My friend opted for the celeriac remoulade, as she'd never had it before. It was a sight to behold, the beyonne ham, pickle fritters



and nasturtium made it look so pretty on the plate. She was very pleased with her choice and vowed to be more adventurous from now on.

Mains for me were baked king prawns, crabmeat stuffing, squid ink noodles and coconut with a tamarind sauce. Boy, this was good! All of the flavours complemented each other, and you could tell that this dish had definitely been put together by a chef that knows his seafood! Sticking to her 'trying something different' Helen went with the duck breast, cooked pink, served with brown butter potato, salsify, sage, and pear with a green peppercorn/cider sauce. The duck melted in your mouth and the accompaniments balanced out the richness of the duck perfectly. It's quite a large portion this dish, so be warned, if you've only got a small appetite.

We didn't go with sides, although they sounded tempting, there is more than enough food without them, but we stuck it out long enough to want to order a dessert. My friend had baked New York-style aromatic cheesecake, roasted pineapple served with a generous portion of gingerbread ice cream. She said this was a winner on all counts and took her to the unbuttoning of her jeans state. I went with a slightly healthier option (that's what I told myself) with the apple, blackberry and hazelnut crumble served with Frangelico custard. The crumble was my favourite bit of this, as I love anything nutty and crunchy, and this was both. The apple; soft and tasty, blackberry; tart, and got the juices flowing in my mouth, just enough to be calmed down by the custard. A really tasty dessert and ended the meal beautifully.

We had a bottle of the Picpoul, a lovely citrusy dry white wine – chilled to perfection and a great addition to the meal.

It maybe a long time since we visited Six, but it hasn't lost any of its charm. The staff are so attentive too – the views to die for. The bill was £143 for the two of us, which was great value for money and an absolute treat.

When I got home hubby was slightly jealous, so I had to promise to go back next week, which was not a difficult promise to keep. It's a hard job, but somebody has to do it!

**Six Restaurant at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead Quays, NE8 3BA**  
**[www.sixbaltic.com](http://www.sixbaltic.com) 07922 427 019**







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## Awards, are they reliable?

Awards, has your business won one? They are a fact of life for businesses of all types and a useful tool in so many ways. Incentives for staff and business owners alike, a great marketing tool for the winners, and always good for a night out on the town and a reason to get dressed up. But are they worth it and how accurate are they?

**In the hospitality business there are lots of them and many of them are of course well known. The main and most prestigious protagonists are of course Michelin and the AA here in the UK, there are currently, and have been in the past, many others but these are probably the best known and most prolific.**

Michelin, the Holy Grail of accolades has led the field for a very long time now, I won my first Michelin star for my food back in 1981, at the time there were only 32 in the UK, now, considerably more! I achieved my first AA Rosette, (Michelin have Stars, up to a maximum of three and the AA Rosettes, these used to be a maximum of three but that is now five), the previous year. This was because the AA guide came out in the September while the Michelin Guide was published at the end of January. On the face of it these were a year apart the reality was that they were only four months apart.

Michelin have always been seen to be more prestigious than the AA, firstly there are a lot fewer Michelin Starred establishments, mainly because their standards are so much higher than those of the AA. Those that have them desperately want to keep them as they are members of an exclusive club. Those that are looking to gain one work extremely hard, with so few actually managing to attain the ultimate prize. The numbers of those that have stars are growing all the time, I fervently hope this is because the standards are improving across the board at a greater rate than the stars are being attained but the number of three starred



establishments remains tantalisingly small.

Look at the AA Rosettes though and you see a totally different picture, it seems so very easy to attain the lower one Rosette standard as there are just so many. I had it in my head to count them to emphasise the difference between the two publications but the list is so long that I gave up, there are just not enough hours in the day! Even the list of two and three Rosettes winners is huge. It is usually recognised that three AA Rosettes is almost equivalent to one Michelin Star but that is not always an accurate comparison.

The trouble with the AA was highlighted to me recently when the new AA Restaurant Guide was published for 2023. I read of one recipient who proudly announced his achievement on social media, and rightly so, that he had at last attained three AA Rosettes, well done that man and his team. The problem however was that he said it was his first inspection for five years. Which then begs the question, how reliable are these awards and therefore what value can we place on them? I recently sold my small restaurant with rooms, we held four Gold Stars

for our rooms/service/ambience from both the AA and Visit Scotland, they both claim to operate to the same judging criteria, we also held two AA Rosettes for our food, we too had not been inspected for four years. The people that bought the business from me were not capable of attaining two Rosettes, sorry but that is the way it is, the food would be okay but not award winning. They still hold the two Rosettes and the four Gold Stars from the AA, why? because they would still not have been inspected since they took over making it 6 years since the last inspection even though I wrote and told them we were selling.

As Marco Pierre White said when he gave up on his Michelin Stars saying he no longer wanted to be part of the game "Once you accept you are being judged by people who have less knowledge than yourself, then what's it worth." Beware of believing everything you read!

**© Ian McAndrew of Chef Yes Chef 2023 – A professional consultant to the Hospitality industry. 07973 488 670.**



# Blu Meets Green

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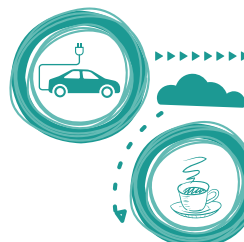
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Our events team are looking forward to hearing from you.  
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# Introducing Gosforth Family Chiropractic Clinic...

## So, what is chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a regulated primary healthcare profession. Chiropractors are trained to diagnose, treat, manage, and prevent disorders of the musculoskeletal system (bones, joints, and muscles), as well as the effects these disorders can have on nervous system and general health.

Chiropractors use a range of techniques to reduce pain, improve function and increase mobility, including hands-on manipulation of the spine. The chiropractors at Gosforth Family Chiropractic use hands on manipulation.

Treatment helps to restore natural movement that has been lost through minor sport injury, degenerative changes, or poor posture – and is particularly effective in treating back and neck pain.

Musculoskeletal conditions are the leading contributor to disability worldwide, with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability in 160 countries. We treat patients



of all professions at the clinic and treat a wide variety of issues from sporting injuries to problems arising from our increasing sedentary lifestyle as well as the impacts of poor posture.

## Mission

Our mission is to provide a professional and honest approach to health care.

We are dedicated to providing ethical and professional care to help our patients not only alleviate their pain, but to give them the knowledge and skills to help themselves long term.

## What you need to know about your appointment

If you are coming to Gosforth Family Chiropractic for the first time, your consultation



will normally last one hour for an initial assessment and treatment.

