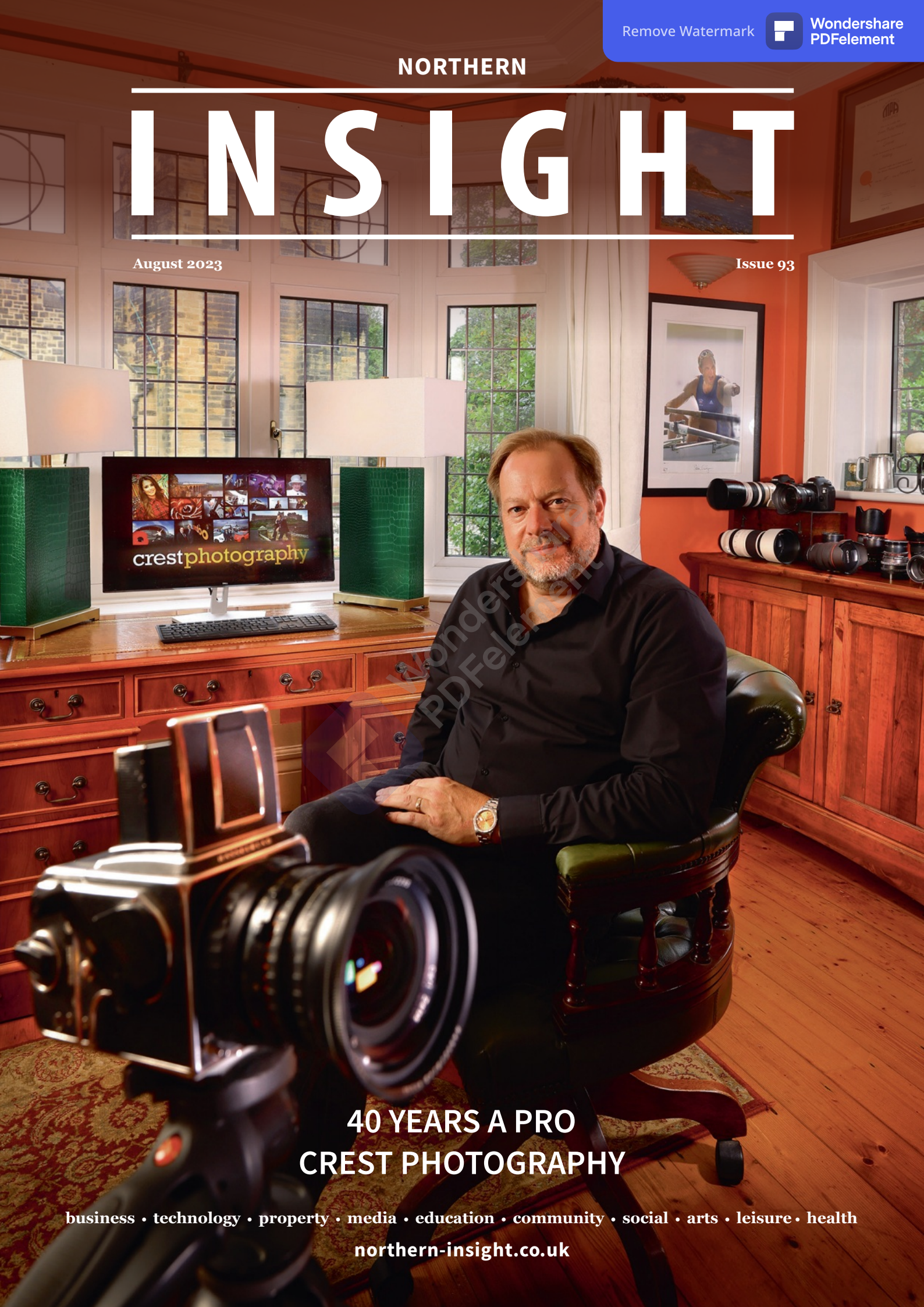


NORTHERN

INSIGHT

August 2023

Issue 93



40 YEARS A PRO
CREST PHOTOGRAPHY

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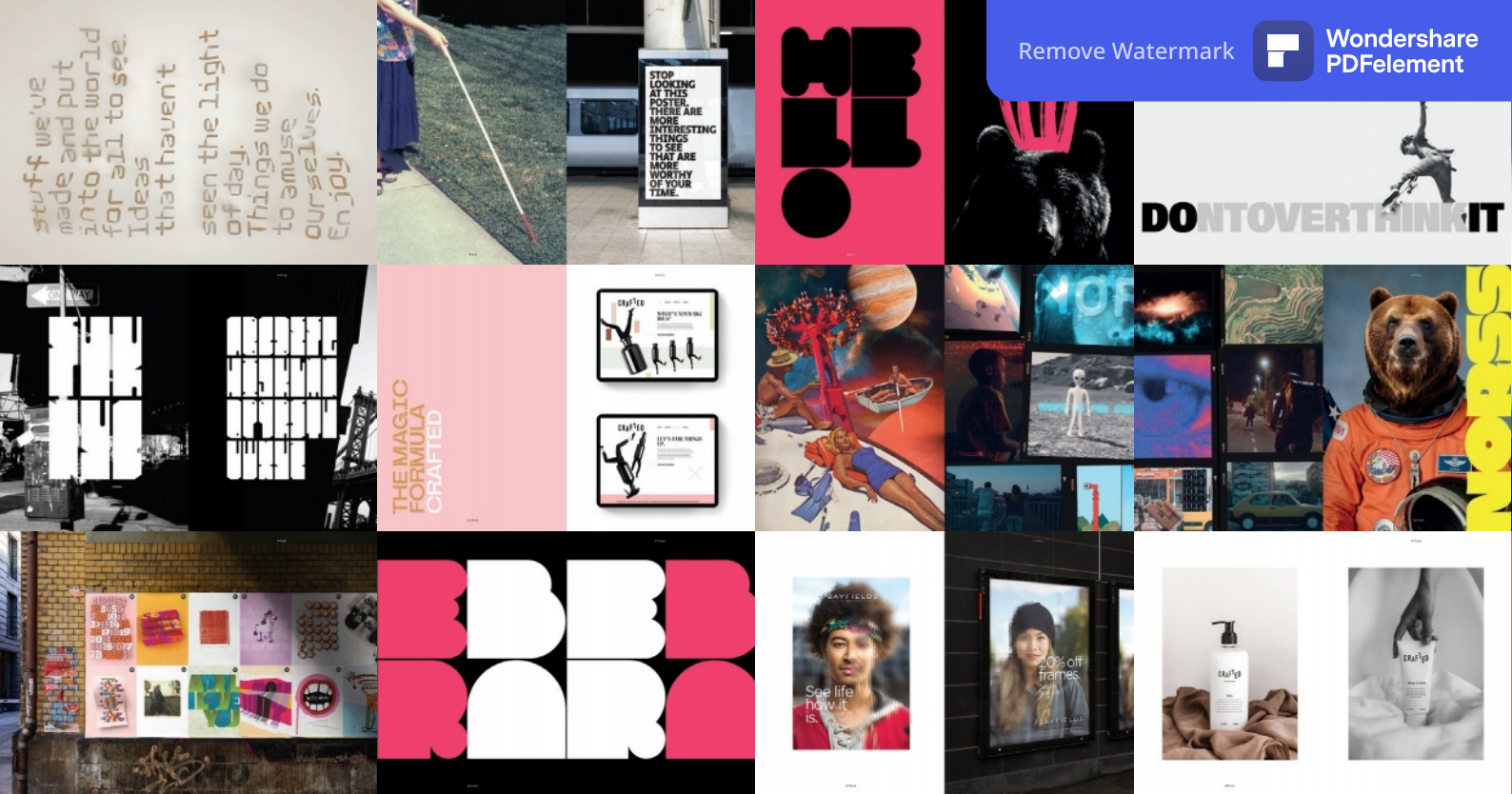


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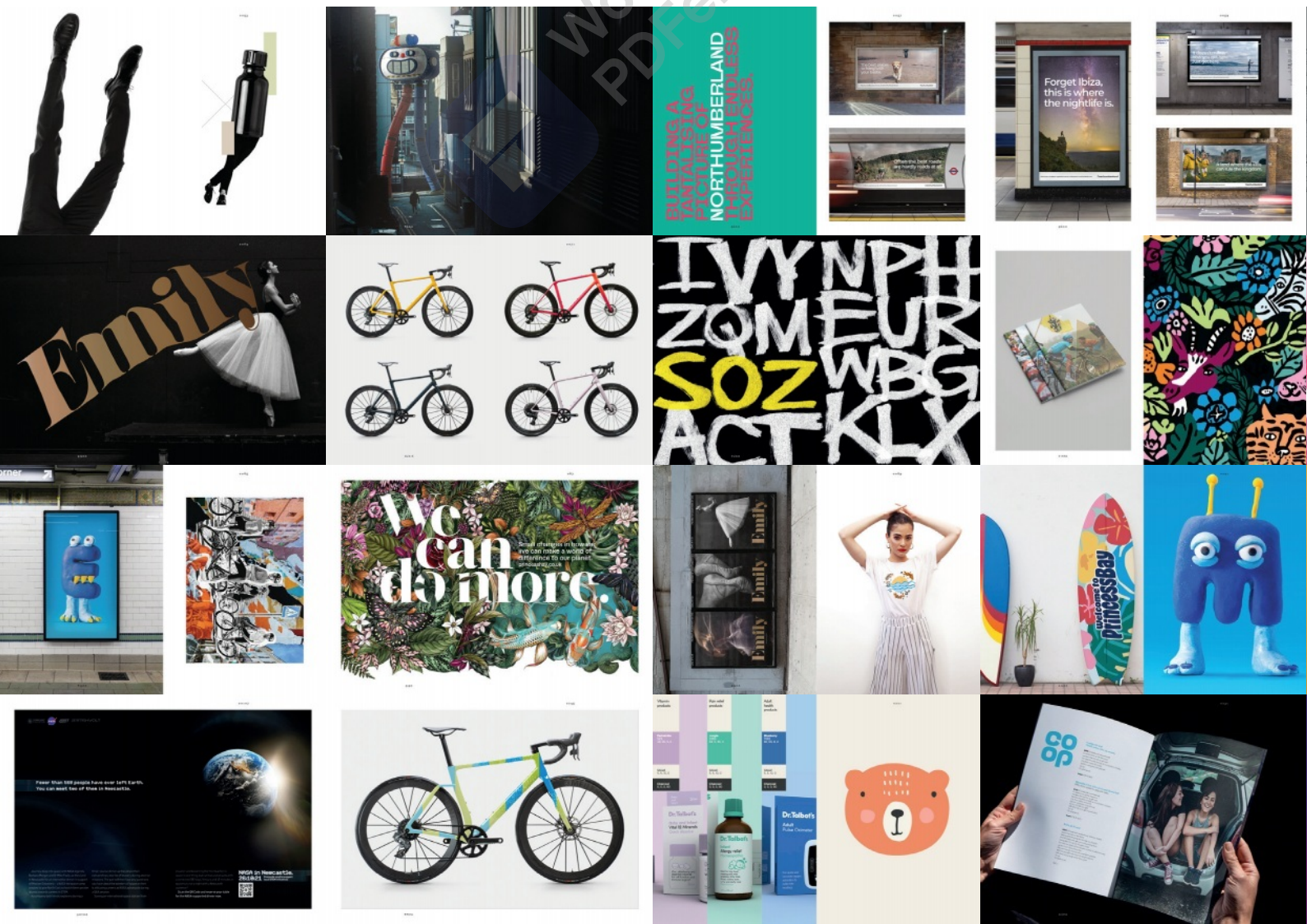
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Crest Photography

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Foreword

Welcome to the August edition of Northern Insight, the region's most comprehensive and indepth business, social and leisure magazine.

Our cover star is our dear friend Simon Williams, the well known face behind the lens at Crest Photography.

Amidst a plethora of interesting business features look out for a great article on the Newcastle headquartered North Standard, now one of the worlds largest marine insurers.

We also focus on the opening of a new branch of wealth management firm Raymond James.

As ever our Property, Media, Technology and Education sections are bristling with topical content and analysis also.

On our travels we take a first visit to the brilliant Gaucho Restaurant and further afield, venture into Tom Cruise territory in Stavanger.

Another vibrant issue full of the essential Northern Insight ingredients. We hope you enjoy it!

Huge thanks to all of our loyal readers, advertisers, suppliers and contributors.

Till next month...

M. J. Grahamslaw

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher
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Business Owners from North Tyneside Volunteer for Key Roles in the North Tyneside Business Forum

Two dedicated business owners from North Tyneside have demonstrated their commitment to improving the local business landscape by volunteering for important roles within the North Tyneside Business Forum.

Michael James, a resident and entrepreneur from North Shields, has been an active member of the management group for several years. He has now taken on the voluntary position of Interim Chair and eagerly anticipates the challenges that lie ahead. Michael's professional expertise lies in NE1 Web Design, where he specialises in assisting businesses in boosting their lead generation through professional web design, development, and digital marketing services.

Sangeeta Chopra, who has served on the management team for just over two years, has stepped up as Interim Vice Chair. Sangeeta is the owner of Namaste - A Taste of India, located at the Royal Quays Outlet and Independent Centre. Originally focused on selling Indian food, spices, and ingredients, Sangeeta's businesses' recent move to larger premises, enabled her to diversify into Indian-based jewellery and fashion.

Supported by the North Tyneside Council, the North Tyneside Business Forum plays a vital role in fostering a vibrant and prosperous business community within the Borough.

The Forum is FREE to join and is for any business with a trading address in North Tyneside.



PD Ports holds ceremony to commemorate war memorial refurbishment

A memorial to North East shipyard workers who gave their lives for their country during the two World Wars has been refurbished by PD Ports engineers.

The Smith's Dock War Memorial, at the entrance to the Teesport Commerce Business Park, has seen the original memorial name plaques cleaned and made weather-proof, while the surrounding area has been turned into a garden of remembrance.

A private ceremony to rededicate the memorial took place on Sunday, June 25th, led by PD Ports chief executive Frans Calje and Liz Chambers, chair of the Smith's Dock Park Trust.

The memorial wall was first erected in 1924 at Smith's Dock's South Shields site, to honour those employees who both served and fell in the Great War. An additional plaque was added following World War II.

Following the closure of the South Shields operation the plaques were moved to Offshore House at South Bank, until the 1987 decision to close the dockyards and the end of ship building by Smith's Dock.

The plaques were moved to their current location in the late 1980s after PD Ports had taken over the site, when it became Teesport Commerce Park. In 2020 a proposal was made by PD Ports Engineering Champions Dino Capaldi and Andrew Jaffray to refurbish the memorial and make it a fitting tribute to the fallen.

Business is Ship Shape at Royal Quays Marina

The North Tyneside Business Forum, created a unique opportunity for local businesses to explore the bustling world of Royal Quays Marina. This exclusive visit was designed to showcase the workings of the busy marina and illustrate its importance to the local economy.

Around 15 enthusiastic business owners and entrepreneurs from the Borough embarked on a voyage of discovery behind-the-scenes at the marina hosted by manager Matt Simms and his team.

Michael James, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, expressed his excitement about the visit, stating, "This experience was truly eye-opening for our members. It provided a unique opportunity for local businesses to witness the dynamic operations of Royal Quays Marina first hand. The customer service and expertise demonstrated by the marina's team left us all feeling inspired and motivated."

The group met in The Lock Restaurant for a breakfast buffet before being warmly welcomed by manager Matt Simms. During the visit, the visitors were shown how the marina is able to move vessels in and out of the lock systems at all states of the tide, 24 hours per day, they heard about the history of the site and were given a detailed tour of the facilities.



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Golf group putts money to good use

Kind hearted golfers have put their sporting skills to good use and raised £12,000 for two deserving North East charities.

Formed two years ago, Newcastle based Golf in the City (GITC) is a dynamic networking group comprising of more than 80 golfers who share a passion for the sport. The group provides regular opportunities for golf enthusiasts to come together, forge connections, and enjoy the camaraderie of the game. GITC is committed to giving back to the local community through charitable initiatives combining their love for golf with helping good causes.

Their inaugural charity-led golf event was held at Slaley Hall where the day's golfing was followed by dinner, prizes, and a fund-raising auction.

The two charities benefiting from the event are the Newcastle Eagles Foundation and the Teenage Cancer Trust. All funds raised have been split equally between the two organisations, ensuring that the proceeds will directly benefit people in the North East.

"We are thrilled with the outcome of our first charity-led golf event, which raised £12,000 for the Newcastle Eagles Foundation and the Teenage Cancer Trust," said Marc Millar, partner in Cleadon based North Wealth Management and co-founder of GITC.

"Our goal was not only to enjoy a day of golf and networking but also to make a positive impact in our local community. We are grateful to all the participants, sponsors, and supporters who contributed to the success of this event."

Carole Gives the Write Balance in New Clinic

Carole Sanderson is an accredited counsellor, psychotherapist and EMDR practitioner with more than 20 years of experience working with anxiety, depression, and trauma-based issues. With a master's degree in Comedy Writing, Carole is combining her day job expertise with her passion for the written word to help people explore their emotions and experiences through the power of writing.

Her own practice; Carole Sanderson Counselling has just moved into new premises in Lansdowne Terrace Gosforth, where she helps people with a wide range of issues including depression, panic attacks, trauma, and low self-esteem.

To help with her own work-life balance, Carole enjoys writing and has penned two books currently in the editing stages with hopes for future publication. Her Masters degree in Comedy Writing makes her uniquely qualified to combine her therapeutic skills with her passion for writing. While her Master's focused on Scriptwriting for Television and Film and having completed courses in Therapeutic Writing, Carole believes that writing



using a therapeutic method is a valuable tool for self-expression, reflection and transformation. By using various writing techniques including journaling, poetry, prose and scripted exercises, she helps clients to delve into their feelings and gain a deeper understanding of themselves.

"I've started the 'Write Balance Group' as writing about trauma can be beneficial as it provides an opportunity for us to reprocess our experiences from a place of safety. This process allows us to gain a sense of control over the traumatic events, ultimately helping us overcome the feelings of helplessness often associated with them. Another benefit is that by writing things down, the intensity of the original trauma can subside making it easier for the person affected to deal with."



Survey launched to measure entrepreneurs' mental health

A North East entrepreneur turned business coach is launching a survey to get to the heart of mental health issues among company owners.

Ian Kinnery is passionate about ensuring that business leaders take care of themselves and their businesses. He has launched an anonymous survey, to gauge levels of stress and anxiety among company owners in the region.

He said: "I know myself the pressures that entrepreneurs can face; I've been there myself.

"By my mid-thirties, I had bought and built my own car dealership – but, ultimately, the stress very nearly killed me. My business had grown too big, and I just wasn't equipped to handle the pressure – but I had nobody to turn to for help.

"I'm not alone, either: research has shown that nearly 70 per cent of entrepreneurs claim to have no one to talk to about their problems, with 43 per cent adding that this is because no one understands the pressures of running a business."

Ian is now looking for North East business owners to participate in an anonymous survey to get a full picture of the mental health crisis affecting entrepreneurs, along with their thoughts on what support they would benefit from.

I want to create a movement where people are happy to talk about their challenges, with a view to easing them – after all, a problem shared is a problem halved.

"This anonymous survey will tell us more about the region's entrepreneurs and the issues they face, allowing us to make real change that improves people's lives."

The survey is available on Google Forms and the results will be collated into a report, to be released towards the end of this year.



Cover Story

Simon Williams on the crest of his profession

The summer of 1983 was a memorable one for Simon Williams, the well-known face behind the lens at Crest Photography.

After sitting his O Levels, rowing for England in Paris and enjoying his first holiday in Spain with his pals, he came home to do some work experience in a commercial photography studio in Gosforth before, he thought, starting a photography course at college. Everything went to plan, apart from being offered a job in that studio after a couple of weeks. The college course was abandoned and a 40-year career as a professional photographer began.

So, we thought it was time to catch-up with him.

What was the photography world like when you started?

It was so exciting as a 16-year-old to be involved in shoots, processing and printing the images and ultimately seeing them in newspapers, magazines and brochures. That feeling is still as strong today when I see my work in print, online, on the back of buses, on advertising hoardings all over the UK or even in a Sheffield casino toilet!

A lot has changed since 1983, but the skills I developed in the dark room are still the ones I use today when editing images on my computer.

When did you start Crest Photography and why?

After 12 happy years working in Gosforth, I was ready for a new challenge and wanted to be my own boss, so launched Crest Photography. I currently work with over 100 clients every year so, in reality, I have actually many more bosses today! I've worked with some of them for more than 30 years and they're all very collaborative, which is a great way to work.

I found a niche in the Corporate PR world and quickly built up a solid client base, working across all sorts of industries, from house building, engineering and hotels to food, education, transport and many more. This variety keeps me excited to this day and no two days are the same.

How varied can a day taking photographs be?

Any given day really could involve anything. I can start with a shoot in Inverness, then head to London, then finish off in Durham before going home.

I once worked with Sting until the early hours in Newcastle,...was shooting in a casino in London the next morning and then across at The Houses of Parliament in the afternoon. It could even mean shooting King Charles on Hadrian's Wall before shooting in a factory in Ashington - that's the variety I love and it's given me an amazing portfolio of images.

It sounds like you've worked with some amazing people - does anyone stand out?

I was the late Queen Elizabeth II's host camera at a visit to Dame Allan's School, which was an amazing honour for me, and I've also done one-to-one shoots with King Charles in my home county of Northumberland, which was a great opportunity to meet and work with the man, rather than the occasion.

Sting, Sir Bobby Robson, Sir Richard Branson, Sir Steve Redgrave, Ant and Dec, Princess Anne, Cheryl, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and more ministers than I can remember have also been in front of the Crest lens.

Forty years is a long time - how have the highs and lows been?

There've been a couple of recessions during that time, but I've been lucky in my spread of clients being varied, so while some may have suffered, others carried on. I actually worked all the way through the pandemic as I work for a few NHS Trusts and there was a lot to do. I'm especially proud to work for my NHS clients - they've had me in tears a few times over the years, but I always had the camera to hide behind.

Forty years later, how has the job changed?

Other than the changes in technology, it's essentially the same job. I know exactly what and why I'm shooting at each job, and while it's not necessarily the prettiest photograph, it's the best picture to tell that particular client's story every time. It's their story I'm getting over in a shot, whether it's a train on the coast for LNER, staff and cake at Greggs, an excavator for Komatsu, an aeroplane and cabin crew at Newcastle International Airport or even a cover shoot for Northern Insight at Buckingham Palace.

What does the future hold for you?

I've got such an amazing set of clients, the job's getting better every year and I've no intention of letting up any time soon.

Doing 60,000 miles a year photographing good news stories is still an absolute joy, and I'd pay to do this job - just don't tell them!

Check out Simons work on Crest Photography's Facebook page and if you'd like to contact Simon, give him a call on 07889 532545 or simon@crestphotography.co.uk





Simon Williams





Just Williams and The Just Williams Sales Academy are certified B Corporations

We believe in the power of using business as a force for good and meeting the highest standards to serve our customers, community, people, and the environment. That's why we chose to join the global movement of B Corp.



Jessica Williams

We commenced our B-Corp journey back in 2021 with an ambition to achieve the highest standards with a continuous progression mentality. We wanted to ensure we were operating our businesses in the most sustainable, responsible and ethical way for now - and for the future - and importantly to have a standard to hold us accountable to.

We have always believed that business could be used for so much more than profit and we had already implemented a large number of initiatives both internally and externally. But we wanted to take it to the next level. With a growing following across the UK and the world, we wanted to be part of the B Corp movement and work with other like-minded businesses that place these principles front and centre.

As a sales and marketing company working

with a range of owner managed businesses across the UK, we knew our journey would support others alongside The Just Williams Sales Academy and we are huge advocates for B-Corp, its ethos, and potential for global change.

It's taken a complete revision in many areas of the businesses and highlighted and formalised great things we were already doing but it has given us other areas to focus on too. With our purpose clear, our strategy laid out and our ambition high, we are committed to supporting other individuals and businesses thrive, with the B-Corp mentality at the heart of what we do, and how we do it.

If you want to find out more about our journey, you can read our full blog here www.justwilliamsLtd.co.uk or visit www.justwilliamsales.academy

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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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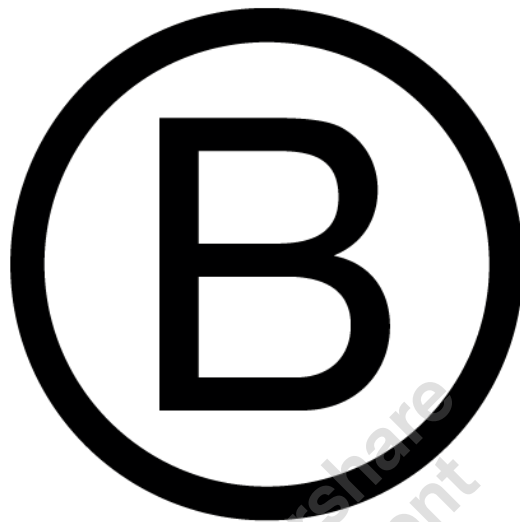
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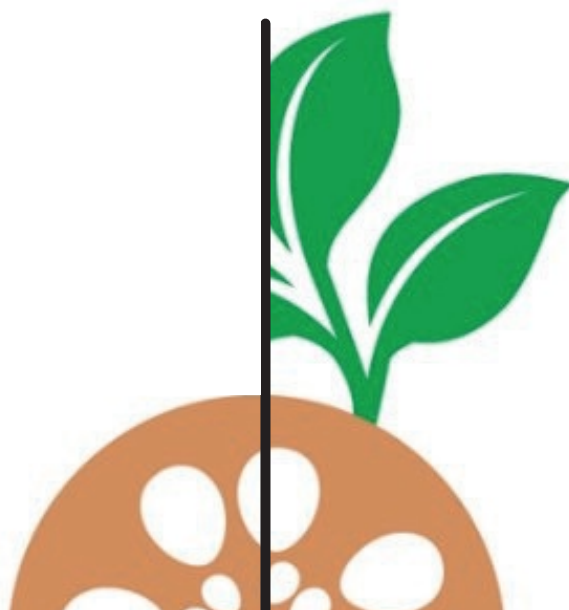
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A very fit wedding

Northern Insight Health and Fitness Correspondent David Fairlamb married his partner Karen in April and celebrated this small family wedding with a meal at the gorgeous Beaumont Hotel in Hexham.