This will consist of a consultation where we discuss your general health and lifestyle, medical history, any previous health conditions, and your reason for visiting. We will then perform a physical examination to check your spine, posture, and movement. This includes any orthopedic, neurological and chiropractic tests. This in-depth history and examination will provide our chiropractors with the information to make a working diagnosis and treatment plan.

**For more information of our services, or to book a consultation, call 07359 188 567 or email us at [care@gosforthfamilychiropractic.com](mailto:care@gosforthfamilychiropractic.com)**

The continued adventures of...

# Ziggy and Cally!



Hi everyone,

**Hopefully we have seen the last of the snow and we can get some exterior works done. Never laid a brick last week. Auntie Lola is here at the moment and cousin Dexter is coming next week. Cally says hi! See you next month!**

**Lena from Whitley Bay asks:** Following on from your recent articles about the damp problems created by cavity wall insulation, my query concerns houses such as my own, which is of Victorian solid wall construction. When you say that the cavity prevents damp crossing to the inside, I presume this means that any water is dissipated by traveling down the inside of the external wall. In that case, where does any water go in a solid wall where there is no cavity? You would think that the internal walls would be covered in damp, but this is clearly not the case. I am sure this would be of interest to the thousands of people who live in solid wall houses such as myself who have been following the cavity wall insulation story with interest but are not directly affected by it.

**A:** The usual way of describing the difference between solid brick walls and cavity walls is that the former acts like an overcoat, and the latter like a raincoat. So when a solid wall gets wet from incident rain, it absorbs it as an overcoat would, and then dries out afterwards by natural evaporation. As you rightly observe, this generally works very well. Victorian houses had the added advantage of being built with lime mortar and lime plaster, which are soft, breathable materials, which allow this cycle of wetting and drying to take place without any notable or extreme dampness "events" taking place. The outer leaf of a cavity wall, on the other hand, is supposed to repel the rainwater, meaning that the inner leaf always stays dry. But cavity walls are mostly built with cement mortar, which is hard and non-breathable. So when incident rainwater penetrates, rather than being absorbed, it tends to dribble down the inner face of the brick outer leaf. This all worked perfectly well until a few years ago, when some bright spark had the idea of blowing absorbent fluffy material into the cavities. Contrary to the insulation manufacturers' claims, retro-fit cavity wall insulation can allow water to cross cavities, where it shows up as damp patches on the internal surfaces, resulting in mould growth and decorative damage. This is a potentially huge problem, with some three million UK homes possibly at risk.



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: [wdlnortheast.co.uk](http://wdlnortheast.co.uk) or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on [mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com](mailto:mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com)



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Our chefs have created a fresh spring menu featuring the finest local produce and seasonal ingredients.

See a selection of our menu below:

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Garden Pea & Mint Soup, Crispy Hens Egg, Pine Nut & Lemon  
Asian Style Duck Salad, Coriander, Sesame, Chilli, Ginger & Lime

### MAINS

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Confit Duck Leg, Spiced Puy Lentils, Morteau Sausage & Green Beans  
Pan Fried Halibut, Café de Paris Butter, Brown Shrimps & Samphire  
Double Baked Cheese & Spinach Soufflé with a Chicory, Poached Pear & Walnut Salad

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Smoked Caramel, Date & Pecan Delice with Mango Sorbet

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# ...Welcome to Tynemouth...

Travel just 10-miles East of Newcastle City Centre and you will stumble across Tynemouth, the beautiful seaside village that has everything.

Tynemouth is home to an eclectic mix of cafes, quirky bars, restaurants, and independent shops and markets, coupled with amazing scenic views, beaches and a range of coastal activities...this Village really is a special place!







Long seen as Tyneside's Jewel in the Crown, regularly appearing at the top of 'Best place to live', and 'Best Coastal Town' lists, more than 100 businesses can now be found on Tynemouth Front Street, Percy Park Road, Tynemouth Station and The Sidings.

Three years after lockdown it is a hive of activity again, and businesses and visitors alike are looking forward to a sizzling summer.

Over the past two months footfall figures show that more than 210,000 people visited the Village and that 70% were repeat visitors.

Unlike most villages and towns around the country, you won't find any empty shop fronts in Tynemouth. As soon as premises become available they are snapped up and an exciting new business appears.

The latest businesses to take root in Tynemouth include The Dog Hoose, pet shop and Little Lobo, Mexican restaurant on Percy Park Road: Deep North, Donuts & Coffee shop and Richards Podiatry on Front Street. All this with more still to come with the Old Gate of India, at the end of Front Street, soon to become home to Iztuzu Turkish Restaurant.



## Where to browse

By weekday Tynemouth Station is an ordinary metro station, but by weekend it transforms into the famous Tynemouth Market, where you can pick up toys, books, vintage clothing and bric and brac, alongside delicious street food and locally roasted coffee.

A selection of shops and businesses are situated next to the market in The Sidings which gives access to plastic free food in Buy the Kilo, sweets in Sweet Reminisce and hireable bikes in Ride Electric.

Front Street and Percy Park Road are home to a range of independent businesses that offer everything from unique clothing, jewellery and homeware at Razzberry Bazaar, home baked goods at The Deli Around the Corner and Cook & Baker, designer bags, purses and bracelets at the Leather Mob and Fezziwigs along with gifts you just won't find anywhere else at To the Moon and Back, Artichoke and Fine & Sandy.

## Where to eat and drink

With 40 different eating and drinking places in the Village where to eat, and what to eat, is a real dilemma.

The award-winning Riley's Fish Shack serves seafood out of a shipping container on the beach. You can enjoy fresh coffee and amazing brownies at Gareth James Chocolatier, or indulge in some seriously good donuts from Deep North.

From Ice Cream to Indian and Tapas to Thai Fusion, there's something for every palette.

Tynemouth's Green Ginger Arcade has undergone a transformation over the past three years. Gone are the antique shops, quirky boutiques and Super Gran's bike! And in their place are some fantastic food and drinking spots. Vineyard 72, Charcuterie and Cheese, serves up sharing boards that are a feast to the eyes as well as the stomach; Crust Social's Neapolitan stone baked pizzas are a firm favourite and the old church building now has a very cosmopolitan, café-culture feel to it, so diners can enjoy their delights while they soak up the atmosphere, live music and real ales at the Blind Pig, Alfie & Fin's and Rhumba, rum bar.





If you fancy a coffee stop you won't be in short supply with Mr Woods, Cullercoats Coffee, Dil & The Bear, Rene's and Priory Café all dishing up some delicious hot drinks and snacks,

Little Lobo, the sibling of the hugely successful Lobo Rojo on North Shields Fish Quay, Davanti Classico, Allard's, Ora, Buddha Lounge and Pleased to Meet You all offer great food choices and dining out experiences. And there are burgers to die for available from Lola Jean's. The answer to the 'where and what' dilemma is to keep coming back and try them all.



## Where to sleep

Tynemouth 61 Guest House and Tea Room, recently placed top three - in the North East Tourism awards, is a spectacular 18th century Georgian guest house and tea room on Tynemouth's Front Street. The business was taken over by Stephen Minns and his husband, Neil McWhirter, in September 2017 and the couple have worked to transform it into a boutique-style hotel offering beautiful, high standard, en-suite accommodation with a friendly and welcoming service.

The Grand Hotel, which celebrated its 150th Birthday in 2022, originally built for the Duchess of Northumberland as a holiday home in 1872, is today a truly 'Grand' Hotel. With its original sweeping staircase and 46 bedrooms, it proves a popular choice for people wanting to enjoy a staycation as well as to guests from as far away as Australia and America.



“

*...I love living and working in Tynemouth...*

Stephen Minns



## What to do

But it's not all about eating, drinking and shopping in Tynemouth...the award-winning beaches, Tynemouth Longsands and King Edwards Bay are great places to stretch the legs and blow away the cobwebs, or get involved in some watersports and do some surfing or paddle boarding.

For visitors interested in history, Tynemouth Castle and Priory, Collingwood Monument and the Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade Watch House Museum are well worth a visit, and Tynemouth Park and Boating Lake and the Tynemouth Aquarium offer superb entertainment for families.

Tynemouth Village is also home to around 10,000 people, according to the 2021 Census Data. And we're sure that's 10,000 people that count themselves lucky to live in such a great place.

"I love living and working in Tynemouth," said Stephen Minns, owner of Tynemouth 61, and chair of the Tynemouth Business Community. "I'm a Londoner, but after arriving here six-years ago, it really feels like this is my home now."

"The past three years, since the start of the Covid Pandemic and the subsequent lockdowns have been hard for all the businesses in Tynemouth. We've all had to adjust our offerings and change the way we operate our businesses so that we can thrive again."

"It's great to see the Village looking vibrant and full of visitors again, particularly at the weekends. We are all looking forward to a great summer."





## Mystic river

By Michael Grahamslaw

With the Friday feeling coursing through our veins, my son Jack and I screeched down to the Radisson Blu in Durham for an overnight stay which will live long in the memory.

**Durham remains the Quintessential British University city, a maze of cobbled streets, buoyant nightlife and riverbanks so picturesque it makes you want to pick up a paintbrush.**

Occupying an enviable location on the banks of the river, the hotel combines its city centre location with the best features of a destination retreat with a salubrious in-house spa and fitness centre, not to mention a modern British brasserie 'Collage' on site.

The hotel boasts a lovely, capacious, open-plan reception area with vast floor to ceiling windows affording much natural light on a glorious, early springtime evening.

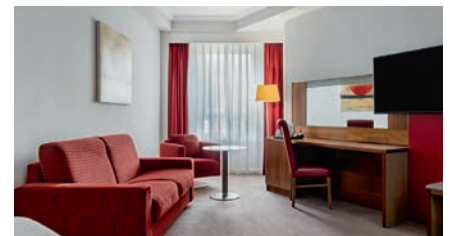
We were checked in cheerily by the hotel's very amenable reception staff before ditching the bags and heading out for all downtown Durham has to offer.

Few hotels boast so many UNESCO world heritage on the doorstep with the city's world famous castle and cathedral within easy walking distance. However, 5 o'clock and in high spirits, Jack and I swerved the culture in favour of a few classic local hosteleries.

Returning to the hotel, we were equally impressed by the high quality of our guest suite. The hotel comprises 207 bedrooms in total, each resplendent with that trademark Radisson contemporary design and cutting edge technology. Ours was a haven of comfort and convenience, well equipped with Flat Screen TVs, plush armchairs and boutique toiletries. Ours even featured a hi-tec Nespresso coffee machine and panoramic views of the river.

After a quick blast in the walk-in shower and a change for dinner, we arrived at the hotel restaurant Collage with high anticipations. Its extensive menu combines many Classic British dishes with modern inflections and a mouth-watering grill menu where the diner is free to mix steaks, sides and sauces however they fancy.

Jack kicked off with a warming leek & potato soup, embellished with a slick of oil and served



with a fat hunk of sourdough. The soup packed freshness and that telling depth of flavour.

I opted for the barbecue chicken wings, spiked with fresh chilli and a similarly fresh Asian side salad which complemented perfectly.

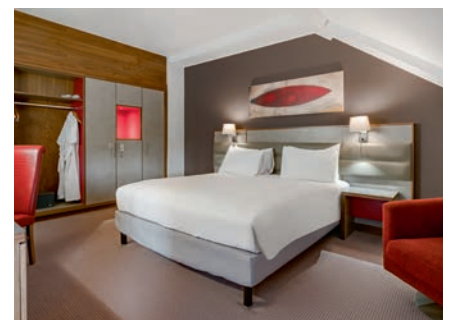
Moving on, the two trencherman sought robustness in the form of rib eye steak, expertly cooked to the shade of medium rare and served with thick cut chips, peppercorn sauce and giant, bangled onion rings.

Totally replete, we swerved desserts but lingered into the night over an exceptional bottle of malbec which set the meat off exquisitely.

The following morning, after a full eight (!) hours sleep, we were refreshed enough to venture down to the spa for a morning tune up. Here with the latest resistance and cardio equipment, we worked up a strong appetite for breakfast back in the hotel's bright and airy eatery.

After a sumptuous stay, we headed home relaxed, recharged and re-energised. Or as you might say, re-radissoned!

**For more information, visit [radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-durham](http://radissonhotels.com/en-us/hotels/radisson-blu-durham)**





# Have an *egg'celent* time with STACK Seaburn this Easter...



Now it wouldn't be a post dedicated to Easter activity without an obvious pun, would it? But all jokes aside – it's time to delve into Sunderland's favourite social hub, to discover what food, events and entertainment await the thousands of customers expected to visit STACK Seaburn this April.

**Located along Sunderland's coastline, STACK Seaburn offers an array of local businesses, tasty street food, stunning sea views and a great daily entertainment line-up – making it the perfect place for a day out with the family, or lively hangout for beating about the long Bank Holiday weekend.**

First up on STACK's jam-packed schedule, the return of its regular Kid's Events!

Give the little one's something to get excited about, with not just one - but SIX live events taking place across the half-term holidays from 12noon – 2pm (Monday 3rd to Friday 14th April). The themed events will feature a range of favourite characters, dance battles, colouring in and a whole lot of fun.