This was followed by a big party in June at the Salt House Social on North Shields Fish Quay.

The Honeymoon will be in Barbados in January.

Huge congratulations to David and Karen from everyone on the Northern Insight team.







“

...The recent merger certainly created a very solid platform for future growth and diversification...



North East's NorthStandard builds on recent merger to drive forward growth in global markets

The Newcastle-headquartered, NorthStandard, a £630 million (US\$800 million) turnover business and now one of the world's largest marine insurers, has announced strong annual performance figures as a consolidated business following the merger between North P&I and Standard Club.

Based on Newcastle's Quayside, the business now employs 650 people in 12 office locations worldwide, with 330 being based in the North East and has seen its financial and operating performance strengthen through the merger of both organisations in February 2023.

Having recently published its first annual review, NorthStandard, reported annual premiums (premium income) in excess of £630 million (US\$800m) for the 2022/23 trading period, and has seen revenues from specialist divisions such as offshore and renewables grow to more than £157 million (US\$200m).

The company has now outlined plans to expand its network and services further, building on new market opportunities and a changing economic landscape.

One of the two Managing Directors, Paul Jennings, based in the Newcastle HQ, explained, "NorthStandard, with a heritage in the North East stretching back over 160 years, is a formidable organisation that is continuing to set the pace of change throughout the global shipping industry. We now insure almost one in five ocean-going vessels that move goods from all sectors around the globe daily, which is a remarkable achievement.

"Our annual performance results are very encouraging and demonstrate that we're in a very good position to build upon this further, pushing ahead with growth and expansion plans into new specialist markets. We're currently assessing new business opportunities in the Middle East, Asia, and the USA, which may catalyse further employment opportunities here in the region."

Fellow Managing Director of NorthStandard, Jeremy Grose, said: "We're operating globally and leading the way as the 'go-to' marine insurer, but our heart and soul are very much rooted in the North East as a key employer for the region, especially here in Newcastle. Our people, with their knowledge and experience, are unparalleled across the whole marine insurance sector, and they have, without doubt, helped to create a dynamic, innovative, and highly successful company."

NorthStandard's influence, market presence, and strong financial position are also helping to implement world-first sustainability measures throughout the shipping



Paul Jennings and Jeremy Grose

supply chain, working closely with international governments to help reduce the industry's carbon footprint ahead of regulatory changes due to come into place in 2030.

Paul added, "Our people are at the core of our business, and our efforts to retain existing staff, develop their specialist knowledge and experience, and recruit a new generation into the industry remains a key priority going forward. This makes us a world-leading organisation which can only have a lasting, positive benefit for the North East region, the local economy, and the wider business community.

"The recent merger certainly created a very solid platform for future growth and diversification as well as new investment in advanced technologies. It's a very exciting time for NorthStandard and one that has certainly created a significant step change within the global marketplace."

north-standard.com

CMYK announced as headline partners for the region's largest Automotive Expo and Engineering & Manufacturing Event



Craig Pratt with Sarah Wharrier

CMYK Business Technology will be sponsors and partners of both the NEAA Automotive Expo 2023 and EMCON Engineering & Manufacturing Conference 2023 in September. CMYK will also be providing both events with digital sign-in and registration services.

CMYK works with several of the region's largest automotive, manufacturing and engineering firms to provide agile and hybrid technologies to improve operational and workplace efficiencies. Their core business offerings include all aspects of Managed IT Services, Hardware, Software and associated support, Managed Print & Integrated Scanning Services, Cloud & Mobile Telecoms, Cloud Services, Business Connectivity and Visitor & Access Management Solutions.

CMYK's infrastructure spans the entire UK, which includes a national network of technical service engineers and fully accredited, highly skilled helpdesk support team function. The emphasis at CMYK is delivering a local approach to support whilst having national strengths and

capabilities. CMYK are a dynamic, client-centric business which is continuously innovating and developing to ensure they continue to provide exceptional value and support to their clients. Craig Pratt, regional director at CMYK said: "We are delighted to have been selected again this year to support and sponsor both the NEAA Expo and EMCON. It goes without saying that both of these events are the flagship gatherings in the calendar for the automotive, manufacturing and engineering sectors. To be involved is a huge privilege for CMYK and to have the opportunity to demonstrate the capabilities of our event sign-in & registration services is fantastic."

Craig added, "CMYK have a great deal of experience and expertise when it comes to supporting the region's automotive, engineering and manufacturing firms. We see exceptional growth potential in these sectors and also its supply chain channel due to significant inward investment into our region. By partnering with both the North East Automotive Alliance and Engineering & Manufacturing Network it has provided a solid platform for CMYK to showcase our capabilities, services and align ourselves with these growing sectors and network amongst leading businesses across our region."

Laura Gage, marketing & PR manager at NEAA said: "We are hearing of more and more of our member companies working with CMYK on a range of projects, which is very pleasing to see, and building these valuable connections is really what the automotive cluster is all about."



Laura added, "It's fantastic to have CMYK and the team onboard as an Expo sponsor for a second year after the great success of the contactless sign-in and registration last year, which was of particular importance as we were transitioning out of lockdown and remote working. Everyone fed back with very positive comments relating to the onsite registration process, so we are pleased to be able to bring this back at the 2022 event."

Kaye Collins of Engineering & Manufacturing stated that "partnering with CMYK was a strategic move for our EMCON show, capitalising on the incredible services and experience of their exhibition team. We know that this will provide a smooth registration process on the day and eliminate much of the time spent on the day's organisation. It's great to have them onboard again this year as a sponsor and recently announced EMN affiliate partner."

www.cmyk-digital.co.uk



Louise Murray

Top tips to market your home

Knowing what to do when you have decided to put your property on the market can be daunting. What do you need to have in place? How do you prepare for the photography?

Having worked behind the scenes at Sanderson Young for over six years and having prepared hundreds of properties to go on the market for sale, I have seen many homes and can offer sellers help in many aspects of the marketing process.

At Sanderson Young we want to make selling your home as easy as possible for you and below are some of our top tips for making sure your home is ready for marketing:

1. First impressions are vital and therefore it is important to present your property in the best possible light. Before photography is taken, consider addressing any DIY jobs that you have been meaning to get done and try to declutter rooms to make them appear larger. We also recommend making sure that gardens and driveways are tidied up, allowing the

photographer to take the best exterior images of your home. We'll edit your photography to help improve its marketability but a clean and tidy home only helps to increase its appeal – not only for photography but also viewings!

2. You will need an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) and a set of floorplans, but don't worry we will organise this for you! An EPC is required by law when marketing a home and outlines the way the building is constructed, insulated, heated, ventilated and the type of fuel that it uses. Floorplans can be carried out at the same time and we are now seeing that buyers find them just as important as your photography!

3. Make sure you know your home! Along with our contract paperwork you'll also be required to complete a Property Information Questionnaire, which asks you important questions about your property. We recommend that you make sure all planning permission and building documentation is in place prior to marketing, to allow for a quicker sale.

4. It is a good idea to do some research and make a decision regarding a solicitor before you put your property on the market, as this can help avoid unnecessary delays once an offer is accepted.

If you are considering a move but feel unsure on what you need to do to maximise the saleability and appeal of your home, we would be happy to provide our expert advice. Please feel free to contact our sales teams to book a free market appraisal, where our friendly team of valuers can visit you to discuss the sales process in more detail.

Louise Murray, Administration Manager, Sanderson Young
louise.murray@sandersonyoung.co.uk



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Darras Road *Darras Hall, Ponteland*

This impressive, state of the art, Crestron controlled smart home boasts individually designed and very versatile accommodation of 5000 sq ft. The magnificent, luxury family property is offered with the option of being fully furnished as shown and occupies a mature garden plot which has been stylishly landscaped with beautiful lawns, enclosed terraces and concealed seating areas. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: H.



5 4 5 B

Price Guide:

Offers over £1.699 Million



Ashleigh Sundin

0191 223 3500

ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk


**SANDERSON
YOUNG**


Woodside

Broom Lane, Whickham

Woodside is an immaculately presented, detached period home positioned on prestigious Broom Lane, with easy access to outstanding local schooling and amenities. This substantial family home has undergone a full transformation having been sympathetically remodelled and modernised throughout, with most rooms having a dual aspect. Externally, the property sits in a south and west facing garden site of 0.79 acres. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: G.



4 3 4 C

Price Guide:
Offers over £1.35 Million



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Woodbine Road Gosforth

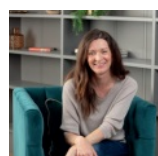
This beautifully presented Victorian terraced home has been recently refurbished by the current owners and is perfectly placed within the heart of Gosforth's Conservation Area. Boasting close to 1600 sq ft of well presented accommodation, including an impressive refitted kitchen/dining area with doors leading out to the rear courtyard, this fantastic property combines period charm with modern detail. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax: C.



4 2 1 D

Price Guide:

Offers Over £495,000



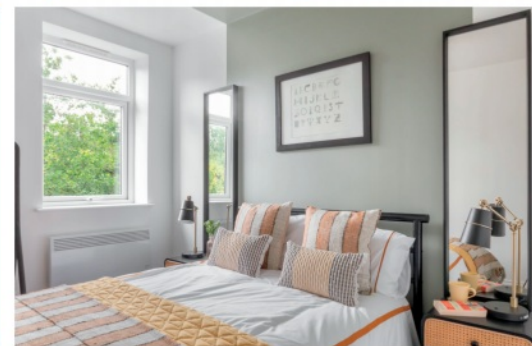
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Simplified Operations Brand Launch

Last month, the vibrant Chaophraya Newcastle played host to a special event as Helen Butler, founder of Simplified Operations, unveiled her new brand. Joined by clients, friends and a great network of supporters, Helen shared her mission to empower business owners to create self-reliant enterprises.

With a focus on streamlined operations and self-sustainability, the launch marked a promising future for ambitious business owners who want to be able to step away from the day-to-day whilst continuing to grow.



Simplifying your business operations for increased success

An operations consultancy helping owners of small businesses to access the skills, resources and practical support they need to build sustainable and profitable businesses through highly efficient and simplified operations.



Helen Butler,
Founder and CEO

Simplified OPERATIONS.



We are truly excited about the difference efficient operations can make to both a business and its owner, but we know that when you're knee-deep in making sales, wearing all of the hats, and trying to keep your customers happy, it can feel a struggle to find the time or energy to make changes, or even know where to start!

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*...We understand
that running a
business can be
challenging...*

Can't see the wood for the trees?

Simplified Operations will clear a pathway for you!

We've all been there.

You're brilliant at what you do...you and your idea, product or service are terrific. The business is doing well, sales are constantly coming in and the team is growing.

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Thankfully, help is at hand.

Helen Butler and her company, Simplified Operations, will help you get sorted.

"A lot of our clients take the plunge of setting-up their own business but they don't come from a business background so therefore don't fully grasp what running a business entails," said Helen. "Consequently, they spend a lot of time in the detail of the day-to-day activities. Ultimately becoming a business owner in the true sense means that they need to stop being the do-er/operator."

Helen is the calming voice of reason. She's been there... done it. Her background is steeped in the corporate business world, establishing streamlined and efficient systems and teams, checking that costs are under control and that profits are being maximised. Now, enabling a business to run without the owner holding it all together is her number one aim.

"I work with a lot of small businesses. The owners are invariably bursting with enthusiasm. They're incredibly passionate about something or feel they are experts in their field. In a matter of days they go from working for someone to working on their own. The only snag was that they end up doing everything. It's not sustainable."

Helen always has her eyes firmly focussed on the long game because many people who set up their own business want to be successful, establish a strong business and then have the option of keeping and growing the business, selling-up or perhaps handing it on to other members of the family. Helen wants to ensure that they have the choice to do this.

"This is where we at Simplified Operations can get involve. We work with our clients to help them create profitable businesses that can run without needing their constant time and attention. We examine the inner workings of



their current business set-up, determine what is (and isn't) working as well as it should and customise a bespoke plan to address key areas of improvement (including the plan, the process and the people). We understand that running a business can be challenging, and it's easy to get caught up in the complexities of operations- which is why we we're here to provide practical day-to-day resources, support and guidance to get the business running optimally.

So, do you recognise the person we're talking about? Is it you? Have you built a business that requires your constant attention? Are you unsure how you could possibly extract yourself from it without it falling apart?

The best idea is to speak to Helen Butler at Simplified Operations. She'll point you in the right direction.

For more details, go onto www.simplifiedoperations.co.uk where you'll find full details of how they can help.



The cost of finance

The right investment is crucial to the successful growth of a business, particularly in challenging economic times, says Sarah Waddington CBE, director of Wadds Inc.

Whether you're a startup or a mature organisation, one of the most important ongoing decisions to make is about sources of finance.

Debt and equity provide a way to develop products, services and technology, fund growth and survive challenging economic times, but both come with a cost.

Debt (such as loans and overdrafts) comes with the obligation to pay it back. The cost of interest can quickly spiral without due attention. There is no legal requirement to return shareholder equity, but company control can quickly be diluted. Often a good way forward can be a combination of the two.

However you choose to fund your business, the key is to ensure the financing strategy fits with your risk appetite and put regular reviews in place so you always have the right balance. Shopping around can help find cheaper options so you aren't overpaying.

Alternative funding sources

Of course, debt and equity aren't the only ways to get money into a business and to offset costs.

Access to finance can come in the shape of grants, voucher schemes and tax credits too. Successfully applying for what's available nationally and in your region can make a huge difference to your company's financial health and sustainability.

Industry bodies, independent networks, local authorities and Growth Hubs often offer funding and support outside Government-led schemes.

Entrepreneurial directors who have built innovation into their businesses have several possibilities. Some of the more popular current ones include:

● Research and Development (R&D) tax reliefs

If your business is working on a research and development project that aims to advance the areas of science and technology, you may be able to claim Corporation Tax relief. There are specific rules for SMEs, while larger companies can claim R&D expenditure credit (RDEC).

● Innovate UK Smart Grants

Innovate UK, part of UK Research and Innovation, offers funding for game-changing and world-leading ideas designed for swift commercialisation. Ideas need to be genuinely new and not just disruptive within their sector. According to the website, to take part in the current competition, which

opened this June and closes in September 2023, projects of 6 to 18 months must have total eligible project costs between £100,000 and £500,000 and can be single or collaborative. Projects of 19 to 36 months must be collaborative and have total eligible project costs between £100,000 and £2 million.

Innovate UK Future Economy Loans

Scaling micro, small and medium-sized businesses can apply to Innovate UK for innovation loan support with late-stage projects that will significantly boost the UK economy. Projects focused on future economy areas are of particular interest.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) are a potential route for organisations wanting to improve their productivity and competitiveness. The scheme connects companies with a university, college, research and technology organisation or Catapult and engages a graduate to lead the strategic business project. There are two types of KTP – the first is focused on developing new or better products and services and the second is a management KTP focused on enhancing processes and building management capability.

Creative England Creative Growth Finance

Creative Growth Finance provides scale-up loans of £100k - £1m for UK businesses in the creative industries. Firms must demonstrate growth potential, be talent-led, develop new intellectual property (IP) and harness creativity with technologies.

At Wadds Inc., we work with businesses in the creative sectors and beyond with their company direction, supporting strategic growth plans. For a conversation about how we can help you, contact Sarah Waddington CBE on sarah.waddington@wadds.co.uk or visit www.wadds.co.uk



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*...debt and
equity aren't
the only ways
to get money
into a
business...*



Tech firm building influence in digital marketing sector

A North East digital technology firm is looking to build its influence across the UK marketing sector after securing a six-figure investment from the North East Growth Capital Fund Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Xinfluence's proprietary software platform Xi enables brands and advertising agencies to search, engage, and collaborate with verified influencers in order to identify the most appropriate partners for their online marketing activities.

Xi uses a range of different metrics to help and maximise clients' return on investment, and facilitates the creation of tailored marketing content for social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube from concept through to full post-campaign analytics.

The Newcastle-headquartered business, which also has a London office, is using the £200,000 investment, which was sourced through regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers, to enhance its sales and business development resources, with up to 11 new jobs expected to be created over the next two years.



Targeted sector activity supports half year performance for RGCF

RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) is on course to continue a positive year of dealmaking with a strong pipeline of transactions ahead for the remainder of 2023.

Despite operating in an increasingly challenging economic environment, RGCF has delivered strong performance in the first six months of 2023 as it enacts its strategy of supporting businesses in key target sectors.

This is set to continue in H2 of the year with a strong pipeline of transactions ahead in markets such as professional services, human capital/recruitment, healthcare and technology.

The pace of activity in the first half of the year increased in the second quarter, with RGCF delivering a series of significant transactions in a short space of time.

The period culminated in RGCF winning the Corporate Finance Deal of the Year award at the North East Accountancy Awards in June for its involvement in advising the management team and Shard Credit Partners on the MBO of NA College.

Funding helps South Tyneside firms accelerate growth

Two related South Tyneside companies are moving into a large shared premises, allowing them to grow far quicker than would have been possible at separate sites.

Zenith People and Zenith Training have come together under one roof at Monkton Business Park in Hebburn after receiving support from The Growth Fund – which was set up to help companies looking to expand in Gateshead, South Tyneside, Sunderland and the wider North East.

Zenith People is a Recruitment Business covering Engineering and Manufacturing; Technical and IT; Commercial, such as Marketing, Sales, Finance and Customer Service; and Construction.

Zenith Training supports companies with recruitment and training of apprentices, upskilling existing staff and accessing other funding sources.

The companies took over two floors of a building in Merchant Court in June, allowing both businesses to align their work much more effectively and collaborate on opportunities.

Managing Director Angela Anderson believes that the positive impact of the move is already being felt.

She said: "Culturally it brings the two companies closer together and allows for a much more integrated workforce."



"From a commercial perspective it allows us to have much more effective conversations and look at new business more easily and service our clients better."

"So there's the positive impact on the staff – bringing us all together and aligning the skills – and the commercial impact of allowing us to grow the business far quicker through more direct communication."



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Increasing importance on paying tax bills promptly

Azets, the UK Top 10 accountancy firm provides the latest information.

It was announced on 22 June that the BoE would increase the base rate yet again to 5%, marking a 15-year high. HMRC's tax payment interest rates are linked to the Bank of England (BoE) base rate, which continues to rise. The base rate increases are introduced as a means of calming stubborn inflation but it has a direct impact on taxpayers who are already dealing with heightened financial pressures.

The late payment interest is calculated at base rate plus 2.5% and repayment interest is set at base rate minus 1% (minimum floor of 0.5%). As such, the late payment rate now stands at 7.5% and the repayment rate is 4%.

There have been consistent rises on HMRC interest rates and there are no signs of them letting up. This late payment increase is the 13th consecutive jump, with the last reduction being on 7 April 2020.

A year-on-year comparison shows a 4% late payment increase, equating to an extra £400 per

annum on a £10,000 tax liability. The repayment rate was at the lower limit level of 0.5% for 13 years before it started to creep up from August 2022.

Despite HMRC's repayment rate being significantly lower than the late payment rate (and we understand that this is a factor that has been drawn to HMRC's attention of late by the professional bodies), it represents a possible incentive for taxpayers to complete their tax returns early and get any necessary payments made early.

These rises are across Income Tax, National Insurance contributions, Capital Gains Tax, Stamp Taxes, Stamp Duty Reserve Tax and non-quarterly instalment payments for Corporation Tax. In addition, VAT late payment charges also now apply for accounting periods commencing on or after 1 January 2023.

While not falling within late payment interest described above, interest on underpaid quarterly instalments of corporation tax has also

risen to 5.5% on 22 May 2023, an increase of 4.4% from 1.1% this time two years ago and the highest rate for 15 years.

Considerations for taxpayers

Any taxpayers who have outstanding tax bills should seek to repay as much as possible before another hike in the interest rate occurs, which is widely expected prior to the end of this year. It is widely predicted that the BoE rate will climb to 6% by December 2023 and this will further impact taxpayers who are encountering financial pressures or regularly fall into the late payment category.

Anyone who is in a position where they can't pay the tax owed could be eligible to discuss a Time to Pay Arrangement with HMRC. This is a flexible and bespoke option for any individual or business struggling with tax obligations. However, if going down this route, it's critical to know finances as HMRC may ask for details of income and expenditure to ensure that payment terms are realistic.

We are here to help

If you have any questions about the late payment interest hikes, or need advice on managing your tax requirements, please get in touch with a member of the Azets Tax Team or hello@azets.co.uk

www.azets.co.uk

This article is for general information only and is not intended to be advice to any specific person. You are recommended to seek professional advice before taking or refraining from taking action on the basis of the contents of this article.



Investing in Newcastle: Raymond James, Monument opens



Wealth management firm Raymond James has opened a new branch in Newcastle upon Tyne, offering investment and financial planning services to individuals, families, business owners, Trusts and charities across the North East.

The branch is located in the old Newcastle Building Society HQ, which has been totally revamped in a sustainable way, offering a warm and inviting environment for clients and staff, with the additional benefit of client parking on site.

Raymond James, Monument will offer bespoke investment and financial planning services across the North East of England, from the Scottish Borders to North Yorkshire and the Lake District. The North East offers an array of opportunities for business, with a booming and supportive community of entrepreneurs and organisations, becoming a major hub within the UK for various industries.

The branch will be led by branch principal Gary Fawcett and fellow wealth managers James Carrick and Rob Brotherton. Gary and James have lived in the local area all their lives, and Rob relocated there for university and subsequently made it his home.

Branch principal Gary Fawcett began his financial career at Wise Speke (later acquired by Brewin Dolphin) in 1998 on a work placement during university. He returned as a graduate trainee and remained there for 23 years.

On opening this new branch in Newcastle, Gary said: "With business booming in and around the North East, this is a perfect opportunity to



L-R: Gary Fawcett, James Carrick and Rob Brotherton

set up a branch focused on delivering best in class financial advice to help drive further investment and growth in the region.

"The North East has had its challenges in recent years, but the opportunity for the area, business and people is huge. The region has a culture rooted in resilience and evolution, and this permeates into business. One of the main priorities for me has always been to help facilitate business connections through my work, and given the branch's central location, I am confident this is something we can achieve in the region through Raymond James.

"Raymond James' ethos is of placing clients first, giving them personalised solutions and direct access to experienced professionals. We know that in a constantly evolving business landscape, clients

value honesty, trust, service and expertise - but at a fair price point, above all else - and that is what we are setting out to provide."

On the new branch, Jason Cherriman, Senior Business Development Manager at Raymond James said: "Gary is a talented and experienced wealth manager with a strong reputation in the local business community. He has ambitious plans for the new branch and with James and Rob alongside him we have no doubt that the branch will provide a valuable service to the area and beyond. We look forward to helping them grow the branch and achieve their vision in the years ahead."

www.Monument.RaymondJames.uk.com

“
...this is
a perfect
opportunity
to set up
a branch
focused on
delivering
best in class
financial
advice...”



Louise McGuire

The benefits of outsourcing your business's payroll function

By Louise McGuire, head of payroll services at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd in Gosforth

Managing a company's payroll can be a time consuming and complex process, whether for growing businesses that are taking on more and more staff or smaller firms where the management teams already have enough on their plate with keeping the company's day-to-day operations on the right track.

It's therefore no surprise that outsourcing of the payroll function has become an increasingly popular option for North East businesses of all sizes over the last few years, especially where they simply don't have or can't afford to have staff with specific expertise in payroll matters in-house.

Outsourcing allows for the management of payments, deductions, tax filing, pension scheme admin and record keeping to be passed to experts who deal with these complex matters on a daily basis, while it also takes care of the business's time-consuming responsibility for keeping up with the latest complex legislation and regulations that relates to payroll management.

There are strict legal criteria to be met around how this work is carried out, with penalties in

place for firms that fail to meet them, while the payroll implications from the way in which furlough payments were made through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme during the pandemic are still being played out in many businesses today.

If you're looking at outsourcing the payroll function for your business, your first step should be to talk to potential providers about the range of services they can provide and the specific requirements of your business, whether this is delivering a full payroll service or managing specific elements of it.

Your existing professional advisors may be able to provide this service themselves via their own in-house resources, or they may be able to recommend specialist businesses that they know and trust to deliver the support you need.

Management data should be just as easily available from an outsourced provider as it is from internal systems, as you don't want any missing information delaying business decisions that you have to make, so make sure to question them about how you would access it, what sort of payroll software systems they would use and what are the particular advantages of choosing this option.

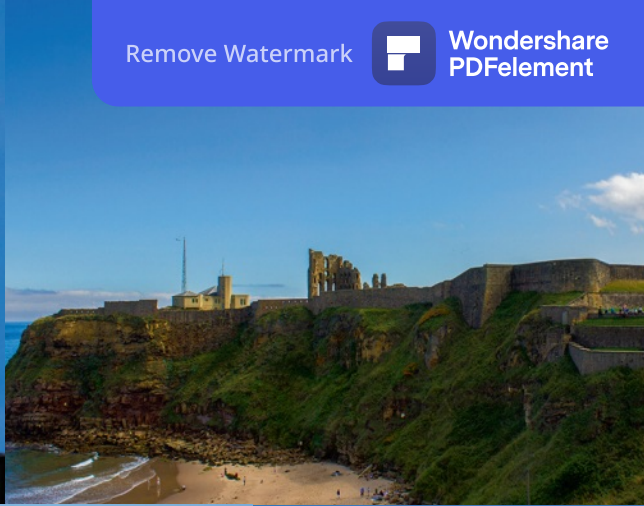
Issues around data security should also be part of this discussion, as you'll need to be absolutely certain that any commercially confidential and/or sensitive information you allow to leave the business is being properly safeguarded.