And this year, STACK are getting ready to put on their first Easter Sunday show with leading children's entertainers Let's Party Events North East on Sunday 9th April. With an interactive hunt, stage games and a visit from the Easter bunny itself – this is the perfect opportunity to

take a break from devouring those chocolate eggs and bust a move in STACK's main plaza.

If talk of chocolate no longer tickles your taste buds, then perhaps STACK's mix of worldwide cuisines and street food traders will. Sink your teeth into a Greek platter or gyros from Acropolis, before moving onto a thali tray of Big Fat Indian Kitchen delights. Maybe you'd prefer some cheesy goodness with Redhead's Mac 'n' Cheese, or a meat and carb laden burger to rival them all from the one and only Boojie Burger?

In amongst STACK's global dishes, you'll also find a more traditional offer in the form of Downey's Fish & Chips. A renowned family business serving crunchy, golden battered Fish & Chips accompanied by all the mushy peas and tartare sauce you could wish for. With Good Friday just around the corner, you can bet their

fryers will be working overtime to give STACK's customers their fish fix!

And for the lover of all things sweet, be sure to check out YOLO Coffee & Kitchen for their special Easter themed hot drinks and American style pancakes - after all, everything tastes better when you add Mini Eggs to it.

If all this talk of street food has knocked you into a food coma, maybe we can perk you back up with a health kick from So Smooth Co? Offering customers fresh juices, smoothies and a variety of filled bagels – this wellness first business use all-natural ingredients and zero additives to ensure you leave with a spring in your step!

Enough talk about food, STACK is also home to a great range of businesses offering grooming and beauty services! For bespoke brows and the longest of lashes, pay the lovely Laura at Arch Brow Bar a visit. Or perhaps you're looking for a fresh cut ahead of a big night out at STACK – if so, Laing's Barbershop is your one stop shop for modern and traditional barbering.

Speaking of big nights out, STACK wouldn't be STACK without its usual live music offering – and the Easter bank holiday is no exception with a great mix of up and coming acts, alongside STACK's usual mix of weekly bingo and trivia quizzes.

Headlining the bank holiday weekend, STACK will get set to provide a warm welcome to the ensemble band Hip Hop Hurray and Queen Tribute 'We Are Champion', as they take over the main stage for two roaring evenings from Saturday 8th – Sunday 9th April.



***The Easter holidays are set to be an incredibly busy time for STACK and full details of the line-up of events, how to book a table and trader menus can be viewed directly on their website, please visit: [www.stackseaburn.com](http://www.stackseaburn.com)***





## Superior Wet Fish Opening Party

A packed audience recently enjoyed the opening of "Fish" in the heart of Low Fell. Guests enjoyed fabulous seafood throughout the evening along with a selection of fine wine and beers.







# fish

## Superior Wet Fish

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# NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week hits a record breaking boost for business



**NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week hit the million pound mark in January breaking all previous financial and event records, and delivering a huge boost for businesses. As well as the £1 million pound record takings, there were more diners taking part and more participating restaurants than at any time in the event's 12 year history.**

**The event has transformed two of the sector's quietest weeks of the year, post-Christmas and in the school summer holidays in August, into two of the busiest and most profitable.**

January's event, which ran from 16 – 22 January, had a striking 119 participating restaurants, up on the previous high of 116. More than 58,000 diners enjoyed discounted menus across the city priced at £10, £15 or £20 per person, beating the 53,000 diner record set in August 2022.

The economic benefits delivered by the event extend beyond the restaurants themselves, with bars, taxi companies and other transport providers all noting an uplift in business with many participating venues also able to offer extended hours for their staff during the week, a rarity in the usual post-Christmas lull.

January 2023 NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week in numbers:

- £1,008,955 revenue generated (compared to £885,694 in August 2022).

- 119 participating restaurants.
- 58,146 diners (compared to 53,128 in August 2022).

NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week is held twice a year, in January and in August. Inspired by a similar scheme in New York, the NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week event was the first of its kind in the UK. Its success has influenced many other UK cities to follow suit and introduce their own Restaurant Weeks across the country. NE1's first event was hosted in 2011 with 13 of the city's top restaurants taking part, the majority are still among the first to sign up to take part each year.

Ben Whitfield, Director of Communications at NE1 Ltd said: "We are delighted that January has smashed all previous records, and that we have surpassed the £1 million mark. This is a huge milestone for the event and a reflection of its popularity across the region. Even when times are tight people want to enjoy experiences and Restaurant Week delivers each time. Roll on August when people will again be able to enjoy what is now a key date in Newcastle's event calendar."

"Newcastle's hospitality sector is one of the most vibrant in the UK, with more independent restaurants per person than any other city outside of London. Back in 2011, we looked internationally for inspiration on how to support the industry at traditionally quiet times of the year and Newcastle Restaurant Week was born. The event shines the spotlight on the industry and creates a real buzz in the city for two weeks of the year and there is a genuine hunger for the event as can be seen from the statistics."

Andy Hook from the Hooked On Group, owners of Blackfriars and Dobson & Parnell, said: "We joined in 2011 when the event only had 13 venues so to be part of this journey and see it generate more than £1 million in revenue for the restaurants of this great city is a testament to

the stunning progress of the event. It's always a great time for us to give a little back, and get bums on seats so I'm delighted it's working so well for both restaurateurs and the dining public. We can't wait to see how far it can go."

One of the newcomers to this year's event, Missy Milieu was delighted with how their first event went.

Commenting on the success, Matthew Settle, Director said: "The whole team at Missy Milieu's was delighted to be part of Newcastle's NE1 Restaurant Week. It's our first year of trading and we were extremely pleased to have been invited to our inaugural event alongside some well-respected and established restaurants in the city.

"We were fully booked during NE1 Restaurant Week which helped us establish ourselves quickly on the scene, during what are extremely difficult trading times.

"It was an absolute pleasure taking part in Restaurant Week and gave us an amazing opportunity to showcase the quality and attention to detail that we provide to our customers. We're already looking forward to taking part in August's event and welcoming back the new customers we attracted."

[www.newcastlene1ltd.com](http://www.newcastlene1ltd.com)





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L-R: Martin Malinowski, Terry Laybourne and Matt Clarkson

# St Vincent returns to Newcastle's hospitality stage

Popular Newcastle wine bar and restaurant St Vincent has re-opened after a three-year hiatus.

**Renowned North East chef and restaurateur Terry Laybourne closed the buzzy Quayside restaurant on the eve of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. Other venues within his 21 Hospitality Group (21HG) have since re-opened while St Vincent remained closed.**

That all changed on March 9 when the doors were thrown open and St Vincent stepped back onto the Newcastle dining scene in a splash of colour.