You should also seek clarity on likely 'per head' costs right from the outset, which will of course depend on the exact of services you need and the number of employees they will cover, but should enable you to make savings on managing the process in-house.

In the current challenging economic climate, management teams have more than enough to keep them busy without having to worry about meeting their payroll responsibilities.

Getting expert help with doing so can save substantial amounts of management time, money and worry, and whatever size your business is, it's something that's definitely worth considering.

For further information on the benefits and practicalities of payroll outsourcing, please contact Louise McGuire at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors on 0191 256 9500 or via louise.mcguire@r-m-t.co.uk



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*...the key is in
how we empower,
communicate, lead
(not manage),
measure and adapt
together...*

Managing strategic change

Change is always around us. In our personal lives and in our business lives. Sometimes we embrace it, but a lot of the time it is natural to deny the need, resist it or avoid it. And then there are those that create it because they love the chaos it can bring.

There are also different grades of change ranging from incremental changes through to fundamental changes. Incremental changes happen in small steps and are things as simple as continuous improvement, sometimes we are not even aware they are happening! Next is tactical change, which are the things that are needed to improve performance in the short or mid term.

Strategic change, which this article is going to focus on, is also known as transformational change. This incorporates significant organisational changes, business development and process changes, all of which are long term and strategic in nature with the aim of increasing the business value. They can even encompass a pivot, which is a fundamental change in the purpose or primary focus of what the organisation is doing.

Andrew Marsh, Vistage Chair, runs a number of cohorts in the North East and Northumberland. As well as members days when the cohorts focus on learning and supporting each other, discussing challenges, there are regular speaker days.

The most recent speaker, who focused the groups on managing strategic change, was Business Psychologist, Sue Firth. In the session, it was clear that no matter what the process and level of strategic change an organisation is going through the steps to take are the same.

Any resistance to this change process from the team is there because the word change is grounded in fear. Sue's first piece of advice is to use another term such as improvement or modification, which keeps people in their comfort zone. Everyone is different, and everyone has experienced change that hasn't worked or lead to mistakes. Andrew said:

"Mistakes in strategic change can be changing too much, poor communication, creating instability, getting timings wrong, not leaving space to account for adaptation but fundamentally making it hard for people to act. Sue worked with my Vistage groups on a model on how take an organisation from A (today's position) to C (where do we need to be) implementing strategic change with the team onboard."

The A to C model is designed to not scare a team, but to motivate them. It is a tool that maps out a journey, starting with why can't we stay at A, what needs to improve, what is not for changing, where the organisation is now and how far has the team come already? Sue said:

"The next step is then to describe C and what it looks like and how it will feel, and how via B we will get there. This includes repeating why we can't stay at A, what is in it for the team and where we need to get to and why. The real trick is to create a

first step known as B. B steps should be bitesize and scattered with thanks and encouragement to the team, along with reminders of why we can't stay at A and need to be at C. This should become your mantra – repeating the process until we arrive at C."

Andrew agrees with Sue in reminding people that the key is in how we empower, communicate, lead (not manage), measure and adapt together. Bringing in positive steps to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are generally embraced so are good to bring in or review alongside any other strategic change as discussed in Andrew's previous Northern Insight articles. It also good to apply a form of coaching with your team, as coaching is an advanced form of communication that should be applied throughout all levels of managing people, but especially by leaders. It is different to mentoring in that you are helping people find their own answers, rather than giving them the tips on what to do, so they feel empowered at a time of change.

This ties in with Sue's view on helping the three types of personalities – the balanced people need different support to those who internalise experience, and again for those who have expressive, external needs during times of change. She concluded:

"Understanding these different personality types in your team and their needs will help you identify what they require during these types of change. With this knowledge you can use the A to C tool, with a solid vision and plan."

In a previous Vistage meeting, Daniel Pink's Chairworld video was shared with the attendees. He reinforces this approach to strategic change with the opinion that people may get the vision BUT unless you fundamentally make it easy for people to act, then that vision may not manifest. His motivation theory is all about autonomy where employees are expected to comply with what they are asked to do. According to Pink, giving employees autonomy ensures that they are more involved in what they do especially if they include time, technique, team, and task.

If you want access to speakers like Sue or Daniel and are interested in joining Vistage, then get in touch with Andrew, andrew.marsh@vistagechair.co.uk



Peter Neal

How to improve your own board level performance

When you ask the members of the Experience Bank Group's peer group (for NEDs, trustees, board advisors and consultants at board level) what the hardest thing about holding one of these positions is, they all have the same answer: "Finding a way to improve your own performance as a board member."

This quandary is what led Peter Neal, the founder of the Experience Bank Group, into setting up the peer cohort opportunity. Here he talks about how board members can improve performance, highlighted by examples from real-time NEDs and trustees.

"Being a board member can be quite a lonely experience. As our peer group facilitator Andrew Marsh pointed out at our latest session, whilst a board is a team with a common goal, it is also a group of individuals who have to focus independently on what they believe is the best for the stakeholders – board members need not necessarily like each other, but they can and must act professionally.

"It can sometimes, therefore, be hard to turn to other members of the actual board you are involved in, and often NEDs find themselves relying on their own tenacity to find ways to improve their own performance. But is that enough?

"There is, of course, lots of online material that you can read, but I firmly believe the best way to process information is to talk to other NEDs from other organisations. By building relationships in and outside of your organisation, by asking for

others' perspective, you will adapt new skills and approaches. You should, without question, make sure that this is done in a safe and confidential space though!

"New member Garry said on joining our peer group that one of the main immediate benefits to him was to learn, in a confidential setting, lots of different perspectives to the same challenge - he fully enjoyed watching how the group talked around the issue to come to pretty much all the same conclusion.

"Which shows, as with everything in life, the best way to learn is to listen. Ask the relevant questions, spend time with your MD/CEO, and absorb. There is no way that you can be performing well if you don't actually understand your organisation, its aims, purpose, challenges, current model and strategy.

"As well as listening and asking questions you should be on top of standard knowledge on governance, articles and policies, as well as changes to legislation in the industry you're working within.

"You can usually source this from industry bodies, but it is always good to have allies at the same level as you in other organisations who you can

swap notes with. Simply reading something and then putting it into practice can be difficult and unsuccessful – theory is not always transferrable into reality without real-time context.

"Another simple way to perform well is to make sure you read all the information/papers and be fully prepared before the board meeting. If you don't already have a process in place where you receive board papers a week before the event, then it is something I recommend you put in place. Being prepared is key to maximising that time at the board table and is all important to the whole board, not just yourself!

"Understanding what are (and how to deal with) conflicts of interest is key too. In a recent session, our peer group processed what to do about dysfunctional board members, and it was enlightening what some people don't realise is unacceptable behaviour at this level. Cohort members Jon and Ian both reported in on witnessing unacceptable behaviours, along with Alison who asked for ideas on how to get through to a board level colleague who was performing operationally instead of strategically - it made us all realise as a group how many NEDs and trustees fail to perform well, due to ignorance and conflicts.

"My final tip on how to improve your own board level performance is to actually care. Care enough to invest the right time, to invest the right effort and to invest in yourself with some director level training or by joining a peer group. If you keep an open mind, question your own performance, and remove any trace of ego, you will always be looking for ways to be better and that naturally leads to enhanced performance."

If this article has spurred you onto wanting to perform better in your board level position, then do get in touch with Peter for more information on the current peer group opportunities - peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk

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Digital strategies: a roadmap for the future or a road to nowhere?



The use of digital technology in the working lives of millions was transformed overnight in March 2020, but none of this change was carefully planned; it wasn't part of an institutional strategy or transformation project. So why are so many organisations turning to a digital strategy as the initiator for digital transformation?

Earlier this year JISC, the UK digital, data and technology agency focused on tertiary education, research and innovation published a report on how UK universities are approaching digital strategy differently following the pandemic saying 'some are creating specific digital transformation strategies, while others are incorporating digital across existing strategies'. A key theme is how institutions are trying to build on the very abrupt changes brought about by the pandemic in a more strategic and fully embedded way.

A further recurring theme across the sector is the link between strategy and transformation; maximising the use of digital technologies being something every institution aspires to achieve. In fact, this concept is so ingrained in the sector that there are degree programmes in digital transformation, and institutes dedicated to research and impact in this area.

Such initiatives can also draw scepticism; how many digital strategies actually provide a detailed plan for transformation? How many bear any resemblance to what is happening

on the ground? How many strategy roadmaps reflect realistic implementation timelines, which are adhered to? How many staff can articulate their institution's digital strategy?

Moreover, the glacial approach to change is creeping back - I'm regularly told by clients and former colleagues that their digital initiatives are absolutely going to happen once they progress through the multifarious committees, boards and working groups.

I work largely with universities and know that almost all have a nicely presented pdf strategy sitting on a website for anyone to read - and know it's the same for most businesses. But for me, a digital strategy needs to be an active and urgent plan, rather than a vague aspiration. If the only output of a digital strategy is a shiny document on the website, then there is no point having one.

The unique situation and urgency of the Covid-19 pandemic gave all organisations a simple central goal: to enable staff to work remotely but keep delivering, but at the same time the constraints presented meant staff were

enabled and empowered to do so using any means necessary. That said, the fact that rapid transformation took place during the pandemic does not mean that 'unplanned' or 'unstrategic' change is the solution.

How do we reconcile the need for rapid transformation with the need for change to be well planned and executed?

A good digital strategy lays out a clear roadmap for transformation, balancing urgency with innovation and autonomy; be realistic about where you are, understanding what the situation on the ground really is and what resources are needed to make positive use of digital technology.

There will always be barriers and complications when it comes to digital transformation, but ensuring a strategy accounts for flexibility means organisations can continue on their journey.

To find out more about digital strategies, digital transformation and the future of work, get in touch with Waterstons at info@waterstons.com or visit www.waterstons.com



Develop North investment fund supports Aberdeenshire homes scheme with £1.65m investment



Develop North PLC (Develop North), the investment fund providing loans to property developers in the North of England and Scotland, is supporting the creation of a bespoke housing development in Aberdeenshire.

Developed by Churchill Homes Ltd, it will feature luxury homes, having received a £1.65m funding package from Develop North, which is managed by Tier One Capital Ltd (Tier One), the Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based wealth management and fund management specialists.

Develop North, a London Stock Exchange-listed fund, will provide the investment to assist Churchill Homes Ltd to develop the Caim Collection scheme on the site in South Ythsie, which is 17 miles north of Aberdeen.

The architect-designed homes comprise a mix of bungalows and one-and-a-half storey detached units, with an average value of £500,000 designed by Aimee Pirie Chartered Architect. Two units have already been reserved off-plan, highlighting the strong demand for this exclusive housing development.

Churchill Homes Ltd, with more than three

decades of experience, has a trusted reputation in the North East of Scotland. It specialises in selecting prime locations for development, ensuring each property is uniquely designed to complement the surrounding area. Gordon Pirie, the principal developer who is also a structural engineer, has almost 30 years of experience in property development across the Aberdeen region.

Legal advice to Develop North was provided by Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based Ward Hadaway and Glasgow-based Thorntons. Project monitoring will be undertaken on behalf of Develop North by DM Hall.

Since it was founded in 2017, Develop North has successfully provided funding to support the construction of 33 residential and commercial projects across the North East of England and Scotland. These projects have a combined value of £70.3 million and an estimated GDV of £184 million, contributing significantly to the growth and prosperity of the regions it supports.

Coinciding with this latest project, Develop North has completed two successful exits from schemes it has supported with funding in Scotland and North East England.

Alongside funding the purchase of a commercial site in Newlands, Glasgow, which was taken to the point of achieving planning for a residential development by the scheme's management enabling it to be sold to a developer, Develop North has also recently exited from a residential development in Morpeth, North East England, following the completion and sale of four executive homes.

Brendan O'Grady, Fund Manager at Tier One, said: "Churchill Homes has built a reputation for the development of extremely high-quality homes, which create communities in the stunning setting of Aberdeenshire. We are looking forward to supporting Gordon and his team with the development of the Caim Collection."

"This project, and our exits from two recently completed schemes, are part of our commitment to providing a viable and bespoke alternative lending platform for developers, which supports the creation of new homes and commercial premises that encourage economic growth and prosperity in Scotland and the North of England."

Gordon Pirie from Churchill Homes, said: "We are pleased to have secured this funding from Develop North, which will contribute to transforming our vision at South Ythsie into a tranquil and welcoming new hamlet community in the beautiful Aberdeenshire countryside."

Imogen Holland, corporate partner at Ward Hadaway who led on the transaction, added: "We are delighted to work with the team at Tier One and Develop North, as they continue to invest in the construction of luxury property developments across the North East and Scotland. The Churchill Homes' scheme promises to be a great success and is a strong addition to the portfolio of high-end residential properties within the fund."

www.tieronecapital.co.uk

Maven investees support the transition to Net Zero

Maven continues to support the enhancement of ESG credentials to help deliver responsible and sustainable growth in its portfolio companies.



L-R: Guy Bashford of Business Durham, Cllr James Rowlandson, Neil Spann of Power Roll and Michael Dickens of Maven.

Maven Capital Partners has led a £1 million funding round in Power Roll, a developer of ultra-low-cost and lightweight flexible solar film for renewable energy generation, as part of its continued commitment to, and investment in the North East.

Power Roll opened its solar film pilot manufacturing facility in County Durham last year, which is the first facility in the world to produce low-cost, lightweight, flexible solar film using Power Roll's patented micro-groove technology. The business is now producing first generation solar film from the new pilot plant.

Power Roll's unique solar film is capable of producing ultra-low-cost green electricity that is significantly cheaper to make than existing flexible solar photovoltaic (PV) technologies. The film is suitable for non-load-bearing rooftops, building integration, transport, portable applications, and off-grid projects.

Maven's transaction will enable the business to embark on a programme of growth to continue its intensive product development pathway, allowing for the production of its innovative solar film to be commercialised on a global scale.

Solar is expected to be the fastest-growing energy sub-segment by the end of the year, with the global solar energy market expected to exceed \$220 billion this year.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven, said: "We originally invested in Power Roll in 2020 and have been pleased to witness the number of development, technical and commercial milestones the

company has achieved over the last three years, with its disruptive solar film technology. Neil leads a highly professional team with the right knowledge and scientific experience to drive the business forward and commercialise the technology. With green energy more important than ever, Power Roll looks set to drive innovation and produce next-generation solar solutions to assist with the transition to net zero."

Neil Spann, Managing Director, Power Roll, said: "We are delighted by the support that Michael and Maven have provided to Power Roll since its initial investment. Maven share our vision for the future of the business and we are grateful for this further investment. Our mission is to revolutionise solar energy powering a global rooftop solar revolution from here in County Durham. The need for low-cost clean energy has never been greater and our solar film has the potential to generate solar energy from the billions of square meters of rooftops where the heavy and rigid silicon panels manufactured in China cannot be deployed."

Cllr James Rowlandson, Portfolio holder for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council, said: "Durham County Council is proud to support Power Roll through our Finance Durham Fund. With this additional investment, we are confident that Power Roll will continue to thrive in County Durham and contribute to the global transition towards net zero. The innovative solar film technology developed by Power Roll has the potential to revolutionise the solar energy industry, providing ultra-low-cost green electricity on a global scale. We are excited to see the positive impact this investment will have on both the local economy and the environment."

Maven recognises the importance of ESG (Environment, Social and Governance) factors working with portfolio businesses to ensure ESG issues are carefully managed throughout the period of investment, with close engagement for each company in relation to corporate governance practices and support for the management team in developing policies on the environment, community engagement, HR and employee relations, corporate governance and responsible product marketing.

Maven looks to invest responsibly, including backing businesses that are making a real impact on addressing environmental, social and governance issues facing society today.

Last year we backed, iPac Packaging Innovations, a North East business that manufactures sustainable thermoformed packaging, primarily used in the food and pharmaceutical sectors, that uses 90% recycled materials in its products and is investing in alternatives to fossil-based polymers.

The business has strong ESG credentials, working with customers to produce innovative, reliable and eco-responsible plastic packaging which meets key sustainability requirements. At least 90% of the plastic used in iPac's processes is recycled and all of their products are 100% recyclable. iPac also supports global plastic waste prevention, developing a range of packaging products that uses plastics salvaged from the ocean.

Maven also backed the UK's largest shower manufacturing plant, Roman Showers, a local business that manufactures, sells and installs shower screens, trays, bathroom furniture and fixtures and fittings. They support an impressive range of international hotel groups, architects and designers, including Berkeley Homes, Taylor Wimpey, Keepmoat, Miller, IHG hotels and Hilton.

Roman has developed a number of ESG policies including forming a Joint Venture in Malaysia to ensure all the aluminium and brass it uses in its product portfolio is 100% recyclable. 80% of the glass the company produces and sells is recyclable growing to 100% in the next two years and all Roman packaging is recyclable.



Michael Vassallo, Investment Director at Maven, commented: "Maven became a signatory to the internationally recognised Principles for Responsible Investment in June 2021 and is committed to including ESG factors in investment decision making and ownership as part of this initiative. We are also a signatory to the Investing in Women Code which aims to improve female entrepreneurs' access to tools, resources and finance, supporting diversity and inclusion in access to finance. Supporting the enhancement of ESG credentials is a positive step change that helps deliver long term, responsible and sustainable growth in our portfolio companies."



L-R: Cllr James Rowlandson of Durham Council, Sarah Slaven of Business Durham, David Osborne of Roman Showers and Michael Dickens of Maven.

Maven is one of the UK's most active private equity investors and is passionate about working with ambitious businesses to achieve their strategic goals and maximise growth potential. If your business, or the business you advise, is looking at private equity as a solution to fund future growth we would love to hear from you. Speak to one of our investment team by getting in touch at funding@mavencp.com

Ladies take leading roles at accountancy firm



L-R: New Robson Laidler associate directors, Vicky Smith and Georgina Rutter.

Robson Laidler Accountants has promoted a duo of new associate directors at its Jesmond and Chester le Street offices.

Georgina Rutter joined the accountancy firm in November 2017 where she progressed along the firm's career pathway to become a senior client manager in the audit and assurance team. She is promoted alongside longstanding employee Vicky Smith, who joined the firm as a trainee in 2010 and makes the step up from her previous role as senior audit manager.

The promotions are part of a drive to bolster Robson Laidler's audit and assurance offering across the region and is also a demonstration of the firm's performance in progressing female talent with women now representing 30% of the board of directors.

Georgina Rutter said: "The audit department has more than doubled in size since I joined the firm and I'm particularly proud to represent a growing team of female leaders in the office. In my new position I am looking forward to expanding my role from overseeing and reviewing audits to delivering more strategic business advice to clients as well as nurturing our growing team to help them reach their full potential."

Vicky Smith said: "I have attained vastly rewarding experiences advising large multinational corporations with operations across the globe as well as managing audits for local companies, groups and pension schemes. I am eager to continue building my expertise whilst now leading Robson Laidler and helping to ensure we meet our strategic goals as a business."

Robson Laidler managing director Graham Purvis said: "Both Vicky and Georgina have been valued and respected managers for several years and have demonstrated that they are ready to take that next step to hold a director relationship with their own

clients. These new appointments will help us add capacity to our audit and assurance department to help it continue to grow.

"It gives me great pleasure to see Vicky and Georgina progress along our Career Pathway and succeed at the highest level. They are both examples to our trainees of the opportunities we offer here in terms of career development."

The ONS Gender Pay Gap report 2020 highlighted that within the top 20 accountancy firms the overall median pay gap in favour of men averages at 15-20% and far more men than women are employed in senior positions.

Graham Purvis concluded: "No gender pay gaps exists at Robson Laidler and as a certified B Corp, our board of directors champion gender equality and remain focused on developing diversity, across both gender and ethnicity and have factored these considerations into our succession planning activities."

www.robson-laidler.co.uk

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Experience Vistage Event Opportunity for the Region

North East and Northumberland Vistage chair, Andrew Marsh, is announcing a unique opportunity to experience the format and quality of a Vistage event.

There will be two events held, one in September and one in October, which will give leaders interested in boosting their capabilities and network the insight into how Vistage works and why for the last 34 years it has been so popular in the UK.

Starting with a session that shares the magic that 1500 UK members enjoy, the events will also give a flavour of how membership increases the effectiveness and enhances the lives of CEOs and Key Executives. Demonstrating the value of the one-to-one coaching, world class speakers, group meetings, an online community and executive summits, the events will also be framed so attendees experience the format of a monthly peer group meeting. Andrew said:

"Through Vistage membership leaders are increasing sales and profits, raising finance, improving performance of themselves and their team, planning exit strategies, expanding overseas, and getting a better balance between work and personal life. There are so many benefits and as we head into ever changing times with recruitment, finance, EDI and other organisation changing policies, there is no better time to be strengthening your knowledge and your circle of trust."

Attendees at the events will also be presented with the seven key skills of a successful business leader, an example of issue processing, and a one to one session with Andrew to explore if Vistage is right for you and vice versa.

The first event will be held at Close House at 8am – 11am on 21st September. The October event is at the same time on the 19th and at Ramside Hall. To register one of the Experience Vistage Events then please follow the QR code or alternatively email: andrew.marsh@vistagechair.co.uk

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Valued does the double at North East Accountancy Awards

Consett-based accountancy and business advisory firm, Valued, has done the double, winning not one but two prestigious accolades recently at The North East Accountancy Awards.

Returning for 2023, the awards recognise excellence within the fields of finance, accounting and tax, from all industry sectors operating in the North East. Valued won Firm of the Year (under 50 employees), with Valued's very own Michael Mann scooping the award for Rising Star Accountant of the Year.

The Firm of the Year (under 50 employees) Award aims to recognise firms that demonstrate outstanding achievements, with judges specifically looking at areas including growth, innovation, client service, CSR and regional impact.

Valued was named the winners by category judge, Sharon Coull of Drummond Central. Relaying the judges' feedback, Sharon commented specifically how everyone at Valued: "worked together as a tight knit team, both internally and externally, and with their

approach to clients."

Presenting the award, Sharon continued: "You could really see their culture in place. They were authentic and could talk about their core values in a passionate and tangible way. They championed their investment in people while also driving the business forward for their clients."

The firm, which offers accountancy, business advisory and mentoring services to its roster of 700 clients all over the UK, has seen turnover increase by 27% in the last 12 months, with a return to some normality in operations and financial forecasting following the Covid Pandemic.

In addition to serving business owners, many of whom are loyal customers with Valued seeing a 98% retention rate in the last year and many new business wins coming from direct client referrals, the accountancy firm also supports other finance professionals and accountancy firms with mentoring and training, through its recently launched Valued Academy.

Commenting on last night's award win, Stephen Paul, Founder and Managing Director of Valued, said: "Wow. Just wow, I'm absolutely blown away. Valued's ethos is all about understanding the business owner behind the business, putting customers at the heart of everything that we do. From working directly with business owners to supporting other accountancy firms, we do what we do to make a difference.

"The team works so hard each and every day to deliver the best service possible to our clients; from getting to know them and their aspirations, to figuring out solutions and working together to see them become reality, last night really was a dream come true for us!"

As well as Valued receiving praise for its approach to business, its support for clients and regional impact, Valued's Michael Mann was also named as the North East Accountancy Award's Rising Star Accountant of the Year 2023.

The award, sponsored by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), recognises individuals currently studying towards a chartered accountancy qualification or those who have qualified as a Chartered Accountant within the last five years.

Michael was named the winner, and was presented his prize by category judge, Susan Allen, ACCA Council Member and Finance Director for Willerby Holiday Homes. Susan commented that Michael had impressed the team of judges with his: "Clear commitment to personal development, client focus and team work ethic." Susan also said that Michael showed humility, passion and drive for continuing career progression, all of which had made a positive difference for Michael's clients, and to Valued as a business.

Stephen concluded: "Valued's success would not be possible without the people behind the business. They're the ones that build the relationships with our clients, getting to know them and what they want to achieve from life, so they can guide and give them the best advice possible, helping to make their business work better for them.

"Michael is every inch the rising star and such a worthy winner of this award. He's always been a grafter and each day he shows up, works hard and delivers. He's brilliant with his clients, is a fantastic manager to his team and embodies the values of our brand. This award couldn't have gone to a better bloke and I'm absolutely thrilled for him. Well done, Michael!"

As well as winning big at the North East Accountancy Awards, Valued has recently been shortlisted as a top three finalist in the Mid-Size Firm of the Year category at the 2023 Xero Awards, with Founder and Managing Director, Stephen Paul, also being named as one of HELM's top 10 advisors of the year.

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Swinburne Maddison announces two new partners plus major increases in revenue and headcount

Swinburne Maddison LLP have ended the 2022/23 financial year on a major high after posting a superb increase in revenues of 19%. The

firm's three-year plan has been delivered a year ahead of schedule and they are gearing up for further success in the current year and beyond.

During this period 23 new appointments were made across the firm including two new partners' promotions, taking the total number of partners at Swinburne Maddison to 12.

Gillian Moir and Chris Ross, who both joined the firm's commercial property team in 2014, have been promoted from managing associate level and provide even more breadth at the top of the department's management structure.

Firstly, Gillian was part of the team responsible for completing more than £75m of CBILS and RLS transactions on behalf of Atom Bank and has been recognised as a Rising Star for the last four years in The Legal 500.

The second new partner, Chris, was instrumental in supporting the firm's appointment to the 'general property and conveyancing legal panel' for Karbon Homes and Gentoo Group following a successful tendering process last year.