The Franco/Italian inspired St Vincent originally opened in the autumn of 2018, replacing Terry Laybourne's popular Italian restaurant Caffè Vivo which celebrated its 10th anniversary as it completed its last full service.

It sits alongside Newcastle's Live Theatre and will be a welcome addition to theatregoers for pre-theatre drinks and food. A fixed price menu will be offered when the theatre has drama productions.

Jacqui Kell, executive director at Live Theatre, said: "All of us at Live Theatre are delighted to see the re-opening of St Vincent. We've missed it. This restaurant is an important asset to the Quayside and to Live Theatre, enabling us to broaden the offer to our theatregoers."

The re-opening of St Vincent sees several fresh changes, along with the return of many favourites from the food and wine choices, as well as some of the original front of house team.

Matt Clarkson returns as general manager; leading the kitchen team is Martin Malinowski, a 21HG veteran who has been involved in most of Terry's restaurants over the years. Working alongside Martin is Richard Wheatley, who is a familiar name and face among the Heaton restaurant crowd, having jointly owned Bao Bar in Chillingham Road.

Terry Laybourne said: "It feels wonderful to finally reopen St Vincent after such a long break. The hospitality sector has gone through a rollercoaster period these last two to three years. We haven't stood still though during that period – opening Café 21 in Fenwick York and establishing the beer garden at The Broad Chare, as well as continuing our 21@Home collection service. We have been carefully managing and building our resources - St Vincent is the final piece of the jigsaw.

"We have re-opened St Vincent with a super-strong core team of familiar faces along

with some lovely, enthusiastic new recruits. Customers will be able to enjoy some old favourites they may remember from previous visits; plus, we've used the preparation time to freshen things and create some new, less familiar options.

"We will have a concise, ever-changing menu with a seasonal focus, quite often influenced by the punchy flavours of southern France and Italy that we all seem to love so much."

Wine will continue to take centre stage at St Vincent, with a number of classics, but also with a large proportion from small independent producers. Many are organic, some bio-dynamic, others are natural, while several are 'skin contact'. There will also be a rolling programme of open wines to sample by the glass. In addition, there will be classic cocktails and vermouths as well as craft beers.

In true wine bar style, small plates will feature but there will be an emphasis on larger plates that will be ingredient-led and highly seasonal. There will always be a fish dish or two on the daily menu, as well as a strong emphasis on vegetables, many supplied by Hexhamshire Organics.

St Vincent will be open Tuesday to Saturday. Weekday openings are 4pm to 10pm. On Saturday the restaurant is open from 11.30am till late with food served 12pm to 3pm and then 5.30pm to 10pm (last reservations).

**For more details and to make table reservations, visit:**  
[www.stvincentnewcastle.co.uk](http://www.stvincentnewcastle.co.uk)





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# Funny, quirky, totally determined with a wicked sense of humour... Vera Selby MBE

*Born 13 March 1930 -  
Died 13 March 2023*

For those that knew her well, it was impossible to sum up the essence of Vera Selby MBE.

**There were so many sides to this larger than life, highly talented yet highly individual lady, who is perhaps best known for her achievements in the sporting world as nine-time British billiards champion and best female snooker player in the world (1976 and 1981).**

Born in Richmond, where her father was manager of the Freeman, Hardy and Willis shoe shop, this North Yorkshire town remained a place of great significance throughout her life, and she was later to become the Master of the 400-year-old Fellmongers' Guild in Richmond as the first female Master in its history.

As a child of seven, she was introduced to billiards by her Uncle Jack. Vera would sit and watch him play in his cellar, picking up tips and techniques for many years and through this experience, went on to develop a lifelong love of cue sports.

Nonetheless, she regarded snooker to be more of a pastime and put it on the back burner to pursue a career in fashion. So, it was not until she was 36 when she was seen playing by former British amateur billiards and snooker champion, Alf Nolan, who started to coach her, that her sporting career took flight.

She studied art and design at Leeds University and went on to become a senior art, textile and dress designer at Newcastle Polytechnic as it was then called, specialising in fashion, as well as teaching trainee teachers of primary school children how to teach art.

With an interest in macrame and crochet work, she wrote a book called 'Creative Textiles for the Primary School' hoping to get children interested in the craft.

Friends also recall how she would fashion hats out of old plastic bags, long before recycling became a thing, how she had a three-dimensional floor ornament in the shape of a mountain – affectionately known as the cow pat – slap bang in the middle of her sitting room floor and how she famously decided to display a pewter sculpture



Vera Selby MBE

of her torso above the mantel piece. The story goes that her friend, a sculptor, having fashioned a plaster of Paris mould from this part of her anatomy, proceeded to create the piece and delivered it on the back of his Harley Davison to her home in Gosforth.

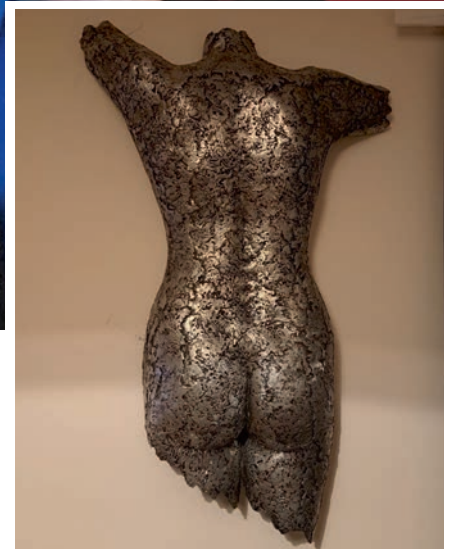
Alongside the quirky part of her disposition, was of course, a steely determination to win.

She decided to retire early from her career in fashion, art and design at 53 and went on to become a television commentator for snooker, qualified as a referee and served as chairman of the North East Billiards and Snooker Association, also picking up a lifetime achievement award for her services to billiards in 2014.

In fact, when she was made an MBE in the 2016 Queen's birthday honours for her longevity of services to the sport, aged 85, she was still playing snooker and commenting on it regularly.

Throughout her life, she was very much a woman in a man's world, which was the title of one of her incredibly popular after dinner speeches. She said that men in the sport didn't faze her and was known to mend the odd bow tie, even sewing up a player's trouser zip which came unstuck in the middle of a match.

She played snooker in many working men's clubs up and down the country, those closest to her heart being Gateshead Railway Club and



Ashington Veterans and Elders Institute, which is one of the largest in the country with eleven leagues.