These promotions have been bolstered overall by a further five new appointments, two of which are brand new positions, reflecting the growth in demand for the firm's employment and dispute resolution advice.



Sweeney Miller Law's Head of Family Promoted to Partner

Leading North East commercial and private client law firm, Sweeney Miller Law, has added to its Senior Leadership Team with the promotion of Head of Family Law, Rebecca Cresswell, to Partner.

Rebecca started her career in a personal injury firm but moved to Sweeney Miller during her training in 2016 where she became involved in Litigation and Family Law. She qualified as a Chartered Legal Executive in 2017 and was promoted to Head of the Family and Litigation Departments in May 2020, before cross-qualifying as a solicitor. Rebecca now deals predominantly in Family Law and was promoted to Partner in July 2023.

Commenting on her promotion, Rebecca said: "Becoming Partner has been a life-long goal of mine, so being promoted still feels like a dream. I am looking forward to building on the progress the team has made so far and continuing to build the department and developing the existing team. It is a pleasure to work with Surbhi and the other partners to help grow Sweeney Miller as a whole and I would like to thank them for recognising my potential and offering me this opportunity to develop."

Rebecca joins Sweeney Miller's senior leadership team with fellow Partners Surbhi Vedhara, Jess Fenwick, Damien Todd and Michael Storey.



Muckle LLP boosts Sport, Education and Charities team with senior appointment

Leading North East law firm Muckle LLP has appointed Alison Jones as Senior Associate, as it continues to grow its Sport, Education and Charities team.

The team, which has doubled in size in the last six months, is now the largest dedicated charity specialist practice in the North East.

Alison qualified as a lawyer almost ten years ago and has worked for a number of different law firms as well as in-house. She specialises in charity law and governance and also advises her charity and not-for-profit clients on data protection issues.

Alison's breadth of professional experience, coupled with her knowledge and passion for the third sector developed through her appointment to the boards of various charities, ensures that Alison delivers the most commercial and best value advice to her clients.

On her joining the team at Muckle LLP Alison said: "It's wonderful to join such a dynamic, forward-thinking firm which serves national clients while also proudly championing its local North East roots.

"I am passionate about volunteering and making a difference within the region and I feel that Muckle's values align well with my own. Muckle always puts social responsibility at the heart of everything it does and, as such, invests in its charities team and its people.

"It is a really exciting time to be joining the team as it continues to expand and grow from strength to strength."



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L-R: Alex Goldthorpe and Callum Bell

North East legal banking team continues to grow

A North East legal firm has continued its commitment to supporting the next generation of banking solicitors after two former trainees have become part of the team.

And now Burnetts, based at Milburn House, Dean Street, Newcastle have once again opened the doors for a new graduate to join its innovative Banking Solicitor and Recruitment Training Programme.

Burnetts' banking department works with high profile clients across the UK and has successfully given two former trainees full time roles.

Callum Bell joined Burnetts in 2021, spending his training contract with the banking team before qualifying as a solicitor in April.

He's joined by former Northumbria University graduate, Alex Goldthorpe, who was successful in his application for the training programme and is currently working as a paralegal in the team.

The programme is designed to give top legal graduates the opportunity to be trained within the banking sector and, subject to a successful initial trial as a paralegal within the team, the graduate will receive formal training to qualify as a solicitor.

It has however been good news for Alex, who has now been given a training contract with Burnetts.

For both Callum and Alex, the opportunity is one that they relish.

"From day one I've had the opportunity to get involved in every aspect of banking law and have been able to work with all different kinds of clients," said Alex.

"I feel like I've progressed massively in a very short space of time and that's because of the massive amount of help and support I've had from the team.

"It's been a fantastic learning experience."

His words were echoed by Callum.

"Banking law was an area I was very keen to

progress in," he said.

"Quick progression was made possible because of the calibre of the other members of the banking team and the support I've had every step of the way."

Nicola Nutley, Partner and Head of Banking at Burnetts, praised both Callum and Alex for their work.

"Callum has become my right-hand man, which is unusual for someone junior but just shows his ability," she said.

"And we knew straight away that Alex was a fantastic fit for us.

"The beauty of people joining us early in their career in banking is the invaluable skills and experience they can get with a really busy team working with clients across the UK."

The training programme is one of a number of initiatives the law firm offers to help graduates or anyone considering a career in law, with it also running a works experience scheme each year.

Along with its office in Newcastle and Hexham, Burnetts has offices in both Carlisle and Cockerham.

The company operates across a whole host of sectors including both business and personal. Further information is available at www.burnetts.co.uk



L-R: Adam Rayner, Sahil Nayyar, Tim Parsons, Stephanie Brown, Josh Campbell

Lake District insurance broking and underwriting business acquired by Jensten Group

A leading insurance broking and underwriting business, Simpson & Parsons has been acquired by Jensten Group in a multi-million pound deal. Jensten Group is backed by private equity firm Livingbridge, and as part of the deal Simpson & Parsons is set to become the northern regional centre of excellence of Jensten Group, servicing clients across Cumbria and the North of England.

Simpson & Parsons is an insurance broker and underwriter which has offices in Windermere and Kendal. The deal means the business will create an additional 20 jobs and contribute more than £9m Gross Written Premium (GWP) to the Jensten Group.

With the Cumbrian and wider northern economy relying heavily on tourism, Simpson & Parsons has established itself as the broker of choice for accommodation and hospitality businesses. Using its in-depth understanding of client needs across the sector, the business has developed specialist products for hotels, guest houses, B&Bs, holiday homes and restaurants through its MGA, InsureUK.

Tim Parsons, CEO of Simpson & Parsons, will be Regional Managing Director for the northern region. He said: "With Jensten, we're joining a business where our established regional presence and focus on delivering great solutions for our specialist groups of clients is valued and seen as important. From the beginning it was clear to us that Jensten were the right people to partner with; their focus on our people, the cultural fit and the part we'd play in the wider strategy to grow gave us the confidence that joining the Jensten family was the right next step for the business."

Alistair Hardie, Jensten's CEO, said: "Simpson & Parsons gives us an additional regional centre of

excellence as we focus on building a connected broker of scale. Our centres of excellence, whether regional or specialist, allow us to get close to our different client groups, building a comprehensive understanding of their needs. Having extensive underwriting and product capability as an integral part of our strategy means we are benefitting from our ability to build and distribute market-leading client propositions."

The shareholders of Simpson & Parsons were advised by Cavu Corporate Finance, led by Sahil Nayyar, and by Adam Rayner, partner at Muckle LLP who worked on all corporate aspects of the deal.

Adam Rayner, from Muckle LLP, said: "I'm extremely proud to have supported Simpson & Parsons on this landmark deal. It has been a real pleasure to have worked with the senior team there and I'm delighted to have helped this successful Cumbrian-based business on a deal which represents an important milestone in its history. I'd like to wish them every success as they continue to grow across Cumbria and the North of England."

Sahil Nayyar, from Cavu, said: "We are delighted to have advised on the deal and to have delivered an excellent result for the shareholders. Simpson & Parsons have established themselves as a leading insurance broker and underwriter in the region under Tim's leadership and will be a great addition to Jensten."

It has been a real pleasure to work with the team and we wish them the very best for the future."

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Associate solicitor Jennifer Wade joins the commercial team (left), while solicitor Jessica Nicholson joins the family team (right)

Appointments strengthen key teams at Mincoffs Solicitors

The commercial and family departments at a leading North East law firm have bolstered their teams, following two key appointments.

Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors has welcomed associate solicitor Jennifer Wade to its commercial department, while solicitor Jessica Nicholson has joined the family team.

The appointments are the latest in a prolonged period of growth for the full service firm, which specialises in corporate and commercial.

With more than a decade of experience in commercial law, Jennifer advises both private and public sector clients in a wide range of sectors, including manufacturing, IT, MedTech, heavy industry, leisure, health and online services.

She supports clients with all aspects of contractual agreements and will work closely with commercial partner, Antony Hall, and his team – which is consistently ranked highly by global legal directory, Legal 500 for its work in intellectual property, information technology and media and entertainment.

Jennifer, whose appointment makes the firm's corporate and commercial team one of the largest service offerings of its kind in the North East, said: "I am delighted to join Mincoffs Solicitors during its exciting period of growth."

"I was drawn to the firm due to its established position and excellent reputation, and look forward to working with our business clients across the North East and further afield."

Elsewhere in the business, the private client offering has expanded with the appointment of Jessica Nicholson, who qualified at the York office of a leading, national firm last year.

She advises clients on relationship breakdown, wealth protection matters and disputes in relation to arrangements for children and is a member of Resolution, a community of family justice professionals committed to resolving issues in a constructive manner.

Jessica will work alongside family partner and head of the team, Emily Cannell, consultant Lyn Rutherford and Rachel Smith, who was recently promoted to associate solicitor.

"Mincoffs has a fantastic reputation in the North East," said Jessica, "and I am thrilled to have joined the family team at what is a key time of growth within the firm."

"Mincoffs stood out to me as its culture and values very much align with my own, and I am very much looking forward to working closely with Emily and Rachel to boost the firm's private client offering."

Senior partner and head of corporate, Paul Hughes, believes both Jennifer and Jessica will be a great fit at the firm.

"Mincoffs Solicitors is currently undergoing an impressive growth trajectory and we are delighted to have welcomed a number of new staff over the last year, along with a series of well-deserved internal promotions," he said.

"Both the commercial and family teams have had busy years and it is brilliant to be in a position where we can expand their teams."

"I am confident that Jennifer and Jessica will prove to be invaluable additions to their respective teams and I look forward to seeing them succeed within their new roles."

Mincoffs Solicitors has provided expert legal services and advice across the North East and beyond for 75 years.

Alongside corporate and commercial services, the firm's offering includes real estate, dispute resolution, employment law, licensing and gaming, residential conveyancing, family law and wills, probate and trusts.

For more information visit
www.mincoffs.co.uk



Emily Cannell

How will a divorce affect my finances?

Emily Cannell, partner and head of family at Mincoffs Solicitors, advises divorcing couples to think about their finances sooner rather than later.

A relationship breakdown can be a distressing time and therefore it is no surprise that the practical, financial implications of a divorce or dissolution of a civil partnership may not be at the forefront of separating couples' minds.

Because of this, many separate without knowing what steps that they need to take to cut financial ties with their ex-spouse.

According to the latest family court statistics published by the Ministry of Justice, there were 28,865 divorce applications made under the new 'no fault' divorce process in the first quarter of the year.

While there were also 27,465 final orders and decree absolutes granted, only 11,432 financial remedy applications - which resolve finances on separation - were made during the same time.

This relatively low number may be because people are not aware of the potential implications if the finances are left unresolved.

The relationship between divorce and finances

It is a common misconception that divorce or dissolution not only ends the legal relationship between separated couples, but also severs any financial ties between them.

A marriage or civil partnership is legally dissolved when the court grants a final order - or decree absolute if the application was made under the old, fault-based divorce law. Finances on separation must be considered as a separate issue from the divorce proceedings.

Even if parties are legally divorced, if the finances have been left unresolved then financial claims against each other remain open. As there is generally no time limit to making a claim for financial provision from an ex-spouse, claims can be made years after a divorce has concluded.

For those who felt that matters had been settled and finalised at the time, this can come as a shock.

How do I formalise a financial agreement?

The only way to formally sever future financial ties from an ex-spouse on a legally binding basis is to obtain a consent order from the court, which records the terms of an agreement that has been reached.

Once a consent order has been drafted, the order must be filed with the court, along with a document which summarises both parties' financial positions. A judge will review the consent order and will approve it if they are satisfied that the agreement is within the boundaries of a fair and reasonable settlement. The order is then 'sealed' so that it becomes a legally binding document.

Until then, it remains open to either party to

make a financial claim against the other in the future, even if their divorce has been concluded for some time.

It is therefore advised that a consent order be drawn up for all divorcing couples, regardless of whether there are limited matrimonial assets at the time of separation, or if the divorce is amicable and an agreement has been reached informally.

When should I start thinking about the finances?

There is no set rule about when separating couples should start considering how they want to deal with their finances, however we would advise that it is considered sooner rather than later.

An application for a consent order can only be made once the conditional order (or decree nisi, under the old law) stage of divorce proceedings has been reached.

Under the 'no fault' process, once a divorce application has been made there is a 20 week 'reflection' period for spouses to consider their decision. If the parties still wish to proceed, the court can then grant their conditional order or decree nisi. It is only at this point that an application for a consent order can be made.

Separating couples must therefore remember that a divorce only legally ends the marriage and, while the two are linked, finalising the finances is an entirely different matter.

For confidential, trusted advice about settling finances during a divorce, contact Emily Cannell on ecannell@mincoffs.co.uk, or visit www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law



Jess Fenwick

Management Buyouts (MBOs): What, why, and how?

Having spent years, maybe decades, growing your business – establishing good working relationships, building careers, and generating revenue – now it's time to move on or retire. But what are your options? Sweeney Miller Law's Corporate team explore MBOs.

Management buyouts (MBOs) provide existing majority shareholders – usually founders – with a sensible and relatively straightforward exit strategy if they decide to retire or move on by allowing the existing management team to take over and maintain the growth trajectory of the business.

For an MBO to be as successful and straightforward as possible, it is vital for all parties to fully understand the pros and cons and exactly what time, resources, and commitment is involved throughout the process and beyond. Early clear advice from an expert legal partner can help with just that.

What is an MBO?

An MBO is a legal transaction where a company's existing management team buys the shares, assets and operations of a business they already work in. Often the buyers then take complete control and ownership of the business, using their existing experience and expertise to continue to drive the company forward.

MBOs can be undertaken in companies of any size or industry, usually to buy out the existing owner, but can also be used by larger corporations to break away an arm or department from the main operation, sometimes as part of a wider restructuring process. Ideally, a successful MBO will result in a seamless transition for the outgoing shareholders, incoming buyers, existing staff, customers and clients, ensuring stability and business continuity for the benefit of each.

Why choose an MBO?

Choosing an MBO, instead of opting to exit your business via another route, such as a trade sale, saves both the seller and the buyers a significant amount of time and energy; there is no need to market the business externally or look for a third-party buyer. And with the buyers' existing knowledge and experience of the business, there is considerably less due diligence required, often resulting in a less complex and swifter transaction.

As the process is generally all done 'in house', an MBO also helps to protect confidential information about the business throughout the sale. There is little to no need to share any confidential company details outside of those involved in the buyout, as there would be if the company was put on the open market with the risk of time wasting 'tyre-kickers'. This ultimately reduces the need for non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and lowers the risk of sensitive company details becoming public.

In our extensive experience of advising on business sales transactions, the success rates of MBOs are much higher than other business sale types, again due to the quantity and quality of 'inside knowledge' that the management team already has through often years of working in the business. The incoming team can hit the ground running with little, if any, disruption to the day-to-day functioning of the business, safeguarding valuable existing relationships with employees, customers, and suppliers who may become nervous of a third party buyer, particularly a competitor or a much larger organisation.

MBOs need not be out of reach

In our experience, one of the main challenges faced by management teams looking to buy the existing owner's interests is how to pay for it. This shouldn't be a barrier to a well thought through and planned MBO. With specialist help, external funding and investment can be explored either through bank loans, private equity, asset finance, owner financing, or a mix of debt and equity known as mezzanine financing. The lenders will carry out their own due diligence and will want to be satisfied that the incoming owners have the experience, "know-how", and support from the rest of the staff to maintain and drive forward the business.

A carefully developed MBO proposal including details such as the management team members, the reasons and objectives of the buyout, and how the buyout will be financed, will generally be warmly welcomed by potential investors and the existing owners.

Commenting on MBOs, Corporate Partner, Jess Fenwick said: "Properly researched, planned and executed, MBOs are an often overlooked 'win-win' for everyone involved, providing a solution that safeguards and contributes to the continued growth of a business. Many see taking over the business as an unachievable 'pipe dream', but actually with expert support this can be turned into a reality. With our multi-disciplinary and pragmatic approach, combined with our extensive industry connections and MBO experience, we can help to explore a range of options including financing. So do get in touch if this is an opportunity that you and colleagues are considering."

Practical steps in an MBO

After developing a solid proposal, the priority for all parties should be to seek expert legal advice to ensure that the business and its interests are protected throughout the transaction. A corporate solicitor can be instructed to create a new management structure following the MBO, as well as draw up new shareholders' agreements and advise on any other potential implications, such as any property or asset transfers and succession planning.

Sweeney Miller Law's experienced Corporate department has advised buyers and sellers on many successful MBOs across a range of business sizes, industries, and complexities. Our partner-led, multi-disciplinary team understands that each business is unique and will take the time to understand you, your business, and your goals for the future. There are alternative avenues to company sales – such as management buy-ins (MBIs), buy-in management buyouts (BIMBOs) and trade sales – and we will take the time to understand which option is most appropriate for your business.

For advice on MBOs, or other types of company sales, get in touch with Sweeney Miller Law's Corporate team by emailing enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk, calling 0345 900 5401 or visit www.sweeneymiller.co.uk

sweeney
miller **LAW**



Getting to know Christian Butler

Christian Butler is an experienced family law specialist who has recently become the Head of the Family Law Team at Hay & Kilner.

Christian specialises in managing disputes arising from divorce and separation which involve complex assets, companies, pensions and property portfolios.

We spoke to him about different aspects of his professional and personal lives, and how they fit together.

How is business at the moment?

Busy. In family law, this is bittersweet, knowing that more people are experiencing difficulties, but at the same time, I'm grateful they are trusting me and my team to help them.

Has it always been 'Law' as a chosen career?

Growing up, I dreamt of being an actor or a doctor. I enjoyed acting, but never followed the dream beyond some am-dram, while a realisation in my late teens that I'm not a huge fan of blood quickly ruled out a future in medicine!

My love of the ocean and diving saw me undertake a degree in Marine Biology at Newcastle University, but I soon realised, unfortunately, that spending all my time on boats was not ideal as I get seasick.

I worked in hospitality while I was a student and flourished in customer service and people management roles, finding I was particularly adept at dealing with more difficult customers.

This ultimately led me to return to university to study law. I envisaged I'd work in corporate law, and that area still interests me, but through my Hay & Kilner training contract, I gravitated towards family law.

Looking back, I believe this was due in part to my own experience as the child of divorced parents. I saw first-hand the difficulties faced

by my parents, and myself and my sister as children, going through the process.

Clients' problems resonated with me, and I found I was genuinely able to assist them in times of great turmoil. In retrospect, given my life experiences, forging a career in family law was perhaps an inevitability.

What is the greatest career accomplishment so far?

My greatest personal accomplishment is returning as a partner to Hay & Kilner, after completing my training contract at the firm. I relish leading a team of brilliant lawyers and I am so excited for the continued growth of both my team and the wider firm.

Who would you say is your biggest inspiration?

My mother. She has endured more than most in her life but through hard work, determination and courage, she led a successful career and was always there for me and my sister. I wouldn't be in the position I am today without her sacrifices and commitment to me, and I aspire to be more like her every day.

What advice would you give yourself if you could go back to the start of your career in the legal sector?

Just be yourself - be open-minded, keep growing, keep reading, keep trying to understand who you are and doors will open that you never knew existed.

How has the legal sector changed in recent years?

In family law, the biggest change has been the Divorce, Dissolution and Separation Act 2020, which brought about so called "no fault divorce."

This, coupled with the reduction in Legal Aid and the services available to parties going through separation and divorce, has meant a large increase in litigants in person and DIY divorce jobs.

There are very real reasons why expert advice is needed in a lot of these cases and I am concerned as to the repercussions of not taking or having access to this advice.

Outside work, what makes you tick?

My family. Despite a busy and forever growing workload, I try to spend as much time with my children as possible, whether walking them to school, attending sporting events or being a monster ridden around the living room.

When we have the time, I love watching a good film with my wife which takes me away from the thousands of thoughts running through my head!

For further information on all aspects of family law, please contact Christian Butler at Hay & Kilner on 0191 232 8345 or via christian.butler@hay-kilner.co.uk



Christian Butler



Are you prepared for an Employment Tribunal claim?

5 October 2023, 8.30am – 1pm, One Strawberry Lane

Would you know what to do if your organisation received an Employment Tribunal claim? How would you defend it? Should you deal with it internally or should you appoint a representative?

Employment Tribunal claims can be time-consuming and stressful for an employer, particularly if unfamiliar with the mechanics and procedures in the Employment Tribunal. Even organisations with experience managing claims can find themselves undone as the process progresses. This is before one accounts for the pressure of, and time and cost required to successfully defend a claim.

Employment Law experts Collingwood Legal are hosting an in person half-day Mock Employment Tribunal event in One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle on 5 October 2023 to help guide employers through the technical jargon and process associated with an Employment Tribunal claim.

The session will walk you through a working example of a 'mock' Employment Tribunal case with our experts acting as witnesses/advocates/the judge in order to aid

organisations in managing the Employment Tribunal process and to equip you with the tools to give you the best chance of success.

The focus of the session includes:

- what happens once a claim has been submitted to an Employment Tribunal;
- how you prepare to defend a tribunal claim; and
- how to be an effective witness and prepare to be cross examined at the hearing itself.

Throughout you will be provided with practical advice and will be encouraged to ask questions and explore issues.

This session will be of benefit to anyone with management responsibilities including HR specialists, line managers and directors of organisations.

If you are interested in attending our "Mock Employment Tribunal" then subscribe to our newsletter or contact us for further details.
www.collingwoodlegal.com • 0191 282 2880

COLLINGWOOD LEGAL 
Employment Lawyers



Leading charity appoints new Director to tackle social welfare issues

Society Matters CIC - the trading subsidiary of 2022 North East Charity of the Year Citizens Advice Gateshead - has appointed Stuart Fearn MBE to help tackle societal issues, mobilise knowledge and build influence with regional employers.

Stuart joins after fifteen years at Newcastle Building Society, bringing with him a wealth of experience in customer experience delivery, strategic partnership, and product development within the financial services sector.

In 2017 Society Matters began to work closely with employers to mobilise the knowledge and experience of Citizens Advice Gateshead to be able to support other professionals to build their confidence and knowledge of the social welfare support systems along with the challenges and opportunities that come with them.

Stuart will be taking the lead in the engagement with businesses through the North of Tyne Combined Authority's Child Poverty Prevention Programme, tackling child poverty – an issue that affects 38% of all children across the region and is a core priority for Society Matters.

He will also be spearheading the development of new 'Corporate Social Action' services, which recognise the growing importance of businesses contributing to their communities and assist businesses in developing and implementing impactful social action strategies, measure their social impact, and align their values with their actions. Part of this work involves the development of immediate direct access for employees and customers to specialist advisors when things go wrong, circumstances change, and financial difficulties are being faced.

Ladies Day Returns for 2023 in aid of Alzheimer's Research UK

Ladies assemble! One of the most talked about events on the B2B circuit is back for 2023 and the team behind the popular North East fundraiser have announced this year's panel guests for what promises to be another sell-out event.

Ladies Day is the brainchild of Sara Hoxhaj (Alzheimer's Research UK) and Sarah Gray (Leonard Curtis Business Solutions Group) and the ground-breaking event, and first of its kind for Alzheimer's Research UK in the region last year saw nearly 150 attendees from over 70 businesses descend on the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, raising over £10k.

Sara Hoxhaj, Alzheimer's Research UK said: "Last year's Ladies Day in aid of Alzheimer's Research UK was an absolute hoot. From the most amazing panel guests to Estee Lauder's live make-up demos, to indulgent raffle prizes to the hip-thrusting Waiter's Surprise, we really did set the scene for this popular event.

The anticipation and interest in this



year's event has been immense, and 2023 promises to be even bigger and better."

The team have announced the return of Caroline Theobald MBE (Power of Women) as host alongside a panel of exciting and inspirational guests including Amazing Jane Co-Founders, Claire Goodliff and Deb De Luen and Avril Matthews from A Liberty Life – life and crisis coaching for the event at Hilton Newcastle Gateshead on Friday 15th September 2023.

Casey Lane, Founder and Managing Director at Lanes & Co, the distinguished and internationally renowned luxury jewellery, antique and auction specialists will also be joining the team to kick off the live auction on the day.

Youth Starts Here campaign

The North East Youth Alliance (NEYA) was set up to support the development and sustainability of the people and the organisations working to improve the lives of young people across the North East.

Their ambition is to support a culture shift across the sector – to get people in the youth and community sector thinking and working differently.

NEYA campaign 'Youth Starts Here' is all about growing an understanding of the sector, improving recruitment and making allies. The Youth Starts Here movement supports important days like 'World Youth Skills Day' which happened recently- the day focuses on equipping young people with quality education, training and skills.

Young people are almost three times more likely to be unemployed than adults (there were 465,000 young people aged 16 to 24 who were unemployed in February to April 2023,) and continuously exposed to lower quality of jobs. In addition, women are more likely to be underemployed and under-paid, and to undertake part-time jobs or work under temporary contracts.

NEYA work with partners to provide continuous training and support for youth workers, managers and those who work within youth sector. Safeguarding, County Lines and Dealing with Knife Crime are just some of workshops on offer to their members. To find out more about becoming a member of NEYA and their Youth Starts Here campaign visit: www.neya.org.uk



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NORTH TYNESIDE



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Inspirational ladies' fundraiser lunch from Feeding Families

Wynyard Hall welcomed over 300 inspirational businesswomen from the region recently, to a fundraising luncheon, kindly sponsored by BP, Additional Lengths and LITT Recruitment Group and hosted by Ingrid Johnson.

CEO of Feeding Families, and Woman of the Year Community Champion, Juliet Sanders told an emotional audience about the struggles she herself went through for the first time and opened her heart-wrenching historical personal life to inspire the women in the room to be open and own their past and show them that women can and do survive in exceptional circumstances.