Married to Bruce Selby, a dapper and famous hairdresser who was 28 years her senior and attended every snooker match she played in or refereed, he died in his late eighties when Vera was only 60.

She was still promoting billiards and snooker for players of all ages until her late eighties, championing the benefits of the sports for maintaining agility and mental fitness. She died from old age ailments on her 93rd birthday.

● Some of Vera's trophies will be returned to the Ashington Veterans and Elders Institute where they were won, and her varied and interesting art collection will be displayed and then auctioned by the executors of her estate to raise money to promote the sport for young people at the Ashington club and also to raise money for the Richmond Museum, North Yorkshire.



# New copper water bottle scientifically proven to benefit health



Move over crystal-infused water bottles, a new, reusable copper water bottle has just been launched that is not only stylish but is also the first to offer scientifically proven evidence of its health benefits. Stick that in your bottle and drink it. Literally.

## The new range of Paani bottles, handcrafted using the purest copper sheet in India.

Just launched in the UK, the Paani bottles are proven to be safer than plastic or steel drink surfaces with scientifically confirmed health benefits and Ayurvedic properties as well as being a stylish way to consume your recommended two litres of water per day. They truly are 'wonder' bottles.

### Why use copper?

With roots back to the ancient Egyptians, ancient Chinese, and India, copper has, for over 5000 years, been known as a 'beneficial agent for health thanks to the material having natural, biocidal properties effectively making it a natural disinfectant.

The practice of storing water in upright, copper water vessels, like Paani, overnight is one of the pillars of Ayurvedic Medicine which credits the practice as having beneficial effects on weight management, cardiovascular health, joint pains,

and skin conditions.

But it is only now that it has been scientifically proven that storing the water for up to 24 hours in the copper bottle actually 'cleanses' the water and removes over 99.9% of harmful bacteria and viruses making it better for you.

### What do the scientists say about Paani?

This is the first scientific study conducted on the benefits of copper water bottles in the UK.

Using filtered tap water, leading scientist, Professor Bill Keevil, Professor of Environmental Healthcare, at the School of Biological Sciences at the University of Southampton, led the 2022 study specifically looking at the health benefits of storing water in a Paani copper water bottle.

The leading Professor has gone on record to say that water stored overnight in a Paani water bottle "rapidly purified the water and we get more than 99.9% reduction in bacteria – such as faecal E. coli and K. pneumoniae. This work showed that Paani bottles have got this very beneficial property of purifying water, certainly within 24 hours" – literally making your recommended two litres of water of drinking water safer to drink thanks to the bottle's ability of inactivating bacteria and viruses\*\*.

[youtu.be/T6fpcMCbQ7k](https://youtu.be/T6fpcMCbQ7k)

### Is the Paani bottle better than crystal water bottles?

Crystal or gem-stone infused water bottles were a craze in 2021, based on a trending idea that crystals could magically transfer some of their powers or energies into the water. This concept had no foundation in Ayurvedic Medicine, nor could it be backed up by independent scientific research, unlike the Paani copper water bottle.

Any health 'benefits' were placebo in nature and could not be substantiated. In contrast, the Paani copper water bottle is backed up by science.

### Is the Paani copper water bottle better than plastic?

Using the Paani copper bottle as your water bottle sidesteps the contamination issues of storing water in plastic water bottles. Drinking water that has been stored in a plastic water bottle can contain, according to scientists like Professor Bill Keevil, hundreds of chemical traces, including toxins from the plastic (PET) water bottle itself, that may be harmful to health. Plastic can also harbour bacteria if cracked or left unwashed. As well as this how good is plastic for the environment? It takes up to 1,000 years for one plastic water bottle to decompose!

### What about stainless steel?

Whilst it might look nice and shiny, numerous studies reconfirm that stainless steel has no antimicrobial properties.

### Substance and Style?

Not only does the Paani bottle boast potential benefits to your health, the Paani copper water bottle also packs a punch in the style stakes, with its sleek and stylish bottle design and interchangeable, branded colour sleeves to make it the perfect accessory on everyone's lips this Spring. As well as this, the option to personalise your choice of grip sleeve by placing your name at the back.

Paani Copper Water Bottles come in two sizes: 700ml and 900ml, priced at £35 and £40.

Find out more at [www.paanibottles.com](http://www.paanibottles.com)

\*when tap water is stored in the copper bottle overnight. \*\*studies found that 75.7% of toxins were removed within one hour, rising to 99.9% in 24 hours.



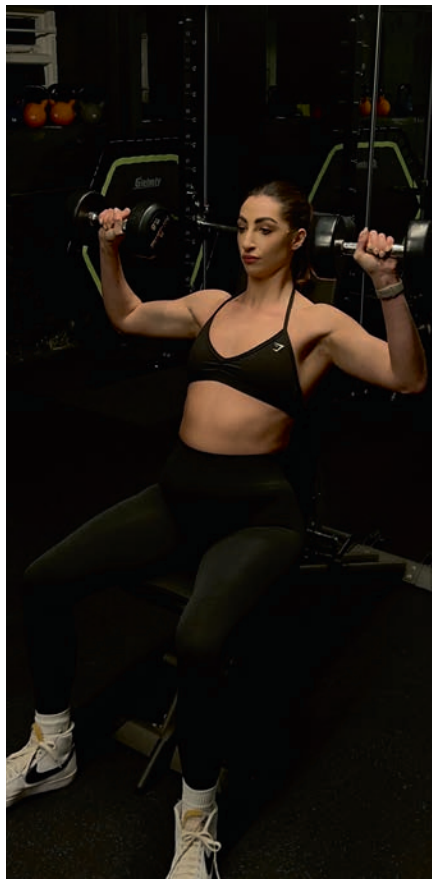
# Healthy body; healthy mind

Samantha Watt discovers physical fitness has more benefits that you might imagine.

**For a lot of people, Covid 19 forced them into making some difficult and often very uncomfortable decisions. A lot of people went from having a steady routine which probably hadn't changed for many years to suddenly finding themselves with nothing to do. Their routine came to an end and, at the time, nobody was sure how long it would last.**

That's precisely the situation Samantha Watt found herself in.

Sam worked in the hospitality industry. She was front of house in a busy hotel and was heavily involved in organising weddings and conferences.



Samantha Watt

And then March 23rd 2020 arrived and hospitality was, in effect, closed for the foreseeable future.

"It was a difficult time for me and I admit that I struggled to cope," says Sam. "It put me in a really bad place and I started to have mental health issues and eating disorders. While I was busy at the hotel, those mental health problems never arose because I was constantly distracted. However, when I suddenly found myself sitting in the house with nothing to do and nowhere to go, I now had a load time on my hands and I know I started to think more about myself... analysing everything I was doing. I felt extremely lonely.

I've always been a fit and sporty person. I played loads of sports when I was at school and I continued to do as much activity as possible after I finished my education.

Fitness is something which has always interested me and I often gave advice to friends and family about what they needed to do to keep in shape as well as explaining all of the mental benefits.

I decided to pursue the qualifications allowing me to become a Personal trainer and in late 2022 I joined the Hidden Strength gym in Gosforth.

Lifting weights was one of the fitness areas which really interested Sam. That is now something in which she specialises. Want to see what she's up to? Check out Sam's Instagram site...@liftwithsamantha

"The response from people on social media has been incredible," adds Sam. "I remember people saying that after a tough session in the gym, they feel great afterwards...that they're buzzing. It's true, and of course there is a knock-on effect to your mental health because it makes you feel better. And yes, if you have the right diet and you do plenty of exercise, you'll look better too. I always take that last point as one of the accidental benefits of doing some work in a gym. The fitness industry places too much emphasis on weight loss and looking good or the need for women to do cardio work. The big benefit is that you will feel better both mentally and physically; the fact that you will more than likely look better and lose weight is an added bonus. The bottom line is that the more you do some exercise, the better you will feel."

Things have gone so well that Sam won't be going back to the hospitality business. She is building a client base and now offers personal training sessions to single people and couples. She also does a few group sessions.

Everything takes place at Gosforth's Hidden Strength gym. Oh, and don't worry, you're not in with a load of other folk. At most you may be in a room where a second Personal Trainer is conducting a single person session.

Healthy body and a healthy mind; Samantha Watt can give you the lift you need.

**Interested? You can contact Sam via her Instagram site...@liftwithsamantha or email her at [samanthawatt4@hotmail.com](mailto:samanthawatt4@hotmail.com)**





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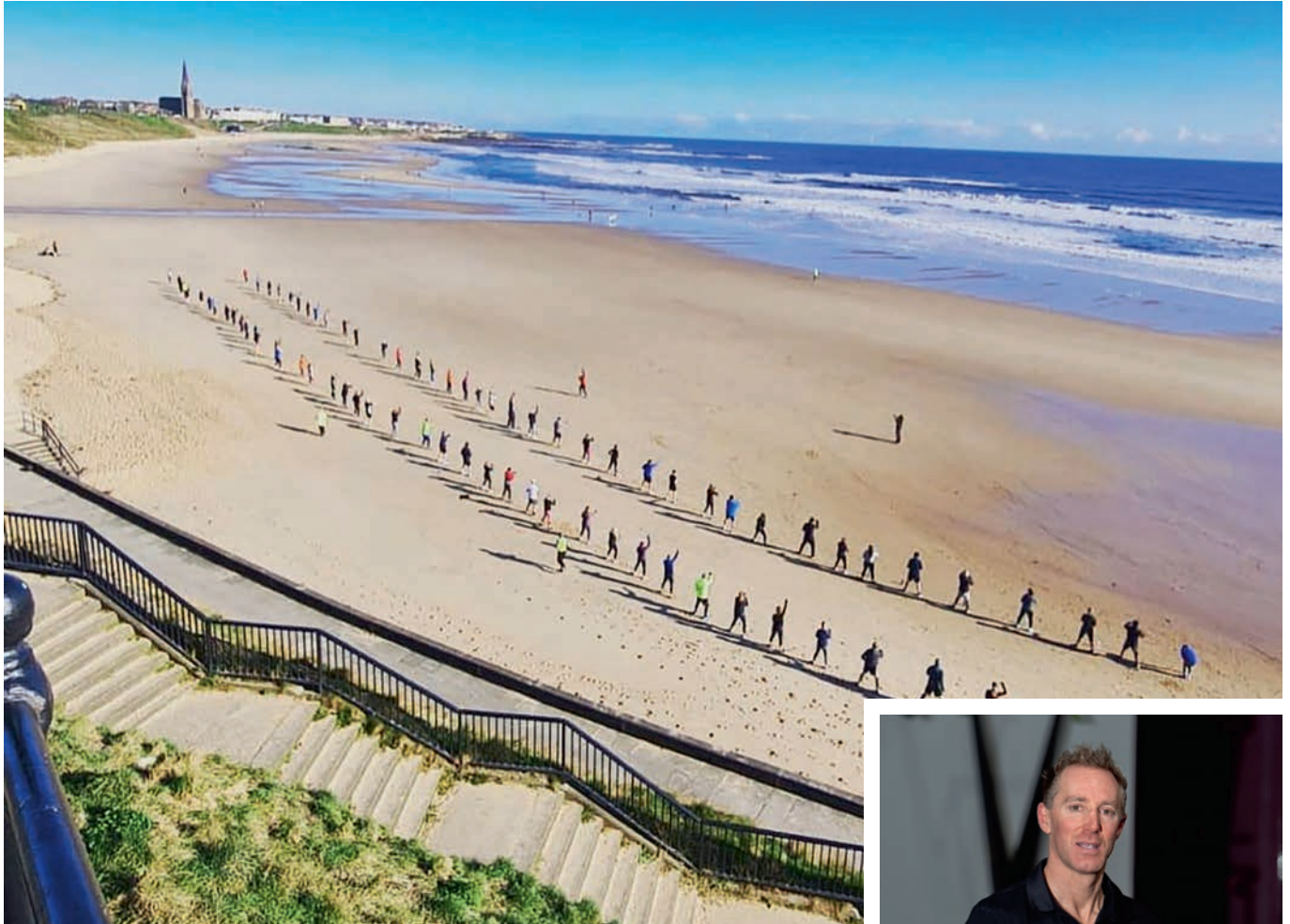


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## Get back on track

Are you finding it difficult to stick to your exercise routine? Whether it be lack of time, lack of motivation, or even injuries, these are common barriers that many people face when trying to maintain a healthy lifestyle. But there are ways to overcome these obstacles and get back on track.

### Outdoors

One solution is to utilise the great outdoors. Joining our Tynemouth Beach Bootcamp is a fun and invigorating way to exercise, with the added bonus of being surrounded by nature. Not only will the fresh air and beautiful scenery provide a refreshing change of pace, but the sand can also add an extra level of difficulty to your workout. Plus, the sense of community and accountability that comes with group fitness classes can provide the extra push you need to stay motivated.