Juliet told us: "We want to shout about the women of the region, we want to know your journey, we want to support our supporters. Just as you have come together as businesses to support Feeding Families, we want to extend our appreciation by running similar events like this and to truly inspire the women in this region to shout about their accomplishments and not be afraid to tell their journey to get to where they are."

The ladies also heard a very personal journey talk from Alice Rowen Hall, founder of clothing brand Pink Boutique, who took the audience through her journey of growing the brand into a £25 million turnover business, as well as her latest venture, Rowen Homes, which offers glamorous homeware.

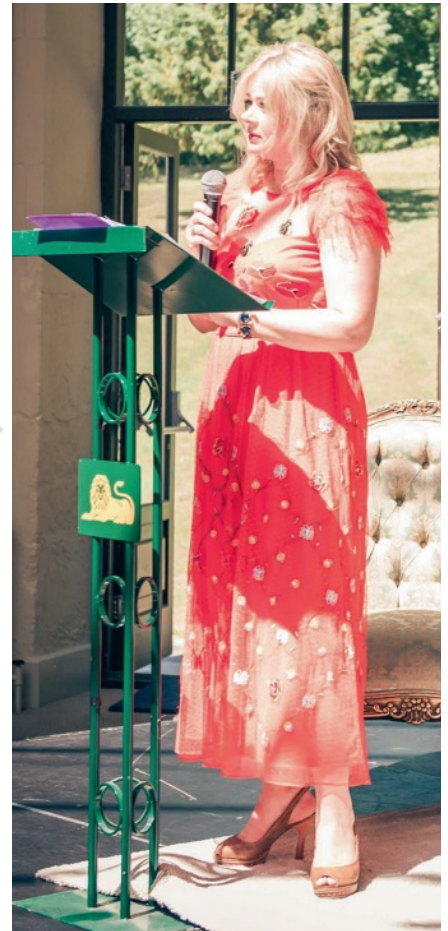
Victoria Lynch, Managing Director of Additional Lengths, also shared her experience of starting her own business over two decades ago and transforming it into one of the UK's leading and award-winning hair extension manufacturers and retailers.

The aim of the charity is to ensure that no family goes hungry, no matter what their personal circumstances. Given the high levels of deprivation in the North East, their aim is to empower and support women, letting them know that they can make a positive impact. The charity encourages those who are able, to donate to Feeding Families, as this will directly support individuals in our region who are facing food insecurity.

Sarah McPhie, Head of Engagement at Feeding Families, and joint host of the event paid special personal thanks to two ladies in the audience that had inspired her, in particular during her career: Jackie Marston from JAM Marketing and Jane Heath from the Grand Hotel, Gosforth.

She told us: "We are proud to announce that we raised over £8,000 for the charity on the day, and we are so grateful to be able to offer a platform for all of our inspiration women to stand proud of their achievements. I am proud to represent this vitally important charity, but it's important to let people know that often every successful journey has had its ups and downs and we shouldn't be ashamed to admit these, we should wear them as a badge of honour!"

Feeding Families are planning more similar events in the future, and anyone interested in assisting in their mission to end food poverty can get in touch by contacting them via their website: feedingfamilies.org.uk





Newcastle PR company throws its weight behind supporting homeless veterans



Clothier Lacey celebrates 25 years: CLC Managing director, Philippa Clothier with Launchpad's CEO, David Shaw.

Clothier Lacey & Co, one of the region's best-known marketing and PR consultancies, is throwing its weight behind Launchpad, a charity which supports homeless veterans, to help bolster its fundraising activities during its tenth anniversary year.

Launchpad was founded in 2013 by former members of the military community who wished to help veterans struggling with transition from the military into civilian life and needed help and assistance, particularly with accommodation.

Additionally, the founders realised that the sort of accommodation needed was in short supply in the North East.

Accordingly, Avondale House in Byker was the first house to open, followed by Speke House in Liverpool which the charity purchased in early 2015 and its third home, Hollyacre House in Sacriston, County Durham, opened in May 2022.

While 90% of the veterans who arrive at Launchpad are either street-homeless or sofa-surfing, to date, almost 635 veterans have been supported since 2013, 137 residents have been supported between July 2022 and end of June

2023, 61% have successfully moved on and 41% gained employment during their time with Launchpad.

Speaking about the charity and Clothier Lacey's decision to lend its support, managing director, Philippa Clothier, said:

"We are also celebrating a milestone this year – our 25th anniversary – and we wanted to select a special partnership to mark our successful twenty-five years.

"I have sat on the fundraising committees for several charities over the years but wanted to work with a totally different type of charity in our 25th year. Launchpad just seemed to be the perfect match - putting our marketing and PR skills as well as our extensive network of contacts to work on behalf of those less fortunate who are finally being given a roof over their heads by the charity.

"Many of the residents have mental health issues, ranging from anxiety to service and non-service-related PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). Some have just been released from prison, some need help with addictions to alcohol and drugs and others have found themselves homeless because of relationship and family breakdowns or not being able to secure paid employment.

"Whatever their back story, these men and women have at some stage, been prepared to put their lives on the line so that we can all sleep safely in our beds at night. They deserve our help and we are looking forward to working with Launchpad to provide support in whatever way we can."

CEO and co-founder of Launchpad, David Shaw, said: "We are very grateful to Philippa and her team that they are keen to work with us in this important 10th anniversary year and we look forward to developing a successful relationship with them. It is timely that we are sharing 10th and 25th anniversaries.

"Launchpad has recently been selected by the government as one of nine organisations to tackle the issue of veteran homelessness. Funding for additional support has been awarded through the Op FORTITUDE programme, a new dedicated pathway for veteran rough sleepers. Staff at Op FORTITUDE will refer callers to a network of support including housing providers, charities and local authorities and as part of the programme, Launchpad will provide additional, sustained support to homeless veterans across all three of its houses.

"We are likely to be entering a much busier period – although we always have a waiting list for accommodation – so it is tremendous news that our PR, communications and business development manager, Craig Downs, will be able to call upon extra pairs of hands."

Launchpad is marking its 10th anniversary with a fundraising dinner to be held at the Discovery Museum on 27th October. Organisations can support the charity by attending the event, providing a raffle prize or providing training and employment opportunities to residents.

Find out more at veteranslaunchpad.org.uk

**Headline
sponsor****Guest
speakers &
surprises**

Supporting Homeless Veterans **Fundraising Dinner**

Raising funds for veterans' charity Launchpad -
providing accommodation and support
to homeless veterans

Friday 27 October 2023, Discovery Museum, Newcastle

Arrival from 6.30pm for 7pm start. Carriages 11.30pm

Black tie or No. 2 Dress with medals or equivalent



Introducing guest
speakers and entertainment
with your compere
Alfie Joey

James Rose, Launchpad
ambassador and first double
(above-knee) amputee to climb
Mount Kilimanjaro

Sing United choir,
performing a selection
of war songs

**£1,000 per table of 10,
or £100 per ticket**

Includes pre-dinner drink, a 3-course
served meal, guest speakers and
entertainment, raffle, silent auction,
plus some surprises on the night!

To book or to find
out more, please contact
Craig Downs on
07811 287 922 or email
**craig.downs@
veteranslaunchpad.org.uk**

Launchpad is a veterans' charity
registered with the Charity Commission
(AF&V Launchpad Limited No. 1153185).





Launchpad – Celebrating 10 years supporting homeless veterans

Launchpad provides accommodation and services, with the help of specialist providers, to support homeless veterans who have fallen on hard times and have found the transition from military to civilian life difficult.



For most veterans, the transition from the armed forces to civilian life is smooth but more often than not, those few who can't resettle easily face challenges such as homelessness, poverty, mental and physical health issues, addictions, broken families and unemployment.

Founded in 2013, the charity helps veterans to overcome these challenges and to live positive and rewarding lives thereafter. Almost 90% of the veterans who arrive at Launchpad are homeless and are supported for up to two years (longer if necessary).

In the North East, Avondale House in Newcastle upon Tyne comprises 33 self-contained flats and Hollyacre House in Durham provides accommodation for up to 18 veterans. Speke House in Liverpool includes 50 flats.

Since opening, Launchpad has supported over 620 veterans across all three houses. On average, over the last five years, 41% of residents gained employment during their time at Launchpad while 61% successfully moved on to settled accommodation, either living independently, reunited with family or with the support they needed.

For more information and to find out how you could support the charity here in the North East, please visit www.veteranslaunchpad.org.uk. To donate, please scan the QR code.



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AF&V Launchpad Limited Registration Charity No. 1153185



Hollyacre House

Charity of the month

Tandem

A Darlington-based charity which offers information, advice, guidance, training and confidence building for anyone who's looking for work.

Here, Northern Insight talks to their chief executive, Sarah Bentley, about the charity...



Why was the charity formed?

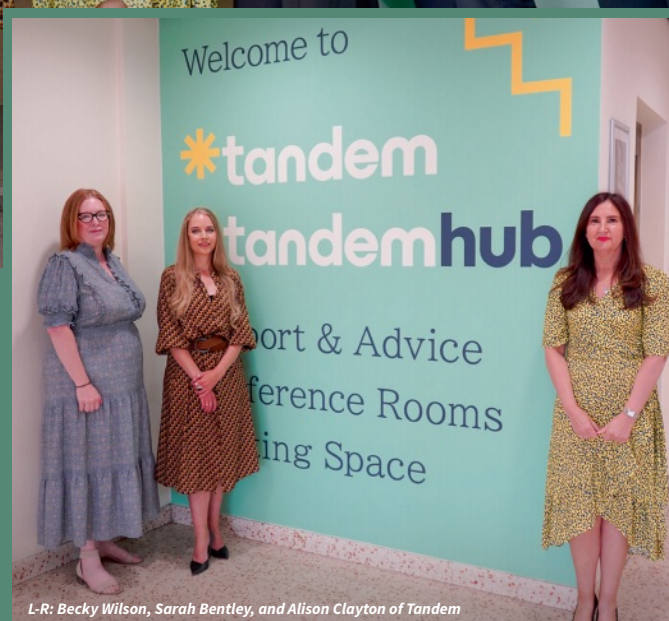
Our charity was set up in 1995 and the aim was to support people in Darlington with employment, training and skills by providing clear information, advice and guidance. Since 1995 we've worked with thousands of people across Darlington, providing person-centred, one to one support with everything from helping to update a CV, providing funding for people to do career changing training courses to offering small group sessions on team work and confidence building.

Which area do you cover?

We can support anyone who is living within the borough of Darlington. We have also recently done some work in Stockton and Hartlepool and we were part of two key projects that worked across the Tees Valley (Step Forward Tees Valley and Youth Employment Initiative).

What type of fundraising events do you have?

We bring in income for our work in two ways - through applying for grant funding applications and through generating income from our conference centre. We have some great space at Morton Park (four big conference rooms, two boardrooms and several other meeting rooms), which work well for companies and other organisations to use for training, meetings,



staff away days, conferences and exhibitions). So when businesses use our room space, they are supporting our charitable work.

What have been your proudest moments so far?

Every time someone that we've supported achieves something that they didn't think they would be able to, it's a proud moment and seeing people become more confident in themselves and in their skills is always hugely positive for our team. Tandem exists to make sure everyone has a fair chance to progress and thrive.

What are you currently working on?

Shouting about our new name! We were very fortunate to be successful in securing a funding grant from the Growth and Resilience fund at Tyne and Wear Community Foundation, to raise our profile and create a communications and marketing strategy, so more people know about us and what we do. We worked with the design company, Sail Creative to develop a new brand and we also took the huge decision to change our name! So after 27 years as Morrison Trust, we are now Tandem. Our new identity feels authentic to us and really shows the values that drive what we do – inclusion, collaboration, valuing people and equality. We want people to know that whilst our name and logo have changed, the genuine care and tailored support you can expect if you access our projects and the quality of customer service you can expect from hiring a room remain as important to us as ever.

What does the future hold?

The next few weeks will be very busy as we're about to start a new project that supports young people (up to 25 years old) and we've just started a project that can support people who want to change their career and need to do training to make those steps into a new job.

The impact of the Covid pandemic and the cost of living crisis continues to have a huge effect on people. Worries about losing a job and being out of work can lead to high levels of stress and can have a serious impact

on people's health. Darlington also has a high number of young people who are not working. We want to make sure that our support is available and accessible to as many people in Darlington as possible. So whilst we're based at Tandem Hub at Morton Park, being out and about in the community is really important to us and we're always looking for more opportunities to hold sessions in community venues to support people in spaces that bring are convenient for them.

How do you get involved?

If anyone would like support to build their confidence, increase their skills, do training to increase their job opportunities or get some support with applying for jobs and knowing what employers are looking for, they can get in touch at hello@tandem.org.uk

If any organisations would like more information about the rooms we have available or would like to book some space, please get in touch at hello@tandem.org.uk

We're always happy to hear from anyone who would be interested in knowing more about how they could support us as a Trustee on our Board too.

To find out more about Tandem, visit: www.tandem.org.uk



L-R: Alison Clayton, conference centre manager, Sarah Bentley, chief executive, Bruce Warnes, chair of trustees, and Becky Wilson, deputy chief executive cut the ribbon at the Tandem launch event.



North East unsung heroes celebrated at luxury event

To mark Carers Week 2023, a North East charity brought together 50 carers for a luxury event to say thank you for their vital, often unrecognised, service to the North East community.

Newcastle Carers, an independent charity that supports adults, children and young people who care for someone living in Newcastle upon Tyne, organised the luxury afternoon tea event at Arthur's Bar, Fenwick to celebrate and thank the often overlooked carers from across the city.

According to Census data, the North East region has the largest proportion of people

providing unpaid care and is the region with the largest proportion of people providing more than 50 hours of unpaid care a week. The charity currently supports over 7000 unpaid carers in Newcastle, supporting each person to improve their quality of life and to overcome the challenges they face.

Austin McNamara, Interim CEO of Newcastle Carers said, "We work with carers to provide a space for them to talk and be heard. Not only was this event a chance to celebrate their incredible contributions, it was also a chance to bring people together from what may be isolating or upsetting situations and give them a chance to meet other carers and hopefully form long-lasting connections. Without the critical work that everyone in that room, and in our network, deliver, the health and social care system would be in even greater crisis than it already is.

"Carers are the unsung of our community economy here in the region – finding from a recent study by Carers UK and the University of Sheffield show unpaid carers in the North East contribute £9 billion to the economy every year and according to a new report published by Carers Week, 19 million people in the UK have provided unpaid care - but haven't identified as a carer. These report findings demonstrate the need for Government and all areas of society to play a role in supporting millions of people to identify their caring role and get help. We are calling on the UK Government to deliver coordinated cross-Government action

to better identify and support unpaid carers, especially here in the North East where we see a disproportionate amount of people providing unpaid care to family and friends."

Attendees at the event, which was supported by Newcastle City Council, NHS North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care Board, were treated to an afternoon tea, music from the talented, local singer-songwriter Annabel Pattison and hand-picked goodie bags gifted by Fenwick. One carer who took part in the day said, "I felt like a VIP from the moment I walked into the room. It was wonderful to meet people in similar situations and it really helped me to unwind. I want to say thank you to everyone who put the event together, it was really special and it meant a lot to us to get a break from our caring duties."

Carers Week was held from 5 to 11 June 2023. The theme for this year's Carers Week was "Recognising and supporting carers in the community". This is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK. It also helps people who don't think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

For more information on Newcastle Carers and their work in the region please visit www.newcastlecarers.org.uk



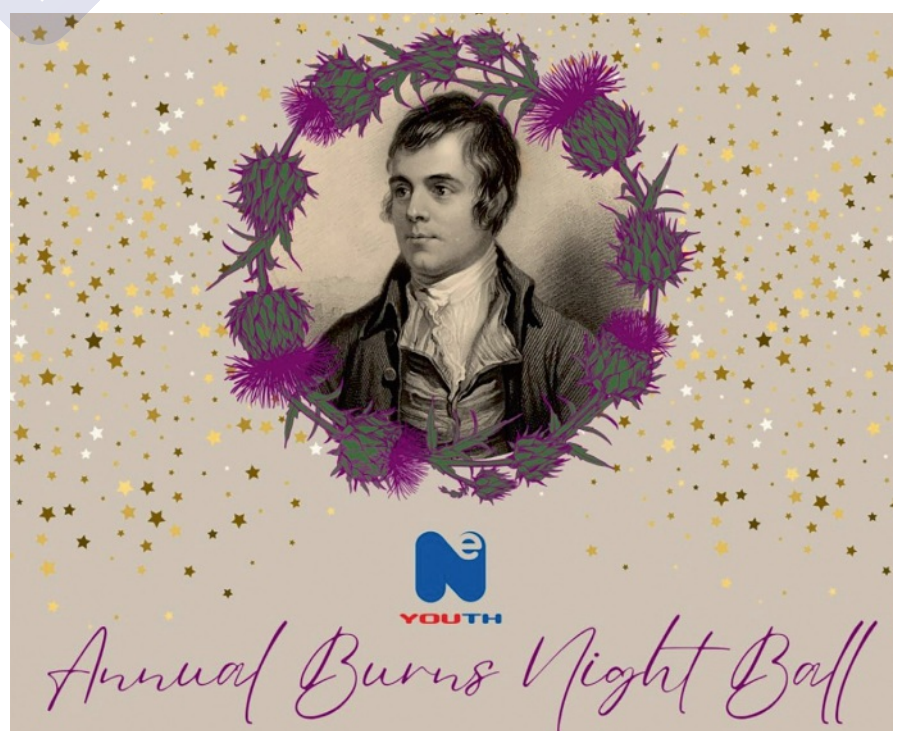
Lets have a cup of kindness

Not everyone knows that Robbie Burns wrote 'Auld Lang Syne' a song sung around the world every New Years Eve!

NE Youth celebrate Burns Night and the life of the great poet every January, raising vital funds whilst having a mighty hootenanny with over 350 guests.

Next years event will be held yet again at the fantastic Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park on 26th January. Early bird tickets are now available online: www.neyouth.org.uk/events. NE Youth are keen to hear from potential sponsors who want to support the charity so that they can continue their essential work with young people in the North East.

If you want to be part of best Burns night this side of the Clyde, contact Jon Niblo CEO: jon@neyouth.org.uk



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2023 Annual



Awards & Dinner

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19th October 2023

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Tickets & Tables



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For enquiries:

call 01661 823234 or email info@abconnexions.org

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





Mind over patter

I'll let you in on a little secret: I used to be the world's most seasoned couch potato. The thought of running, especially in an event like the Great North Run, used to make me tremble in my cushioned trainers.

However, with a nifty bit of innovation and a rejigged mindset, I turned my anxious energy into a triumphant success story.

The Great North Run is no small feat; we're talking about the world's largest half marathon, a whopping 13.1 miles, people! From Newcastle upon Tyne to South Shields, this race embodies spirit, grit, and a community vibe like no other. However, for an apprehensive beginner like I was, that distance felt more like a trip to the moon than a jaunt across Tyne & Wear.

The challenge wasn't just the distance, but the mindset that had me anchored. My belief system, wrought with negative self-talk, needed an innovation intervention.

I realised the first step was to tackle my negativity with a new approach, using innovation as my primary tool. No more doom-scrolling on my fitness apps or obsessively measuring my progress. Instead, I decided to create a 'mindset map' - a way of laying out and reframing my negative thoughts into something positive and constructive. **"I can't run 13.1 miles!" became "I will focus on running one mile at a time."**

Then came the 'Mind-Body Connect', a strategy I devised to ensure my physical training complemented my newly minted positive mental attitude. As I worked on building my physical endurance, I used this time to flood my mind with encouraging mantras. I was no longer 'huffing and puffing' around the park; instead, I was 'embracing the thrill of the run' and 'loving



Ammar Mirza CBE

each stride forward'. Trust me, your brain is a brilliant ally when you teach it to cheer you on!

In this journey, I didn't ignore the Great North Run's community spirit either. I began to tap into it as a source of inspiration and positivity. I engaged with seasoned runners, soaking up their positivity, resilience, and nuggets of wisdom.

Finally, I made a conscious effort to enjoy the journey rather than obsess over the finish line. The moments of training in the beautiful North East landscapes, the cheering crowd on the race day, the camaraderie among runners, I savoured it all.

And guess what? On the day of the Great North Run, I ran the 13.1 miles with more vigour, passion, and happiness than I ever thought I could. I didn't just cross the finish line, but I did so with a radiant smile, an exuberant spirit, and a profound sense of achievement. **The fears that once dominated my mind were replaced by a newfound appreciation for resilience,**

innovation, and the power of a positive mindset.

The real triumph, you ask? It wasn't just about completing the run; it was about the transformation, the positivity, and the resilience that I uncovered within myself.

So, here's a friendly nudge from someone who's been there, done that: you're more capable than you know! All you need is to innovate your mindset and sprinkle a dash of positivity in there. **Because whether it's the Great North Run or any other marathon of life, with the right attitude, you're already a winner!**

So don't let the patter impact your matter! Cannot wait to do the run again this year in aid of Pathways4All.

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

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At the heart of every problem is a human life

This is the essence of Kind Currency and was the message we delivered at the Northumbrian Water Innovation Festival in July. And what a week it was!

When we were asked to participate in the event, we weren't sure what to expect. Inject your kind values was the request, as an exhibitor, running activities and as a lightening speaker.

Our activities are designed to make people genuinely think about their actions, how their choices matter, and their individual influence on the world around them. They are designed this way as we get caught up in the day to day routine especially in business, and we've been conditioned to think a certain way, a way that doesn't put people and the environment first. We need a jolt of reality to make us do the right thing!

And doing the right thing was the challenge we presented in our presentations throughout the week.

As a lightening speaker I was kindly invited to several 'Sprints'. Each sprint focused on a problem from mould to flooding to cost of living



to community engagement to people support. Serious problems that destroy lives and in some cases, cause death.

Kind Currency was created, to support citizens and businesses to take kind action to overcome the crisis problems we face as a society and within that we present challenge because doing the right thing has been made difficult and us humans don't like feeling uncomfortable.

Our talks provided a reality check, a big one!

We tend to approach problems with a 'symptoms to manage' method. But they aren't just problems or symptoms. You are actually trying to save a person's life.

At the heart of any problem is a human-life.

And some lives have already been lost due to lack of effective solutions.

Solutions should put the human life as a priority not the symptoms and absolutely above the boundaries of the boardroom and the bottom line. We injected our kind principles to shift that short-term sticky plaster mindset to long-term people-centric goals.

We challenged the teams not on what they think they know but what they need to do. Not to manage the symptoms, but plan solutions that

develop real change and create real impact.

We asked people to be brave, be unafraid; we asked them if it was their life affected by this problem, what would they want the solution to be.

We asked them to embody the Kind Currency way - Empathy. Compassion. Understanding. Respect. Kindness.

And most importantly, we asked them just do the right thing. Our goal, not knowing what to expect, was to plant the seed of change and shine a light on a better way of doing business for people and the environment.

What we experienced was far greater!

Those seeds were watered and began to sprout.

Why? Because as I became to learn, the festival is a change-making opportunity given the chance.

We all have the opportunity to put human-life at the centre of our business, we just have to choose to do the right thing.

Be brave and unafraid. Choose the Kind Currency way!

michelle@kindcurrency.co.uk
www.kindcurrency.co.uk



Grace House Golf Day

A highlight in the Grace House events calendar is the Golf Day and this year's event was no exception. 14 teams took to the Prince Bishops Course at Ramside to compete for the first ever Grace House Shield and although it was a tight competition, the team from Evolve Technology came out on top!

Grace House is delighted to announce that, thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, golfers and volunteers, we raised £9,240 which will allow us to continue providing essential services to disabled children, young people, and their families.

Thank you to our event sponsors The Unite Group and also Social Plus for taking over our socials on the day and capturing some great photos and videos.

Another thanks to our Tee Sponsors, volunteers who helped out on the day, and to Gavin Forster Photography for taking the official photos.

If you would like to take part in the Grace House Golf Day 2024, which will be held on Friday 28th June at Ramside, please email Laura on LF@gracehouse.co.uk



Are corporate meat-ings a thing of the past?

North East events company reduces carbon footprint of major event.

Beaconhouse Events, a leading events agency based in Newcastle upon Tyne, has dramatically reduced the carbon impact of a major North East event by making one simple change to catering; delegates were given vegetarian meals by default.

As part of the TechNExt Festival 2023, BeaconHouse Events, who co-founded the festival in partnership with Sunderland Software City and Dynamo, designed the catering throughout the week to reduce carbon emissions by encouraging people to make conscious choices about what they were consuming. That meant that all buffet options at the Main Stage event and Festival Party were meat-free and the menu for the 120 guests at the conference dinner was vegetarian by default, with delegates being asked to request the meat option if that was their preference. The result was 55% of the attendees at the dinner choosing the meat-free options, as opposed to the average of only 10% that the team would see at a usual event, greatly reducing the carbon footprint of the event across the week.

BeaconHouse Events announced its five-year ESG strategy earlier this year which aims to deliver considered, achievable actions, help the business reach responsible carbon neutrality and drive sector-wide change from inside the organisation.

Sarah Thackray, co-founder and director of the award-winning agency said, "We believe that great events don't have to cost the earth, and as part of our five-year ESG strategy we have been examining how we create experiences that move us towards our aim of becoming, and remaining, a carbon responsible business, while still maintaining a fantastic experience for our delegates



"As an office of foodies, we know that the catering options are a corner stone of any event, but the amount of meat consumed was having a major impact on how sustainable our events could be. So we got our heads together and came up with a simple solution – what would happen if you had to opt-in for a meat option, rather than opt out?"

"The climate impact of meat is enormous – roughly equivalent to all the driving and flying of every car, truck and plane in the world. This one simple change allowed us to do better for our planet during the week-long festival while still providing a delicious dinner for the guests to enjoy.

"The key to creating impact isn't simply switching to a veggie or vegan menu, the trick is to communicate the importance of why. Going meat-free was just one element of our 'Good Festival' ambition and 'for good' was a core value that ran through everything throughout the week. That meant a focus on quality, inclusivity, diversity, accessibility, and sustainability, all of which we communicated the impact of to our delegates in the lead up to the festival."

The issue of meat-free events and experiences is coming into mainstream consciousness more and more, over the last year we have seen the news that Oxford Council have banned meat from their menus at corporate events, with Cambridge, Exeter and Norwich Councils following suit and Cambridge University

Darwin's College served a fully vegan menu for their ball this June.

Sarah continued, "It is our job as a responsible employer and business to forge the path of what is possible and to collaborate with other organisations, both in and outside of the event sector, to learn from, and inspire, each other. We are seeing an increased demand for environmental reporting from our clients and are proud to be early adopters of TRACE, a digital carbon measurement platform to help the event industry reach Net Zero. TRACE helps us to gather data on our carbon impact at each event, which in turn gives us the ability to work with clients to benchmark and track success alongside their ESG strategy. There is still relatively low adoption for sustainable change across the sector, but with consistent and considered steps we can make real change together."

This small step is part of BeaconHouse Event's wider goal to reduce their carbon emissions by 5% year on year, with the key ambition to become and remain a carbon responsible business by looking at carbon neutrality, alongside supply chain engagement, research into sustainably sourcing materials, digital solutions to limit single-use print and staff training to upskill the team on the future of events both in-person and online.


For more information on BeaconHouse Events visit www.beaconhouse-events.co.uk



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People Spark Solutions was launched in June 2020 to support organisations with their learning, talent and organisational development.

Throughout the whirlwind of the last three years we've tackled nearly 200 projects and collaborated with tech gurus, social housing firms, consulting dynamos, recruitment, universities and NHS superstars.

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scott@peoplesparksolutions.co.uk



LOUISE KENNEDY



KELLY CHARLES-COLLINS

Real World HR



Oculus HR goes global

Multi award-winning HR specialists Oculus HR have been hitting the airwaves over recent months with their popular Real World HR podcast. Hosted by Founder and Managing Director Louise Kennedy, the podcast series has seen an array of industry experts take to the studio to discuss a host of topics from mental health awareness, the menopause to mindset.

author Kelly is passionate about revolutionising the way leaders and employees address the issues of justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in the workplace.

Within this, Kelly advocates building conversational workplace cultures, which she unpacks on the podcast.

On the episode, Kelly shares:

- How to develop the skills and empathy to have challenging conversations – personally and in a working environment.
- Why the first steps to addressing biases are acknowledging that they exist and understanding how they impact people.
- The benefits of conversational cultures - creating an environment where people feel comfortable to make their voice heard and know that they matter.

Louise commented: “I was honoured that Kelly joined me all the way from the USA – the power of tech never ceases to amaze me! The discussion is really fascinating and enlightening, and I hope people enjoy listening to the episode as much as I enjoyed talking to Kelly.

We really want to put the ‘real’ into HR and our podcasts are a great platform to do this.”

With a number of awards under their wing including news recently landing that Oculus HR are a Finalist for the 2023 Great British Entrepreneur Awards & Community - Service Industries Entrepreneur of the Year category, Louise is committed to sharing her years of expertise with her followers and the podcasts are proving to be an instrumental means to do this.

Oculus HR provide innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach. Building an extensive client list along the way which includes the Foundation of Light, Queensway Orthodontics, Tyne Coast College, Midas Cladding and Glendale Transport.

To find out more about the support available contact: louise@oculus-hr.co.uk

All podcast links to your favourite platforms are now available via www.oculus-hr.co.uk

With the podcast now well into streaming series two, the series is on the cusp of hitting thousands of views, with their recent studio guest propelling Real World HR onto the global arena.

In the most recent episode of Real World HR, Louise is joined by Kelly Charles-Collins all the way from sunny Florida! Keynote speaker and

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Louise Kennedy

Oculus HR Ltd

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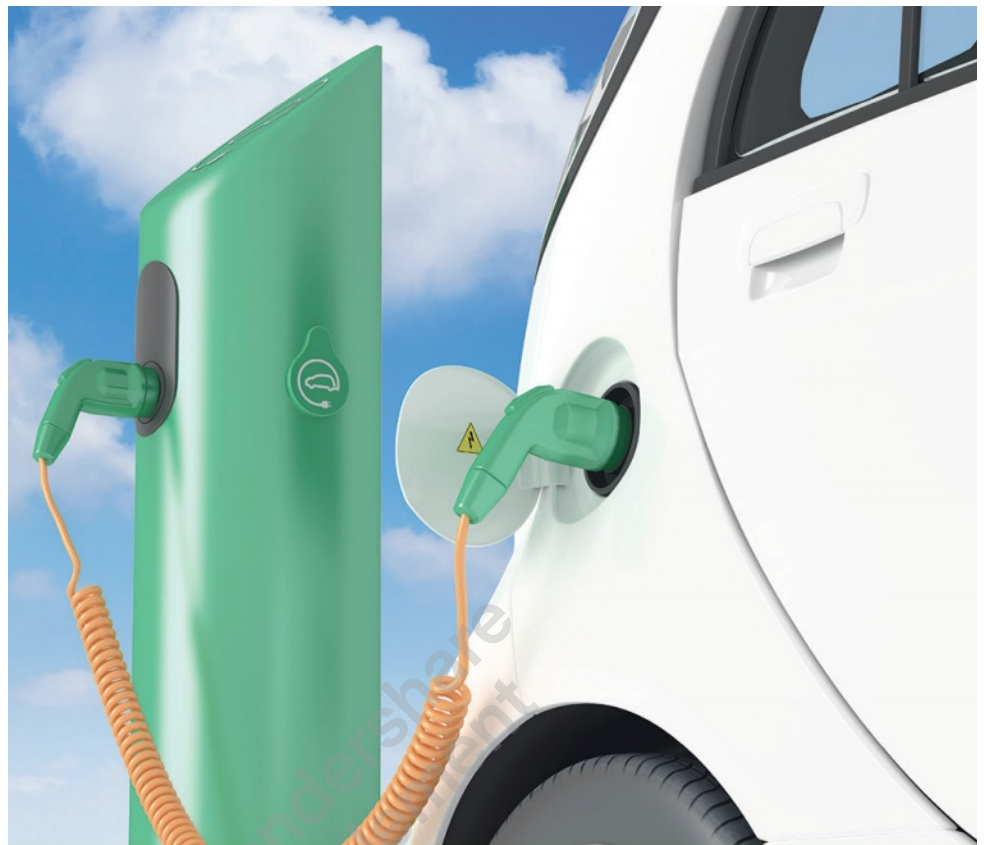
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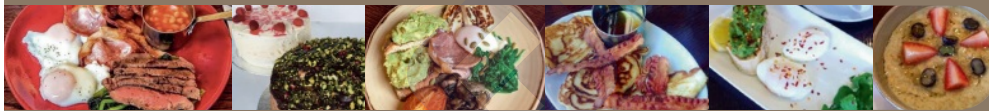
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Are you being useful or helpful?

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

A good friend of mine asked me a question a little while ago. He asked: "Is the world making good use of you?"

And this really made me think. Was it?

I was doing many things which other people may have found useful, but were they useful to me? At the same time, was I actually being useful or just helpful to those around me?

Now this may seem like a very slim distinction, but in the coaching world, it's a very important differentiator. When we are helpful to others, it means we tend to do things for them. This removes personal agency, and doesn't help others to learn or grow.

When we are useful, then we enable others to think and act for themselves, so they can take that learning with them. Being useful rather than being helpful is now a question I frequently ask the leaders and coaches who I work with.

The problem is, as humans, we like helping others - in fact many of us thrive on it. We have been conditioned to do so by our parents and care givers. They role model helping us, giving us the answers, coming to the rescue - all in the name of love. Which means we in turn role model these behaviours, not only in our family lives, but at work. I've lost count of the times I've spoken to people in the workplace who say "I just want to help me team".

Helping isn't always a good thing. Helping may mean you are taking responsibility for tasks and issues which aren't yours. Helping may mean you are being bigger in your role than you should be. Helping may mean your people are not being enabled to step up, make decisions and act for themselves.

Just think about it - how often are you the answer person, the one who people go to with questions?

The person who always has a list of things to do for other people?



Annabel Graham

The person who feels weighed down and overwhelmed by the obligations you have towards others? Sound familiar?

Are you being helpful, rather than being useful?

Reflect for a minute on everything you do at work (and out of work if you wish):

- Do you spend your time involved in things which will add the most value to you/the business?
- Are you attending meetings you shouldn't be in?
- Have you agreed to do something that isn't yours to do, and should belong to someone else?
- Do you delay work that you have planned to deliver because someone else has asked for your time?
- Do you lack space in your day/week to do the things you want to do?
- Are you enabling your team to take the lead and responsibility for their own work?

If you answer yes to any of these, I would challenge you to think about where you can be more useful within your role.

First of all, think about the situations where you tend to step in and be over helpful. What triggers you to do this? Is it a specific person, certain situations, the need to be wanted? Remember, we get a reward from helping others, we get the gratitude and thanks and that makes us feel good. It does not mean though that it is the right thing to do.

Next, think about all the times you've said yes when you should have said no. When you have stepped in and taken charge, rather than asked someone to think for themselves. What boundaries do you need to put in place? What could you do instead which would give you a better outcome?

As you take some time off over this summer, consider where you need to rebalance, so you stop taking on things which belong to others. It will make you more useful to them and to you as a result.

If you would like to discuss your coaching or leadership development needs for you or your team contact Annabel via LinkedIn, annabel@successfultraining.co.uk, or visit www.successfultraining.co.uk



L-R: Dave Attridge, Green Planet Heating Solutions, Robert Little, Eco Media Marketing & Leon Thompson, Green Planet Heating Solutions.

Green Planet Heating Solutions joins forces with Tree Appeal & Eco Media Marketing for tree planting initiative

North East-based Green Planet Heating Solutions is proud to announce its collaboration with Tree Appeal and Eco Media Marketing to support tree planting initiatives in the UK and Africa. As part of our commitment to reducing our carbon footprint and promoting environmental sustainability, we have taken a step forward in contributing to a greener planet.

How can our customers get involved?

As a valued customer of Green Planet Heating Solutions Ltd, you too can be a part of this eco-friendly initiative. For every qualifying product we install, we pledge to plant trees on your behalf. Here's how you can participate:

New Boiler Installation

For every new boiler we install, trees will be planted to support reforestation efforts.

Smart Thermostat Installation

Opting for a smart thermostat from Green Planet Heating Solutions means contributing to tree planting projects.

Thermostatic Radiator Valves (Pack of five or more) Installation

Choose our high-quality thermostatic radiator valves, and we'll plant trees in recognition of your sustainable choice.

Upon participating, you will receive a personalised certificate of tree planting, along with a unique code that allows you to trace the locations where your trees have been planted.

"We are thrilled to collaborate with Tree Appeal and Eco Media Marketing on this essential tree planting initiative," said Dave Attridge, owner of Green Planet Heating Solutions. "By integrating tree planting with our products and services,

we strive to make a positive contribution to the environment and create a significant impact on our planet's well-being."

About Tree Appeal & Eco Media Marketing

Tree Appeal and Eco Media Marketing provide businesses with a distinctive opportunity to engage in environmental sustainability efforts while gaining recognition for their eco-conscious actions. By aligning with these organizations, companies like Green Planet Heating Solutions can differentiate themselves in a crowded market, showcase their commitment to the environment, and foster a robust green marketing strategy. Moreover, these initiatives directly address both environmental and community aspects of Corporate Social Responsibility, promoting a more sustainable future.

Robert Little from Eco Media Marketing said: "We welcome on board Dave and his team at Green Planet Heating Solutions. It's fantastic to know that there are companies out there that are on the same page as us, and we welcome other businesses to follow suit."

Join Green Planet Heating Solutions in our journey to make the world a greener and healthier place.

For further information on how you can be part of this initiative, please contact:

www.greenplanetheating.com

info@greenplanetheating.com,

07826 405 522.

www.ecomediemarketing.co.uk

info@ecomediemarketing.co.uk,

0800 107 5708.



Newcastle-based independent recruitment specialists, Central Employment, report strong turnover and profit

Central Employment, the Newcastle-based independent recruitment specialists, has reported strong financial results for year ending 30 September 2022.

Central Employment, which provides recruitment and training services for some of the largest businesses and brand names in the North East, has reported an increase in turnover to £25.9m, a gross profit of £4.6m and net profit of £1.4m.

The results coincides with the company securing a new larger head office in Portland House in the centre of the city, which it will move to in the autumn.

Currently based at St Mary's Place, the business employs 46 permanent staff and supplies approximately 1,000 employees to the temporary employment sector on a weekly basis.

The recruitment specialists predominantly supply workers to the manufacturing, industrial and pharmaceutical sectors, along with a wide network of business across all STEM industries. It has also seen a continued rise in demand for its permanent employment recruitment services as vacancies and employment opportunities across the region and UK continue to rise.

Will Palmer, Finance Director at Central Employment, said, "These financial results reflect another exceptional year for us with a strong and encouraging performance across all our business interests."



"We have placed in excess of 5,000 temporary and permanent workers into these employment sectors over the reporting period, and we continue to look to recruit permanent members of staff to join the growing Central Employment team here in Newcastle, whether that be at graduate level, sales, admin or executive level.

"These are very exciting times for all the team. We have recently signed a 10-year lease to move our headquarters to Newcastle city centre-based Portland House, which will provide our staff with more modern and open plan office space and allow us to grow our headcount in line with our growth and expansion plans over the coming years.

"It is also very pleasing that on a national level, Central Employment is the only Newcastle-based recruitment company to be listed in the 'Recruiter Top 50' fastest growing recruitment agencies in the UK, appearing at a very commendable position of 43rd."

Will added: "We have invested in and updated our technology and CRM systems internally and have a broad and growing client base looking to recruit quickly and efficiently with the right balance of skill set and profile, as we focus on our business strategy and development going forward.

"As a thank you for all their hard work, we were very pleased, after positive results in our previous financial year, to have awarded all of our employees, full and part-time a favourable annual bonus of at least 10% of their salary."

www.centralemployment.co.uk

“

...We have awarded all of our employees, full and part-time, a favourable annual bonus of at least 10% of their salary...

Central Employment Team of Directors,
L-R, Steve Hart, Will Palmer, Paul Ponton and Mark Trett.

Clearwater Development - Tenant Focus



At Clearwater Developments, we like to focus on our tenants leasing our properties, so each month a different business will be highlighted. In the 2nd of these, we would like to introduce to you, Fit24, a large multi-purpose gym, based at Spectrum, in Seaham. Jack Burton, 31, club owner of Fit24 tells Jackie Marston all about their business:

How long has the company Fit24 been running and where are you based?

The brand has been in the fitness industry for over a decade, and we are based in Spectrum in Seaham and Hull.

What made you choose Spectrum as your latest gym opening?

The location is amazing, the views are stunning, plus the building really lends itself to a health club operation like mine. Working with Ranj Gill and Gursh Kahlon from Clearwater Developments has been a pleasure and even before we started the project the Seaham community have been right behind us every step of the way.

How many staff do you hire as a company?

The club in Seaham has eight full time staff, two health coaches and at current five classes instructors with another three staff to join us with the opening of the coffee shop (Club13) and barbers.

What types of memberships do you offer your clients and what are the costs/benefits etc?

We currently offer single, couple and family memberships. As we settle in, we will be reaching out to build corporate links and build health and wellness packages across Seaham and expand our offerings to cater for as many members as possible.

How do people make themselves a member of Fit24?

We have been open now 18 weeks and have just flown past 1300 members! So far this week we have signed up 51 members which is amazing! They just have to go onto our website or pop in, in person.

How has working with Clearwater Developments benefited your business?

As said before, this was a challenging project for all, but we have worked together to create a facility that has thrived due to the hardwork of those involved in the build and also the amazing support of the local community of Seaham, all of whom I am extremely grateful to! Every time I visit, it's great to see more new friendly faces. We are working with our brand partners, TechnoGym to bring a great package for our official Open Day. As time progresses, we will continue to invest into the club to add additional layers of service for all to experience and enjoy as we grow to a healthier community!

Here is to a great start to a healthy relationship between Fit24 and Clearwater Developments!

www.fit24.co.uk, 0191 429 4501. Fit24 Unit 1, 1A, Lighthouse View, Spectrum Business Park, Seaham SR7 7PR.

A Clear View of the Future



CLEARWATER
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**Joining the Clearwater family is
Rick Maughan as Pricing Specialist and
Mark Price as Corporate Account Manager,
along with owners of Clearwater Developments
Limited, Ranj Gill and Gursh Kahlon to
open Clearwater Utilities Limited.**

Following Covid, the energy crisis and huge price rises in energy, prices have now started to stabilise and as a company that cares about our clients and their businesses, we want to help ensure that those savings are being passed onto the companies that we represent.

Ranj Gill said: "Following many successful deals where we have reduced costs on our existing sites and property portfolio there are opportunities to offer this to other business customers, which means that they too can benefit. By opening Clearwater Utilities Limited, we are creating a unique opportunity to help customers make substantial savings on their gas, electricity, and water costs. We can also offer advice on how to reduce your carbon footprint!"

**For a no obligation chat, contact
Mark Price, Corporate Account Manager
on 07738 181 263
or email: mark.price@clearwaterutilities.co.uk
www.clearwaterutilities.co.uk**

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Nevil Tynemouth

Are you keeping score?

This question might resonate with you instantly, or you might be puzzling over the question slightly. If you instantly connect with this, can I check, are you keeping score personally or professionally?

If you didn't connect immediately, have a think about your personal and professional goals, these might be the scores you need to think about and track.

Keeping score can be a massive benefit to you and you need to be aware of the potential negatives. You might keep a score on how much weight you have lost, how your business has grown and how many clients you have helped – these are firmly in the positive camp.

What happens though if you keep score on some more unusual things, like: those that didn't help you, people who didn't return your calls or those that caused you a personal or professional issue at some point. These can be some of the more challenging scores you or I might carry around with us.

Firstly, let's explore if now is time to let go of some of the less helpful scores you are keeping. Pause and think about what you might need to let go of. It can be as simple as agreeing with yourself to no longer track that score, hold that thought or carry that reference around in your head. It can

be liberating when you no longer feel the need to invest any more energy into this type of score keeping.

When you have done this, let's see if we can reinvest that energy into the important scores you might want to track. How might you feel when you really focus on the positives, and what benefit might you get when you really invest in moving some of these things forward:

- Your personal happiness
- KPI's (Key Performance Indicators)
- Your health and wellbeing
- Customer satisfaction (CSAT) or net promoter score (NPS)
- How much time you spend with people who really value you and care for you
- Strategic AND operational goals – key in aligning short and long term goals

You can see these are a few personal and professional goals. I honestly believe if you want to achieve a great work life balance you need to think about these types of scores together. Here are a few things that I have learned that might just help you in creating a renewed focus:

What gets measures gets done, what gets rewarded gets repeated

A great contact of mine shared these two thoughts. Focus on the right measures for you and create micro and major rewards as you achieve steps towards your goals.

Keeping score not kidding yourself, guessing or making assumptions

It's far too easy to hope and assume, it is far more powerful when you learn to measure and track. Don't guess, instead, have a full complete measure (even if it is a little uncomfortable at first).

Quarterly focus

Having a good timescale to achieve anything makes sense. If the timescale is too short things

may be too difficult. Too long and you may lose focus, momentum and enthusiasm. A quarterly goal tracked every week just hits that sweet spot. It keeps you on track and gives you time and space to achieve what you need to achieve.

Take (a fixed amount of) time to celebrate wins and mourn losses

Have you noticed you can dwell over some of the challenges you face personally and professionally. Do you get carried away with your big wins and quickly fall back into bad habits? Take a fixed amount of time to celebrate and commiserate, this helps you to keep focused and keep moving forward. Don't berate or congratulate yourself too much. Learn from both scenarios and take the next step.

Tracking your progress, are you better today than yesterday?

This is the principle of marginal gains. If you focus time and effort to growing personally and professionally every single day, then these small improvements compounded over a quarter, then a year will give you huge growth and development. My two favourite questions to help people grow are: "What did you do well and how will you repeat it?", and "What didn't you do so well and how might you improve it?". If you take this approach every day, week, month and quarter, that is a real growth path.

Keeping score is both tough and rewarding. The first stage is to track the right scores for you (personally and professionally), your team and your firm. Then be honest (and not modest) about where you really are and where you want to get to. Apply the five techniques above to help you get to each of your goals, making sure you are taking time to celebrate along the way.

To find out how you and your firm can track the right scores, speak to Nevil: nevil@newresults.co.uk, connect with him on LinkedIn or visit our website www.newresults.co.uk



CIC benefits from Heads Up to work with Jackie

A North East based CIC has benefited from a Nation Lottery Community Fund to launch a new service, along with a heads up to work with Jackie Latham of Jackdaw Web Design when they were looking to overhaul their online presence.

Carol Grimes and Katy Hennon, partners at Heads Up Ltd CIC, were struggling to find someone who could do exactly what they wanted for their newly planned website, for the right price. Then Katy, who used to work with Jackie in a previous role, found Jackdaw and the women reconnected.

Through uniquely innovative educational packages, Heads Up aims to provide support in the development of emotional literacy and wellness in children and young adults. The new fund will enable the team to offer creative and fun sessions to children within the local area to develop self-esteem and mental/emotional resilience, involving their parents/carers, over the course of the next two years. They involve storytelling, crafts, art and outdoor bushcraft type activities.

Carol said: "We believe that emotional wellness begins in our early years and that these values should be reinforced throughout our teens, until adulthood. If we develop skills to recognise and cope with difficult emotions as a child, we can become healthy and resilient adults.

"We work hard to develop effective and engaging programs, intended to promote emotional literacy amongst young people, which we believe will assist in the future prevention of mental illness for the next generation. The new sessions will help with this aim massively and support so many young people."

Having received a comprehensive quote from Jackie that represented outstanding value, the pair had an ultimate level of trust

in the expertise Jackie had displayed, and her understanding around legislation, accessibility, and e-commerce.

Carol continued: "Jackie just got what we wanted and knew how to do it. Amazingly, although there was regular communication, Katy and I didn't have to do very much once Jackie was underway, which was ideal. We have built an ongoing relationship now the website is up and running, and she is super responsive when we need changes, snagging, or when our marketing volunteer has a question.

"We have also added in a blog, built up extra email addresses and Jackie is always there with a speedy response. We are delighted to have a website that we can build on for our future, adding new functionality and having an ever-expanding shop."

The Heads Up website shop offers books, emotional wellbeing packs, puzzle books, journals and toys to help develop children.

**For more information on the new courses available, you can contact Heads Up via www.headsupcic.org.uk
Facebook – Heads Up Ltd CIC
Instagram – headsupcic or by email at info@headsupcic.org.uk.**

If you have a need for a new or improved website, then you can contact Jackie on jackdawwebdesign.co.uk



Express Engineering and QA Weld Tech personnel

Express Engineering acquires QA Weld Tech

North East based Express Engineering, the manufacturing, assembly, and testing specialist, has further expanded its offering in the global sub-sea engineering market after acquiring the assets of QA (Weld Tech) Limited.

LDC-backed Express Engineering has secured the site and the plant and equipment of QA Weld Tech, a leading provider of flow spools, crossovers and technical welding services based on Riverside Industrial Park, Middlesbrough.

The transaction to acquire the assets was completed following the appointment of joint administrators Steve Ross and Allan Kelly of the Newcastle office of FRP Advisory, to QA

Weld Tech, which became insolvent after suffering a sustained period of loss-making.

Express Engineering, which is a Gateshead-based global turnkey supplier for subsea actuator assemblies, connection systems and subsea production systems, intends to retain the current site in Middlesbrough and continue to offer fabrication and welding services under the QA Weld Tech brand.

The acquisition has also supported the transfer of 39 staff to the new entity within the Express Engineering group, which now employs more than 230 staff.

The investment expands Express Engineering's technical capabilities and adds flow loops and spools to the specialist product range and gives access to additional markets and customers.

Chris Thompson, chairman of Express Group, said: "The subsea energy sector is a core part of our business and, with resurgent demand for subsea manufacturing expertise and products, the addition and transition to carbon capture equipment is fundamental to our growth strategy.

"We're pleased to be able to welcome QA Weld Tech into the Express Group. They bring valuable skills and knowledge to the team and join at an incredibly exciting time.

"Our order book is very strong and we are delivering on our commitment to investing in our people, products and technology to realise our ambitions for the future."



Chris Thompson

Allan Kelly, partner at FRP, said: "QA Weld Tech has been established for 40 years and its technical delivery remains highly regarded but has faced challenges in the period since Covid. This sale provides an opportunity to retain that experience and build on the business' legacy. We wish the employees and Express Group every success in the future."

express-engineering.co.uk



Remagin unveiling by staff at Newton Aycliffe site

North East manufacturer rebrands as part of broader growth strategy

A County Durham company that manufactures products for the construction industry has launched a brand change as part of an ambitious expansion drive.

EOS, based in Newton Aycliffe, aims to double turnover and employment between now and 2030. The £15m business currently employs around 70 people.

Established in 2006, the company designs, manufactures and markets light gauge steel frame products for the construction industry, primarily steel frame systems for external facades and full load bearing structures.

These products are typically used in housing, flats and apartments, student accommodation, hotels and public buildings.

The company is part of the global building materials company Etex Group, which is driving innovation in the construction industry by launching a new brand focussed on offsite construction.

The trend towards greater offsite production

has prompted Etex Group to leverage its existing offsite construction companies to create a comprehensive, full-service business to meet customer demand and drive performance.