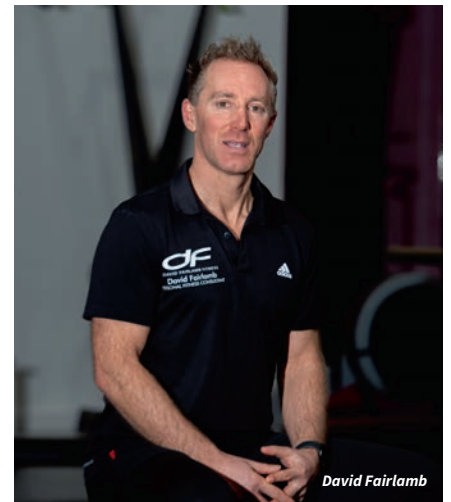
### Lack of Time

Another way to overcome lack of time is to incorporate exercise into your daily routine. Instead of thinking of it as a separate task that takes up precious time, try to find ways to make it a natural part of your day. For example, you could cycle to work or take the stairs instead of the lift. Every little bit counts, and by making small changes like this, you'll be surprised at how quickly they add up.

### Injury setbacks

Injuries can also be a major roadblock when it comes to exercise. But instead of letting them hold you back, use them as an opportunity to try new forms of exercise. For example, if you have a knee injury, swimming or cycling may be a better option than running. If possible seek help from a personal trainer or physiotherapist to ensure that you are performing exercises safely and correctly.

Non weight bearing exercises are often the way forward. Our 30min Versa Climber classes in our unique VersaHub are hugely motivational, generating massive calorie burn without any pressure on your joints, creating that perfect specific muscle and cardio workout you are looking for.



David Fairlamb

### Motivation

Lack of motivation is something that we all struggle with at one point or another. The key is to find activities that you enjoy and make them a regular part of your routine. Whether it's joining a sports team, dancing, or even just taking a walk with a friend, make sure to schedule it into your week and make it non-negotiable.

### Be Patient

It is important to be patient and not get discouraged if you have setbacks. Celebrating small victories along the way can help you stay on track and reach your ultimate fitness goals. Remember, consistency is key, so make exercise a priority and stick with it.

[www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk](http://www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk)

### David's summing up...

*Try experimenting with different forms of exercise and find activities that you really enjoy. This will give you the best opportunity of achieving your fitness and wellbeing goals.*



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Barry Speker

## The Last Word

Problems at the BBC are not confined to unacceptable tweeting by Gary Lineker. Failure to recognise and value their customer base - this time Radio 2 listeners - and claims of age discrimination surrounded the departure of Ken Bruce, after a career spanning centuries. In the event, even his final date was brought forward to reduce the impact of Ken promoting the station to which he has transferred.

**Similar charges of 'timing out' old timers arose from the farewell of Wimbledon National Treasure, Sue Barker (67) following her emotional standing ovation last year.**

Presenters it seems take centre stage and not only on Centre Court. The replacement for Sue is to be the ubiquitous Clare Balding (52), the doyenne of countless sports including horse racing, Winter Olympics, rugby league, Commonwealth Games and for the last 9 years, Crufts - not forgetting the Boat Race. Surely there could have been a role in retirement at Crufts for the aptly named Sue?

The prospect of winning a Wembley cup final for the first time since 1955 was of course a hope too far. But the inevitable disappointment of losing to Manchester United will not dull the boundless optimism of the Newcastle United faithful. The supporters impressed the country with their fervour as well as their good manners in cleaning up Trafalgar Square after a night



of pre-match revelry. Is qualification for the Champions League another hope too far?

The death of Baroness Boothroyd was a time to remark on the illustrious career of the only woman to be elected Speaker of the House of Commons. Betty Boothroyd may have been a Tiller girl but she was a no-nonsense Yorkshirewoman and Labour MP, best known for her stint as Speaker from 1992 to 2000. She stood no nonsense and proudly upheld the traditions of the Parliament and its ability to hold governments up to scrutiny, but holding a fair political balance.

Famously she would not allow Gerry Adams of Sinn Féin to take up his seat because of his refusal to take the required oath of allegiance to HM the Queen.

Baroness Boothroyd had her moments of drama, yawning ostentatiously at long winded speeches and expelling the firebrand Dennis Skinner from the Chamber.

She struck a blow for women in refusing to wear the traditional ceremonial wig, as it would spoil her hair!

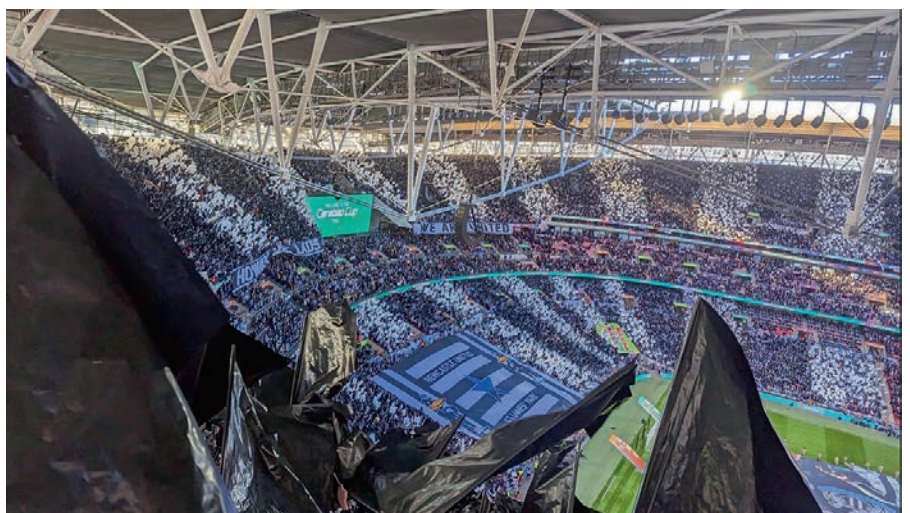
Some politicians still experience difficulty in using or defining words such as 'woman', no doubt to keep favour with those of wokeist views. At least 19 pages of the NHS website specific to women's health problems including cervical cancer and the menopause, now use 'non-gendered' language. For example the section on miscarriage used to say 'for most women, miscarriage is a one off event' but now says 'for most people'.

The Clinical Advisory Network on Sex and Gender has now written to the NHS formally urging a reversal of this trend and for the reinstatement of sex-based, respectful communication which meets the healthcare needs of women. The signatories include over 1,100 doctors, nurses and other health practitioners. They argue that erasing the word 'woman' is disrespectful to women and undermines trust and confidence in health communication.

It is to be hoped that this plea for common sense and natural use of language will not be ignored.

I was proud to be at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House to see Carmen presented by the Ukrainian Opera (Dnipra Opera Company). They are continuing their tour despite the war. The amazing performance was greeted with acclaim and ended with the rousing and proud singing of the Ukrainian National anthem to the background of the Ukrainian flag. What a fantastic night it was!

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