The new brand – called Remagin – brings together the collective capabilities of three existing businesses, Leeds-based Sigmat, County Durham-based EOS and Horizon, operating from Ireland.

The new commercial branding is part of a broader growth strategy which will see the turnover of the combined companies across the UK and Ireland more than double between now and 2030 – with significant employment opportunities in various roles for local people.

By combining their design and engineering expertise, testing and certification capacity,

along with manufacturing and installation know-how, the new brand will offer industry leading, lightweight, factory-assembled panels and associated services, all based on sustainable, light gauge steel framing (LGSF).

Remagin's integrated building systems offer an end-to-end project solution, and means the company is well placed to accelerate the scale and impact of offsite construction.

Scott Bibby, country manager Ireland and UK explained: "This is an exciting time in the development of not just our own business but the wider offsite construction sector. Due to the flexibility and proven benefits of panelised building systems, things are really taking off and by combining our joint strengths we are confident we can accelerate and maximise sector growth.

"Remagin is building on the solid foundations established by Sigmat, EOS and Horizon and is backed by Etex Group with its significant R&D and testing capacity and materials expertise. We're in a significant position to add significant life-cycle value and sustainability benefits to our customers."

Etex Group has 160 sites operating in 45 countries. In 2022 the group reported revenues of 3.7 billion Euros.

More information about Remagin at www.remagin.world



Martin Ellison

Can you cut costs yet remain profitable?

Martin Ellison, business development director, Elanders UK, explores how third-party logistics (3PLs) are tackling rising costs and inflationary pressure

With the impact of inflation and a hike in prices from food to everyday products, 3PLs can play a supporting role to customers when it comes to cutting costs, remaining profitable and safeguarding.

This can be achieved in the following ways by:

- Offering a one-stop solution for supply chains in packaging, warehousing, transportation and order fulfilment.
- Identifying gaps in the supply chain.
- Utilising expertise, best practices and technologies that can be integrated into business processes to solve complex challenges and make the supply chain more

agile and responsive in what can be an unpredictable market.

- Tackling concerns that eCommerce businesses may currently face, including the cost of goods, utility bills, salaries and transportation. Understanding your customer operations will help to develop efficient supply chain strategies, which will naturally help to lower costs and enhance customer satisfaction.

Be challenging

It may sound obvious but customers should always be challenging their partners. At Elanders UK we look at how we can add value, address what our customers want to achieve, analyse what isn't working and assess if we can fill the gap.

We offer a fully integrated solution, covering print and packaging, configuration, fulfilment, warehousing and global distribution. Ensuring that our customers are aware of all of our services is beneficial as it takes time and pressure away from them if we can deliver a service, they may not have thought of.

We operate to our core principles – delivering value, being agile and having honest discussions.

What are your customers' aspirations?

This is important to consider. They may be looking to move into a new market, so our first question is always, can we help? The role of third-party logistics in supply chain management is to drive business growth by giving companies inroads to markets where

they may not already have a presence. Being able to manage their products in a new market without having to spend money on warehousing and equipment can save money, as well as time learning about a new market.

Currently, we are talking to customers about sourcing materials for them. We have seen a 21% improvement in packaging goods for customers where we have helped to consolidate the supplier base at point of source, reduced time and shipping costs and, physically, in terms of space. Customers may not have the facilities to accommodate internal fulfilment and costs can be lowered in off-peak times.

Working in partnership

It is important to remember the relationship between a 3PL and its customer should be a partnership. One which enables business growth. If we are seeing a reduction in costs, potentially we can look to share our saving with a customer who is being impacted by costs.

Driving value and agility

Adding extra value is crucial to customers. The benefits of being part of Elanders Group is that we offer more flexibility. Customers have the best of both worlds by working with Elanders UK, for example, you have that localised angle combined with the benefits of a global operating business.

As we move towards 2024, working in partnership efficiently and effectively, remains key.

www.elanders.co.uk



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Go to www.airviewpark.co.uk for more details.





Bryony Gibson

Embrace the career opportunity of Summer

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, talks about the need for an annual summer career health check.

Summer is a time of relaxation, a chance to unwind and recharge our batteries. It also offers a rare opportunity to take a moment among the daily demands of work to reflect on our professional path and evaluate where we stand.

In my line of work, I often encounter people who have already decided to seek a new horizon. But let me be clear, taking stock and examining your career doesn't necessarily mean it's time to move on. In fact, what I am suggesting is simply about taking responsibility and holding yourself accountable for ensuring your ambitions are aligned with your personal goals.

Granted, finding time for introspection amid a busy and contented life is not easy. However, it is precisely during these periods of contentment that we should evaluate our direction and progress to ensure our careers remain fulfilling. Summer gives us the extra time and space needed to reflect on this and our aspirations.

So, where do we begin? Start by asking yourself

some fundamental yet pivotal questions. Are you excelling in your field? Does going to work bring you joy? Are you happy with your work-life balance? Do your values align with your colleagues and does your company's mission still ignite your passion?

Ask yourself when the last time was that you received a performance appraisal or sought feedback from your boss. Can you outline your key objectives for the next 3, 6 and 12 months, or have they evolved since your last discussion with your manager? Being aware of these changes and maintaining open communication is essential, as your line manager will have a significant impact on your future promotion prospects.

Assuming you aspire to continue growing and developing professionally, consider the new skills you've acquired over the past year. Are you actively expanding your knowledge base? Are there any courses or support systems available to help your personal and professional growth?

Moreover, when was the last time you refreshed your CV? Keeping an eye on the job market not only reveals enticing opportunities but also ensures you understand your own value - especially if you have remained with a single employer for a significant period.

Even the most exceptional jobs can lose their appeal over time. Sometimes, you do need a change or a fresh challenge to reignite your passion. However, before diving into a job search, make sure you think carefully about your current role, employer, and prospects. And be honest with yourself but remember that work will never rival the joy of spending time with your loved ones, so be realistic and kind to yourself too.

To find genuine happiness, I firmly believe you need to discover a purpose in your work that aligns with your long-term goals. This requires understanding what truly matters to you in life. When your strengths align with this purpose, determining your next steps becomes more natural, and the power to make it happen lies with you.

So, embrace the summer as more than just a season of leisure. Use it to unlock new and exciting career opportunities that match your aspirations. Take charge of your professional journey, and let the sunshine illuminate your path to fulfilment.

This year, instead of merely dreaming of distant shores, why not use this break to embark on a fulfilling journey of self-discovery?

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



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FINANCIAL ACCOUNTANT

Newcastle c£50,000pa

A perfect opportunity for an ambitious newly qualified ACA/ACCA to make their first move from the profession into a fast-growing UK group with operations in FMCG. As they look to launch their product on the International stage you will be responsible for overseeing the strategic development of the finance function.

At an exciting stage of their growth journey, you will report to the CFO and be involved in the ongoing corporate restructure of the company, as well as take responsibility for the group treasury function and preparation of group statutory accounts. With a small team you will be the lead contact for the annual audit and oversee group-wide tax compliance with HMRC. Responsible for accounting transactions and company secretarial duties, you will be required to ensure the wider team adhere to good accounting principles.

Excellent communication skills are a necessity, as is the ability to work comfortably under pressure. Able to meet multiple deadlines, prior experience of accounts preparation, cashflow planning and analysis is essential, along with a proficiency in Microsoft Office. A challenging yet rewarding position that can offer considerable progression into a senior finance role. **Quote Ref: 2175**

TAX MANAGER

Newcastle c£40-58,000pa

An exciting proposition for a Tax Manager to join a growing consultancy business providing tax compliance and advisory services. You will be responsible for dealing with all matters relating to the management of a portfolio of clients and leading more junior staff. Working closely with the Partner group you will provide assistance with advisory client work and pro-actively seek out new business relationships for advisory projects.

With ambitious plans to grow the consultancy we are looking for an equally driven Tax Manager with a strong technical understanding in corporate tax. Liaising with both OMB and SME clients you will service their compliance and advisory business requirements. This will include complex returns and involvement in a variety of business tax projects such as ad-hoc advisory, R&D tax credits, international, awareness of VAT and employment taxes.

As a ACA/CTA qualified (or equivalent) professional with a commercial mindset this offers a long and progressive career in tax with opportunities to develop that are tailored to your individual needs. Working alongside the Tax Partner your knowledge will flourish as you enjoy autonomy to develop your name in the local business market. **Quote Ref: 2189**

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTANT

Newcastle, c£40-45,000pa

A global specialist in the Industrial sector with progressive expansion over the last 40 years are seeking a Management Accountant (CIMA/ACCA/ACA) to take responsibility for a number of divisions within the group.

You will be involved in the monthly production of management accounts, budget preparation, cashflow analysis, financial reporting and completion of VAT returns. Working in close proximity with the Finance Director you will be assisting with financial decision-making, developing and implementing strategies to reduce business operation and production costs.

Longer term this position offers the chance to take over Finance Director responsibilities and thus we are seeking a Management Accountant with the drive to develop their technical knowledge and commercial understanding to progress their career to this level. **Quote Ref: 2183**

AUDIT DIRECTOR/SENIOR MANAGER

Newcastle, £75,000-100,000+pa

A prestigious accountancy firm are looking to appoint an Audit Director or Senior Manager to lead the audit and accounts service-line across the north east as they continue with rapid growth.

With a clear route to Partnership this offers the ambitious individual a genuine opportunity to lead a team to success and progress to Partner. We are looking for you to create a market presence locally as well as lead on existing audit work.

You will be ACA/ACCA qualified either with, or with the desire to achieve RI status (training provided). With a background from a mid to large firm you will have 5 – 8 years plus post qualification experience possessing strong technical audit skills, able to guide your team to deliver timely audit and accounts services. With a team of loyal, hardworking and ambitious individuals, you will be responsible for nurturing the management team to ensure they oversee effectively the delivery of all audit assignments and timely delivery of year end accounts. **Quote Ref: 2119**

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

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T3 Security – Based in the North East and now working nationally

New contracts won in Yorkshire and Lincolnshire

When T3 Security was first established eleven years ago, the company had a staff of two...the founders, Peter Moore and Richard Townsend.

Both of them already had extensive experience in the security industry but knew that there was a better way to help clients. Consequently, they decided to go their own way and do things differently.

It plainly works because as the company heads into its second decade, their total workforce is now approaching 500.

The rapid increase in the size of T3 Security is down their success in winning new contracts and retaining those who value the work that Peter and Richard started. Many of the clients which brought T3 Security on board in the early days, continue to use their services.

“We’re really proud of the fact that many of the clients we convinced to use T3 Security in our first few weeks of business, are still with us,” says Peter. “But the speed in which we’ve grown over the past few years has been wonderful.”

“In terms of growth, the first half of 2023 has been one of the best periods for T3 Security. We’ve not only won new contracts here in the North East, but we’re now also working across several large cities further south... places like Leeds, Sheffield and Lincoln.

One of our biggest new clients is the Stonegate Group who are ranked as the UK’s largest pub company with national outlets such as Yates’s and Slug & Lettuce. We began looking after a selection of their bars in York at the start of the year and then in February we started work for them in Leeds. March saw us add Sheffield and Lincoln to the portfolio.”

One of T3 Security’s other big clients is the NHS. Their relationship was strengthened further during the Covid 19 pandemic. Such has been the positive feedback from the NHS led T3 Security to secure a place on the



Richard Townsend with Peter Moore

“
...the speed in
which we've
grown over
the past few
years has been
wonderful...”

NOECPC NHS framework, which now solidifies the relationship. They are now a preferred supplier and continue to offer security to most of the hospitals across the North East including the RVI, Freeman, Newcastle General, Durham University Hospital, as well as dozens of small drop-in centres.

“We work closely with a lot of councils,” adds Peter. “For example we've recently won the contract to look after all of Durham County Council's transport hubs in places like Consett, Peterlee, Stanley and the new Durham City bus station which is due to open later this year.

Towards the end of last year we began providing security to Savill's, the estate agent and property management company after winning a place on their approved supplier list. We look after their Trinity Square centre in Gateshead.”

As you can tell, T3 Security is moving from being a North East company to a national company.

Although our region will continue to be their main hub, they've had to set-up satellite offices and boosted their infrastructure by hiring regional managers in Yorkshire as they continue to grow.

They've also added a new key member of staff.

“We couldn't have grown at such a pace without adding to the team. Although Richard and I are very much hands-on, we needed help. We're delighted to introduce our Head of Operations Paul Gourley. Paul has over 30 years of experience working in the security industry...in his previous role Paul was National Operations Director for a large national security provider with over 2000 staff. He's been a massive help to Richard and I.”

One thing is certain...T3 Security will continue to grow. They already have new contracts in the pipeline.

And of course one thing that being a large

company can provide for clients, is flexibility. They are big enough to be able to cope with any size of contract.

They also have the workforce and national contacts to be able to work anywhere in the UK. T3 Security – you're in good hands.

If you need any sort of security, T3 Security should be your go-to contact. For more details check out their website... www.t3security.co.uk call 0191 284 4730 or email info@t3security.co.uk You can even pop into their offices on the Blezard Business Park in Seaton Burn, Newcastle.



Rising Star

Erin Rochford

Trainee health & safety advisor at Carney Consultancy

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I wanted to be a paramedic or a nurse. I had a change of heart and became interested in a career in construction when I was on holiday with my family. I noticed a number of health and safety issues and pointed them out to my dad, regarding the hotel we were staying in. My dad, who has a career in construction, advised that a health and safety role may be of interest to me.

Before joining Carney Consultancy, I spent three years working within the local council as a health & safety apprentice before I was appointed a health and safety CDM assistant.

Tell us about your current role?

As a trainee health & safety advisor I undertake a lot of site inspections as part of my training. I accompany to site colleagues Jamie Clark, health & safety advisor and Sarah James, senior health & safety consultant.

I am also undertaking my UK Fire Door Training qualification. This is a nationally recognised qualification for fire door installation, maintenance and inspection. I am working closely with my colleague, Steve Harkness, who is providing training and support to both myself and Kerry Benson, health & safety assistant.

To advance myself further, I am also preparing to undertake my NEBOSH construction certificate. At the end of the month I will stay in Manchester for two weeks. The course



Erin Rochford

provides a valuable overview of the core aspects of occupational health and safety, equipping me with the skills to manage and assess workplace risk effectively.

How does your role benefit your learning?

A great deal! I get to put into practice the theory side of the role that I am learning when I am out helping to undertake site inspections. My role is also always varied and no day is ever the same, which I love.

Tell us about your team

I am fortunate to work with a really helpful team who have progressed their skill set with the company and are more than happy to pass on their knowledge to me.

As previously mentioned, I work closely with my colleagues Sarah James and Jamie Clark when it comes to being on site and Steve Harkness is mentoring me for my Fire Door Training.

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

Always ask questions. No question is too silly.

How do you like to unwind outside of work?

I like to relax by seeing my friends and enjoy lots of walks with my dogs. I have a German Shepherd and two French bull dogs.

www.carneyconsultancy.co.uk

Is automation affecting employment in the UK?

As a talent and recruitment business, we have witnessed the steady, yet transformative, tide of automation across various sectors in the UK.

The conversation surrounding the impact of automation on employment is often dominated by apprehension. However, when viewed through a progressive lens, automation presents an opportunity to create more fulfilling jobs and nurture a resilient workforce.

Before delving in, let's remember that automation is not a new concept. It's been an ongoing process that has been changing the landscape of work for centuries, from the introduction of assembly lines in manufacturing to the advent of computers. Each wave of automation has phased out certain tasks, but in return, has led to the creation of new roles and sectors.

Contrary to the narrative that automation will replace humans in the workforce, it's critical to emphasise that automation is likely to redefine roles, not eliminate them outright.

Traditional job titles such as administrator might seem under threat, but in reality, these roles are evolving. The routine tasks traditionally associated with an administrator, such as data entry or appointment scheduling, can be automated, freeing up administrators to engage in higher-value tasks.

As a result, we're seeing the emergence of new job titles like operations coordinator or business support specialist, roles that involve managing the interface between automation software and business needs. These professionals utilise automation tools to streamline processes, while also applying their unique human skills like strategic planning, problem-solving and relationship building.

Automation excels at tasks that are repetitive, data-heavy and algorithm-driven. But work is more than just a series of tasks. It's about



human connection, emotional intelligence, creativity and adaptability - the very aspects that automation can't replicate.

Careers built on these inherently human traits, such as HR professionals, mental health counsellors, content creators and many others, will continue to thrive in the era of automation.

Even in sectors where automation has been highly adopted, like manufacturing or logistics, the human touch remains indispensable. Skilled technicians, quality assurance analysts and logistics coordinators are needed to oversee automated processes, address complex challenges and ensure seamless operations.

One of the most noticeable impacts of automation is the growing demand for tech-intensive roles.

Job titles like AI specialist, data analyst, robotics engineer and user experience designer were relatively rare a decade ago. Today, they're among the fastest-growing occupations,

reflecting the shift toward a more tech-oriented economy.

As the nature of work transforms, lifelong learning has become an essential part of career progression. Companies, educational institutions and individuals need to embrace upskilling, not as a one-time solution but as a continuous process. For instance, an administrative professional today can be upskilled by gaining proficiency in data analytics or project management, which can open doors to other roles.

After all, a skilled and driven workforce is better for your business, which is why at Talentheds, we work directly with you to source and recruit these people into your business. We're not a numbers or target-driven company - for us, it is about finding the right candidate for the right role at the right time for your business.

For more information about what we do, visit the website at talentheds.co.uk



L-R: Rob Edwards, Andy Higgins, Ayrton Silveston and Adam Silveston – members of the Soda IT team

Northern Telecom bolsters IT offering with key acquisitions

A leading North East law firm has advised a prolific Leeds-based telecommunications company on the acquisition of the businesses and assets of two South East IT support businesses, saving jobs and further strengthening the group's offering.

Northern Telecom has welcomed Kent-based IT support providers, Allteks and Absols to its portfolio, thanks to legal support from Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors.

The businesses will now form part of IT support and security solutions provider, Soda IT – which joined the group in 2021 – with the acquisitions providing a boost to the managed services arm of the business and ensuring continuity for its clients.

This is the latest in a period of sustained growth for the company which included the acquisition

of the businesses and assets of Direct Market Services Limited and Toople.com Limited, and Utility Point Telecoms in recent months.

The addition of Allteks and Absols marks Northern Telecom's ninth and tenth acquisitions in just five years, with continued growth planned for the future.

Group CEO, Jon Graves, said "Mincoffs' support has been critical to our growth strategy.

"Getting 10 acquisitions over the line in just a few years is a testament to the hard work put in by Chris and the M&A team".

Chris Hughes, corporate partner at Mincoffs Solicitors, has worked closely with Northern Telecom for a number of years and said: "It was brilliant to deliver yet another successful deal for Jon Graves and the team.

"Jon has built a group with a reach far beyond a traditional telecom provider and it has been a pleasure to advise the team and watch the business go from strength to strength over the years.

"I have no doubt Northern Telecom has big plans for the future and I look forward to seeing what is next for the group as it continues to go above and beyond for its clients."

Mincoffs Solicitors has provided expert legal services and advice across the North East and beyond for 75 years.

Alongside corporate and commercial services, the firm's offering includes real estate, dispute resolution, employment law, licensing and gaming, residential conveyancing, family law and wills, probate and trusts.

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*...Listening
happens so little
these days...*

Dr David Cliff

Who shouts loudest?

In a second article on the theme of “learning to listen”, Dr David Cliff explores that being heard in society is often about getting past the filters created by societal and organisational priorities.

Last month I talked about the value of silence. How, in those spaces we can establish ourselves, reflect and reconnect with who we are. As important is the ability to listen, is the ability to not just hear the words, but what is really being said. Communication happens at multiple levels and virtually all human communication is nuanced, subtle and complexly coded. Listening, therefore, is a paramount matter of importance and is also a skill that requires honing over the years. When our propensity to promote ourselves in a commercial world is to transmit just that bit more than receiving, we often lose the ability to listen. We see it everywhere, people who believe they are listening to their customers, politicians who will tell you what their constituents think. This is a delusion. At best, it is a selective perception based on our own internal biases and how we would like the world to be, as we ultimately see it, rather than seeing the world as it is through the experiences, narratives and sharing of others.

Listening happens so little these days. We are encouraged to transmit. We now have ‘influencers’ who transmit constantly using media that can be very much a one-way street. They often market and promote themselves without understanding the lived experience of ordinary folk. It then becomes unsurprising that for many people customer services in the commercial world, for example, is very much a ritualised situation. In boardrooms, members will tell themselves in a classic group think way, just how the customer is responding based on their chosen, often automated service response rather than what the customer truly wants. Equally, in our politicians, we see greater disconnect now between those who are palpably members of the elite either by their education, culture, or sheer money at bank, advising and overseeing how most people should live, and asking them to “keep their nerve” in harsh financial times that have been at part crafted by the very people in power.

It's small wonder that there is an undertow of anger and frustration that growing numbers believe they are no longer valued as citizens or consumers and that minority issues are given a greater audience. Indeed, it's interesting to notice that as we lend increasing focus on ‘woke’ agendas of relatively small groups of the population we seem to focus less on more common issues of poverty, age, geographical inequality, health equality, and other factors that can affect anyone. Often those who do are accused of being ‘phobic’ rather than simply having a different perspective. Could it be that these ‘intersectional issues’, important though they are, allow us to have a debate within a confined resource envelope, where the business of actually correcting something like poverty, for example, would require far more resource, intensive structural changes that would require reform with the elite and others to pay more, and involve radical redistributive policies, that would be completely unpalatable to many.

Take another example, the ‘levelling up’ agenda of government. A sixty plus page document that has little more than tokenistic project management to correct truly historic imbalances. Talk about the Barnett formula, and the unfair distribution of resources, or something that's more centralist in terms of structural failures within the fabric of our society, this then goes into the ‘too difficult box’, never to get the courageous address it needs. Pity, because truly radical thought in the past gave rise to the NHS, the welfare state and further back still, pensions.

The true danger when we don't listen is that we squabble amongst ourselves about minority issues and forget the issues of the long-suffering majority in our communities. Let's be sure we talk about the paucity of services for people with housing needs, rural communities, cancer, mental health issues, air pollution that shortens life for 40,000 each year. People with strokes and heart problems even now waiting long periods for an ambulance well away from ‘winter pressures’, only to find that their health conditions transported them somewhere else!

Commercially, we must learn to listen also. Increasingly ethics feature in the mindset of consumers. Research studies, very clearly show that ethical considerations account for over 60-80% of consumer choices these days. We see the proliferation of magazines, such as the Ethical Consumer, something that would never have found subscription amongst the populous only a few years ago.

Most importantly the climate agenda must be heard and responded to by all. Once again, just as we have seen principled central resignations recently, politicians are not listening to the climate agenda nearly as much as it now requires, and people can see the world is changing whilst the science of decades is being both proven and simultaneously sidestepped for short term interests. However, as much as one may disagree with their disruptive approaches, this is perhaps why we now see hitherto quiet people often senior citizens protesting for ‘Just Stop Oil’, using behaviour that, for their generation, would have once been an outrage. We also see this in the NHS industrial disputes when we pay doctors £14 per hour and the NHS is being asset stripped by other countries, who pay more, yet some in power are all for bankers’ bonuses forgetting what that culture of reward did back in 2008 for most folk.

Yes, we all must listen, particularly those in positions of power political and commercially, for if we don't, history shows the often silent, quietest voices in our community, may yet turn into a roar of truth to power, with increasingly direct action in order to be heard. Above all, the climate agenda is rapidly becoming something that will no longer be tolerated by growing numbers hitherto reasonable, compliant, ordinary citizens and consumers.

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*...My biggest focus
is to make a
difference to
people's lives...*

Making a difference

If you're thinking of outsourcing leadership management training or require fully-funded assistance to help boost a workforce, then lining up a meeting with Simon Corbett's Orangebox Training Solutions should be high on your list.

The chances are that one of Simon's team would come to visit you anyway, but Orangebox's Tranquility House headquarters boasts a perfectly placed location to hear how the Hartlepool-based provider can help you and your organisation - anywhere in the region.

Simon's CEO office balcony overlooks the marina where Tall Ships from around the world were berthed only last month, and back indoors he has quotes from inspirational leaders dotted around his interior walls.

His favourite, Theodore Roosevelt's Man in the Arena speech, is one of those, along with American General Douglas MacArthur's description of a true leader. Such thoughts are behind Simon's own approach to lead his Orangebox team.

"My biggest focus is to make a difference to people's lives," said Simon. "That's not just to learners and clients, that's to the staff of Orangebox too. I am driven by a positive culture, I want employees to come to work and be happy and for this to filter out into our learners, delegates, where we can change people's lives and deliver training that adds value."

What started off as a business where Simon worked for himself on a second-hand computer off eBay in 2016 has developed into one of the most effective training providers in the North-East employing 52 members of staff.

And the intention of Simon, a former undercover police officer and non-league football player and manager, to deliver bespoke management training seven years ago has now progressed into an essential pre-employment training provider focused on getting more people into work.

He said: "Our training team is out on the ground delivering training every day. We are not only focused on the UK we have clients in Spain, Dubai and Qatar. We are always looking at ways in which we can grow and increase our offer."

"Our intention is really clear. It is our aim to work with as many North-East based employers and provide sector specific accredited training courses to local unemployed residents, helping them on their journey to gain employment."

"When times are hard, and recruitment is hard, our pre-employment training service is free. We recruit genuinely interested local residents who have responded to an advert. The learners want to come to us because of the opportunities we create. The more employers we work with the more opportunities we can create."

Five years ago Orangebox started to roll out government funded pre-employment courses on a regular basis, starting at a customer service employer where ten learners completed the course and nine progressed into employment.

It was then that Simon realised just how Orangebox could change people's lives. Further courses were run for the likes of Blue Line Taxi, End Clothing and a large fashion house based in Blyth who they continue to support through a third party to this day.

Orangebox's offer and reputation continued to grow and by working with more funding partners, further fully-funded training courses as a sub-contractor for the likes of Sunderland College (part of Education Partnership NE), New College Durham, Darlington College, Hartlepool College of FE, People Plus, Stockton College and Middlesbrough College. Orangebox was also awarded its first direct contract with the Tees Valley Combined Authority a couple of years ago.



Simon said: "After 23 years in law enforcement, I'm now nearly eight years into running Orangebox. The transferable skills of that experience have taught me how to speak to people, build relationships and, when necessary, to diffuse certain situations."

"It's gone from infiltrating serious organised gangs to building an organisation with a one team culture that could also stem from 30 years of being involved in semi-professional football."

Orangebox work with SMEs, national and international companies in a variety of sectors, including, but not restricted to, production, manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, retail hospitality, construction, security and care.

It currently trains around 4,000 learners in the North-East, Merseyside and Humberside, and Orangebox has previously delivered courses in west Yorkshire, Greater Manchester and the south-east midlands, as well as Warrington and Cheshire. Every learner is guaranteed an interview and more than 70 per cent progress into employment.

What has been achieved fills Simon, a Newcastle United fan, with pride – and he hopes his late father, Ian, would be proud too.

Simon added: "It's about making a difference and it doesn't stop at staff and learners, I want to do what I can do help and that's why I also work with Alice House Hospice in Hartlepool, I'm a board member on the Mayoral Development Corporation and we sponsor grassroots, semi-professional and professional football teams."

"We are part of Newcastle United's executive club, which always takes me back to when I was aged eight standing on the terraces with my dad. He would have loved to see the Orangebox logo at St James' if he was still alive."

"Bigger than that, though, I'm very proud to be Hartlepool born and bred, representing the town and the North East – I'm pleased to be helping to put Hartlepool on the map as well as people into employment."

For further information on how Orangebox can help your organisation visit orangeboxtraining.com



New CRM System For AR Power

An award winning solar pv installation firm is investing in new technology to streamline the process of installation from enquiry to commissioning.

Advanced Renewable Power (AR Power) based in Washington is run by husband-and-wife team Mark and Maria Dunville who started the business in 2011 and are now one of the leading installers of commercial and industrial systems. They have recently won the North East Solar PV Installer of the Year Award and will be representing the region in the national finals later this year. The firm is investing in a CRM system called Microsoft Dynamics to process and streamline every aspect of their operation from the initial enquiry to the completion and commissioning of an installation.

Technical Director Mark Dunville said, "Our business is growing year on year and this system will help us to streamline our processes. We have seen an increase in staff and contracts, and we can no longer rely on paper-based systems. We are using the technology to help our business grow even more as this will allow us to scale up as well as being more efficient and accountable."

The use of the system will also help the firm in its ISO9001 audit certification.



Applications open for Technology Innovation Award

The North Tyneside Business Forum is thrilled to announce that applications for the prestigious North Tyneside Business Awards 2023 are now open. Celebrating their 26th year, these awards recognise the outstanding contributions made by local businesses to the economy, highlighting North Tyneside as a thriving hub of business prosperity in the North-East region and beyond.

The North Tyneside Business Awards are once again organised by the North Tyneside Business Forum, and will take place on Thursday, 16th November at the Village Hotel, Cobalt Park, North Tyneside.

One of the five award categories is looking at how technology has been embraced by North Tyneside businesses. The Technology Innovation Award will celebrate businesses that embrace digital technologies and drive innovation in their industries. Applications are being accepted online at www.norhtynesidebusinessawards.co.uk with the closing date for all category nominations Monday 18th September 2023 5pm.

The sponsor of the Technology Innovation Award is Technology Services Group (TSG). Verisure NE Display Limited, Capita, North Tyneside Climate Emergency Board, Greggs and North of Tyne Good Work Pledge are also sponsoring the awards, which are in partnership with North Tyneside Council.

The North Tyneside Business Forum is run by a volunteer management group made up of members from various industry sectors in the Borough and gives support in the form of networking, events and signposting for growth and development.



New radio technology is DAB on for Northumberland

A group of local broadcasters in and around Northumberland have got together to apply for an Ofcom licence for what's known as small scale DAB to an area stretching from Cramlington to Alnwick.

The stations have set up a new not for profit company, "Northumberland Community Digital" which will oversee the application process. Should the bid be successful, listeners will hear Koast Radio, Radio Northumberland, Frisk Radio, Lionheart Radio, and other stations in DAB Digital quality for the first time. Up to 25 stations will be able to be hosted on the new system.

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Understanding the Difference Between Antivirus Software and EDR: Why Businesses Need to Upgrade Their Cybersecurity



With the rise of sophisticated cyber threats, businesses face an increasing need to enhance their cybersecurity measures. Traditional antivirus software is no longer sufficient to protect against advanced attacks, necessitating the adoption of Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) solutions.

Limitations of Antivirus Software:

Antivirus software has long been a fundamental tool in defending against known malware. Advanced hacking techniques, polymorphic malware, and zero-day exploits often bypass traditional antivirus defences, leaving businesses vulnerable to attack.

Role of EDR:

Endpoint Detection and Response (EDR) solutions serve as an advanced layer of defence, working in tandem with antivirus software. EDR focuses on real-time threat detection, response, and investigation on individual endpoints, such as computers, servers, and mobile devices. By utilising techniques like behavioural analysis, machine learning, and AI algorithms, EDR identifies and mitigates advanced threats that antivirus software may miss.



Antivirus software and EDR differ significantly in their approach and capabilities.

In the journey to upgrade cybersecurity, Lucid Technology Solutions offers valuable expertise and assistance to businesses. Lucid's team of experienced professionals understands the ever-evolving threat landscape and can tailor EDR solutions to meet specific business requirements. By leveraging Lucid's services, businesses can efficiently implement and integrate EDR into their existing cybersecurity infrastructure, ensuring a seamless transition and optimal protection against emerging threats.

As cyberattacks become more frequent and sophisticated, relying solely on traditional antivirus software is inadequate for safeguarding businesses.

Upgrading cybersecurity measures by incorporating EDR solutions alongside antivirus software provides a proactive and comprehensive defence strategy.



With Lucid Technology Solutions' expertise, businesses can navigate this upgrade seamlessly, bolstering their ability to detect, respond, and mitigate advanced cyber threats effectively.

By prioritising cybersecurity upgrades, organisations protect their valuable assets, maintain customer trust, and ensure business continuity in the face of evolving cyber threats.

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Closing the digital skills gap

By Joanne Finkeldey, People Director at razorblue

The tech landscape is evolving rapidly, and the last decade has seen huge amounts of growth in the sector. Tech professionals are the second most sought after role in the marketplace and a considerable amount of research shows that the UK is suffering from a digital skills gap. A study carried out by Microsoft found that seven out of ten UK businesses are facing a shortage in digital skills.

So, what is the digital skills gap?

It refers to the lack of properly trained candidates to fill necessary posts in businesses. A recent government report found that 72% of large companies and 49% of SMEs are suffering a large Digital Skills Gap.

Arguably, the most notable reason for the extensive digital skills gap is the rapid expansion of the tech industry over the last few decades. Digital transformation has rocketed across all industries and driven an extraordinary level of demand for new skills that the country is ill-equipped to meet. This skills gap presents a challenge to the future of both businesses and individuals.

The good news? The problem is not as obstinate as it might seem.

This issue requires response from policymakers, employers, and educators to diminish the potential negative implications for the UK and for businesses. Of course, to fully close the skills gap will take time, and a shift of mindset, with more young people encouraged to embrace technical subjects to help build a deeper talent pool for the future.

Take an active role at closing the gap

Build partnerships with local schools, colleges, and universities to inspire young people and try to get them excited about embracing digital and technological skills.

We see the value in encouraging young talent to join the technology sector. Our approach to the digital skills gap has seen a huge expansion of our apprenticeship programme, more recently creating the razorblue Academy, which gives us a chance to train staff and give them hands-on experience in key disciplines. We actively work with local colleges in attempts to engage with students, allowing them to have insight into the tech world.

Invest in training and development

Although this is harder for some businesses, there is no getting away from the fact that employers must invest in their work force to continually increase their skills- for both existing staff and the future talent pool.

Retraining people to work in new areas, and allowing them to develop in their current disciplines supports employees' individual learning and professional development and boosts staff morale, becoming a key element of the

organisations ability to retain staff.

At razorblue, we support the advancement and growth of our teams by offering personal development opportunities and plans, where individual employees can utilise them and the training on offer in a way that suits them.

All razorblue employees are offered at least one full day a month to focus on training and improving their skills. We also keep updated on what our partners are providing, like free universities via partner portals, or seminars, to find training opportunities for our staff that is effective and affordable. Within our business, Infrastructure and Network engineers frequently take members from Service Desk with them on jobs to get hands on training.

The constant improvement and diversification of our staff's skillsets are a priority for us at razorblue. With the rapidly evolving landscape of technology, we want to be ahead of the changes that occur within our sector, so we can provide IT support regardless of the challenge.

Think about your company

The value a company brings and what it offers to its employees is a critical aspect when it comes to attracting and retaining talent. Proactive employers are already finding ways to cope with the skills gap by including opportunities for flexible working and offering perks to benefit employees.

Creating a culture in which people feel supported is key. We recently introduced the implementation of a company-wide HR system to give us insight into how our people are doing at any given time, both in work and a personal capacity, ensuring that the business can support them in the most appropriate way.

There is a lot that still needs to be done about the digital skills gap in the UK, however business proactivity is key to close the gap. Digital skills are the future, and how we react in a micro scale will impact how the UK competes on the world market in the upcoming years.

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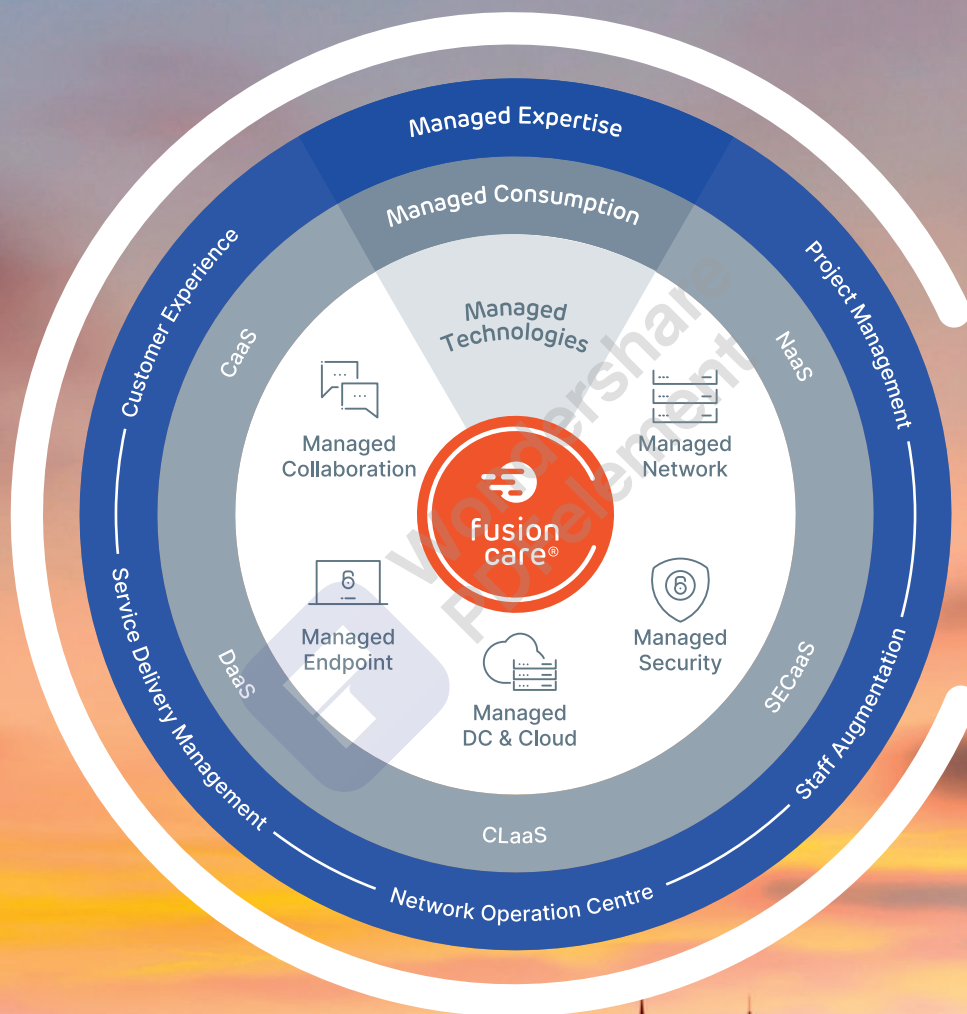
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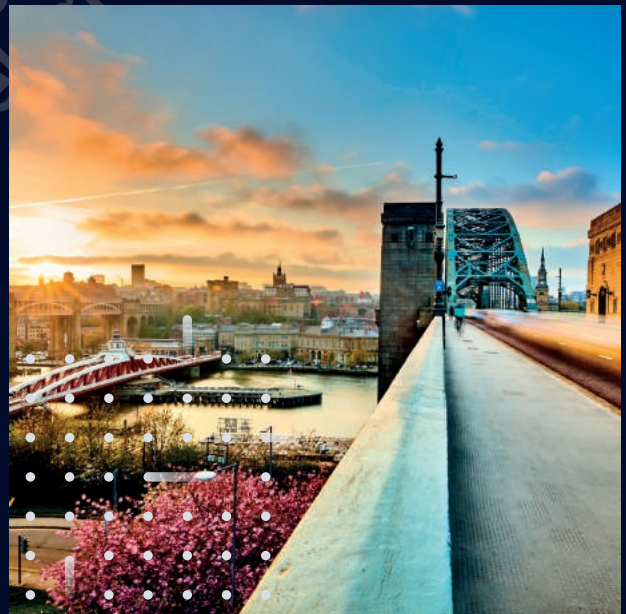
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The power of a focused brand value proposition for technology businesses

By Andrew Young - Founder and Director of The Pulse Rooms



The technology race is showing no signs of slowing down. In 2022, more than 45,000 technology start-ups were registered in the UK. These businesses, along with those already in the market, continue to change how we work and play. But competition is fierce. This means having a clear and focused brand value proposition is even more critical for sustainable success.

A well-defined brand value proposition not only establishes a strong identity but also drives long-term growth. As a brand growth agency that frequently works with start-up and scale-up businesses bringing new technologies to market, here are the reasons why technology businesses can't underestimate the power of their brand value proposition.

Differentiation and Competitive Advantage

In a crowded marketplace, where multiple technology companies offer similar products or services, a focused brand value proposition helps a business stand out. By clearly articulating what sets them apart and why customers should choose them, companies can create a compelling reason for their target audience to engage.

Targeted Marketing and Effective Communication

Technology companies cater to specific industries or niche markets. It's their brand value proposition that helps them tailor their marketing efforts accordingly. By clearly defining their value proposition, businesses can identify

their target audience and create more targeted marketing campaigns. This enables them to effectively communicate the value they bring, addressing the specific pain points and needs of their customers. Such pinpoint communication resonates better with the target audience and enhances brand awareness and recall.

Building Trust and Credibility

Trust and credibility are crucial factors in any relationship, especially in the technology sector, where customers often rely on vendors for mission-critical solutions. A focused brand value proposition helps establish trust by consistently delivering on the promised value. When a technology business clearly articulates its unique value proposition and consistently meets customer wants and needs, it enhances its credibility among existing and potential customers. This, in turn, leads to increased customer loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth referrals.

Efficient Resource Allocation

A focused brand value proposition also aids technology businesses in making strategic decisions regarding resource allocation. By

clearly understanding their unique selling points and core competencies, companies can align their resources, capabilities, and investments accordingly. This enables businesses to optimise their efforts and allocate resources where they can deliver maximum impact and return on investment. Additionally, the value proposition helps identify potential partnerships, collaborations, and acquisitions that align with the company's strategic direction and strengthen its market positioning.

Adapting to Changing Market Dynamics

Technology markets evolve rapidly, and businesses must continuously adapt to stay relevant. A focused brand value proposition provides a solid foundation for companies to adapt and navigate market changes. When businesses clearly understand their value proposition, they can effectively assess market trends, identify emerging customer needs, and adjust their offerings accordingly. This adaptability allows technology companies to stay ahead of the curve, innovate, and remain competitive in dynamic market environments.

Guiding Success

Ultimately, a focused brand value proposition serves as the compass that guides a business towards success, enabling it to thrive amidst competition and carve out a distinct identity in the minds of its target audience.

To find out how The Pulse Rooms can help your technology business to develop and communicate its brand value proposition, email hello@thepulserooms.com or go to www.thepulserooms.com



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The future of the North East tech sector

By James Bunting, CEO of Leighton & Chair of the Dynamo North East Advisory Board

As someone who has enjoyed an extensive career in the North East tech sector, more recently as the CEO of Newcastle-based software development business, Leighton, I am optimistic about how the region is poised for a promising future.

Following my recent appointment as Chair of Dynamo North East's Advisory Board, I wanted to share my perspective on the future of the North East tech industry, highlighting key predictions, challenges and initiatives that may shape our journey ahead.

Envisioning the future

Looking ahead, I feel the North East tech sector holds immense potential. Our region boasts a diverse range of technology businesses spanning various industries. We have established giants like Sage, SMEs like Visualsoft and start-ups like My Sales Coach. In my new role, I'll be drawing upon the experiences and expertise of a wide range of organisations to help propel us forward. The diversity of our region's tech businesses, combined with our innate innovative spirit will set the stage for groundbreaking advancements in the coming years.

Challenges and obstacles

While artificial intelligence (AI) continues to dominate discussions, we must shift our focus towards our people as the primary catalyst for growth. Attracting a greater number of individuals from diverse backgrounds into the region's tech sector is crucial. Equally important is providing them with relevant technical training and essential skills such as emotional intelligence and effective communication. By fostering an environment that encourages local talent to stay and contribute to North East organisations, we can build a sustainable tech ecosystem.

Additionally, reports of limited funding options for tech startups in comparison to London and other regions raise apprehension. Addressing these challenges requires collaboration, increased funding opportunities, and elevating the profile of North East tech organisations on a national and international scale.

Shared values for a common goal

I feel our region has a set of shared values of community, innovation, ingenuity and pride. These values and a tenacious "get stuff done" mindset will enable us to foster collaboration among North East organisations for the betterment of our tech sector. And with five reputable universities at our disposal, we should be leveraging their resources to harness the full potential of our people and skills.

Attracting and retaining top talent

To counter the threat of local technologists opting to work remotely for non-local companies, or leave the region altogether, initiatives must be taken to attract and retain top talent. The recently concluded TechNExT festival is a great example – encompassing the entire region, it emphasised education and knowledge sharing. Within this event, Tech Talent Live provided invaluable insights for individuals interested in pursuing tech careers in the North East. Dynamo's Tech Talent Engine, an online careers hub and employment network, also plays a vital role in connecting talent with opportunities within the region.

The future of the North East tech sector shines brightly, driven by our vibrant community, shared values, and relentless pursuit of innovation. By embracing and empowering our people, fostering collaboration, and overcoming challenges, we can unlock unprecedented growth and solidify our position as a technology powerhouse.

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*...our region has
a set of shared
values of
community,
innovation,
ingenuity and
pride...*

James Bunting

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Smart IT set sights on the future with new office

Against a backdrop of economic difficulties, Gateshead-based IT specialist Smart IT has been able to buck the trend, enjoying several years of fantastic growth, including by an incredible 30% over the last 12 months alone.

From an expanding client base to welcoming new members of staff to the team, it has been a rapid period of expansion, which has led to them recently announcing the next step in their story with the acquisition of a brand new head office.

Eager to maintain its North East roots, Smart IT is remaining in the heart of the Team Valley Trading Estate, but the new 10,000-square-foot facility will be three times larger than its current office space. This is a major milestone for the business and will provide them with the room needed to continue expanding their team, with space for up to 150 members of staff.

"We are really excited to be moving into the new facility," said Tony Wilson, Managing Director at Smart IT. "The last few years have been a bit of a whirlwind for Smart IT, and despite the many challenges that have arisen, which of course, we have not been immune from, we have still been able to welcome new clients across the UK. In turn, this has allowed us to expand our team, focusing on employing the very best talent within the IT sector to ensure that we can give our customers exceptional service from the moment they contact us."

"While this rapid expansion has been fantastic, it did mean that we quickly outgrew our existing Gateshead HQ. We knew we had to find a new office that would meet our current needs and ensure that we have the space to meet future demands and requirements. We wanted to remain in the North East, and after a short search, a property became available on the same trading estate we were already on, which was perfect for us."

"The move is a major investment in our future, costing us around one million pounds in total. It is a significant milestone in our company history, and we hope that this cements to our existing customers and team members that we are committed to growth and innovation. We want to continue to create a positive impact on the world of technology within the UK and remain in the foreground of cutting-edge technology solutions."

Alongside moving into the impressive new facility, Smart IT will continue operating its satellite offices throughout the UK. These premises provide space for both field sales agents and engineers, ensuring that the business is able to offer unrivalled support for customers the length and breadth of the country.

"Being able to provide our customers with exceptional service has always been at our core," continues Tony Wilson, "and from the very beginning, we have strived to not only offer the most state-of-the-art technology possible but provide a dynamic and flexible approach for each client. We know that no two businesses are the same, so we take the time to understand our customers' needs and requirements before creating a bespoke solution tailored to meet their exact needs."

"Whether it is IT infrastructure, IT support, data management, or voice, mobile and internet communication services, we can support businesses with everything that need to excel. We are even able to provide 24/7 server monitoring to ensure that should something go wrong, our team can get their systems back online as quickly as possible, minimising the disruption to their operations."

It is that very ethos that has helped Smart IT shine in recent years. Now working with over 1,100 clients based throughout the UK, the experienced team has become the go-to IT solutions provider for companies of all sizes and across a broad spectrum of industries, including manufacturing, charities, hospitality, professional services, healthcare, and education.

Smart IT are also acutely aware that it is the team they create which helps them succeed, and their reputation has been largely built on the quality employees they have employed. That ethos is firmly rooted in the business, and as they expand, they will continue to only hire those individuals who are passionate about supporting its client base. Of course, it's not all hard work, and the company regularly runs incentives for staff, from gift vouchers and drinks hampers to days and nights out.

"We understand that a happy team is a motivated team," concludes Tony Wilson, "which is why even as we expand with our new HQ, our aim of having a great time together will continue!"

www.smartitgroup.co.uk

“

*...The move is a
major investment in
our future...*



L-R: Darryl Robinson, Sales Manager, Tony Wilson, Managing Director, Simon Thomas, Sales Manager



Storey building career with senior banks homes role

Regional housebuilder Banks Homes has strengthened its expanding senior team with the appointment of David Storey as its new head of commercial.

David brings more than a dozen years' experience in the North East property industry to his new role, which involves appraising land, managing budgets and closing contracts around large-scale residential development sites.

He began his career as a quantity surveyor before working his way up through the ranks with a well-known regional housebuilder in a number of commercial roles.

Set up earlier this year by regional employer the Banks Group, Banks Homes operates across the North East and Yorkshire, and is looking to develop residential sites of all sizes.

Work is set to start on its first two projects, at the landmark Mount Oswald development in Durham City and at West Rainton in County Durham, in the coming months, with further projects set to be revealed soon.

David Storey says: "I'd reached the stage of my career where I wanted to take on more responsibility and joining Banks Homes gives me the opportunity to do just that.

"My new role allows me to get involved with every aspect of a development's progression from initial site identification and technical design work right through to customer care and completion, and with the business still being pretty new, there's every chance for me to apply my experience in shaping how we operate.

Bellway wins HR Excellence in Leadership award

North East based housebuilder, Bellway, has won the prize for leadership at an awards event which celebrates best practice among human resources and development (HR&D) teams in the North East.

The company, which began as a family business in the North East in 1946 and is one of the region's largest employers, with its head office in Woolsington, was presented with the Excellence in Leadership award

The award was made in recognition of Bellway's Better with Bellway sustainability strategy, which was launched last year and touches on every aspect of the business, with a focus on putting people and the planet

The North East HR&D awards, which are run by media outlets including the Newcastle Chronicle, The Journal, Chronicle Live and Teesside Live, aim to raise the profile of the human resources and development profession in the North East region.



Bellway Group HR Director Heidi Khoshtaghaza, who collected the award, said: "We see ourselves very much as leaders in this industry, so it means a great deal to be awarded the Excellence in Leadership award.

"Our sustainability strategy goes beyond our own employees, encompassing an approach that cares about people in every area that is touched by our company activities, and that includes the supply chain, our customers and the communities that eventually form as a result of the developments we create.

"We're also committed to carbon reduction and helping lead the industry towards a more sustainable future for people and the planet."



Council set to revive Jopling House

One of Sunderland's most iconic former retail stores is now in council ownership, with the city's leader calling it 'a key connector between two transforming parts of the city centre'.

Jopling House has been bought by the council in a move it describes as being 'vital to ensuring the building contributes positively to city regeneration'.

The former high street department store will be improved at ground floor level, with the aim of attracting retail or food and drink businesses to bring vibrancy at a street level. Additional investment will enhance the upper floors too, improving the external fascia which was left unfinished by the previous owner.

The acquisition will allow the council to maintain the current use of the building, after suggestions

the building could be sold and repurposed.

Councillor Kevin Johnston, dynamic city cabinet member at Sunderland City Council, said: "Our residents deserve a city centre they can be proud of, and - wherever we can impact on that - we are delivering.

"Council-led developments like our City Hall, The Beam and the multi-storey car park at Farringdon Row, are raising the bar in the city centre and, in turn, this pushes others to do the same.

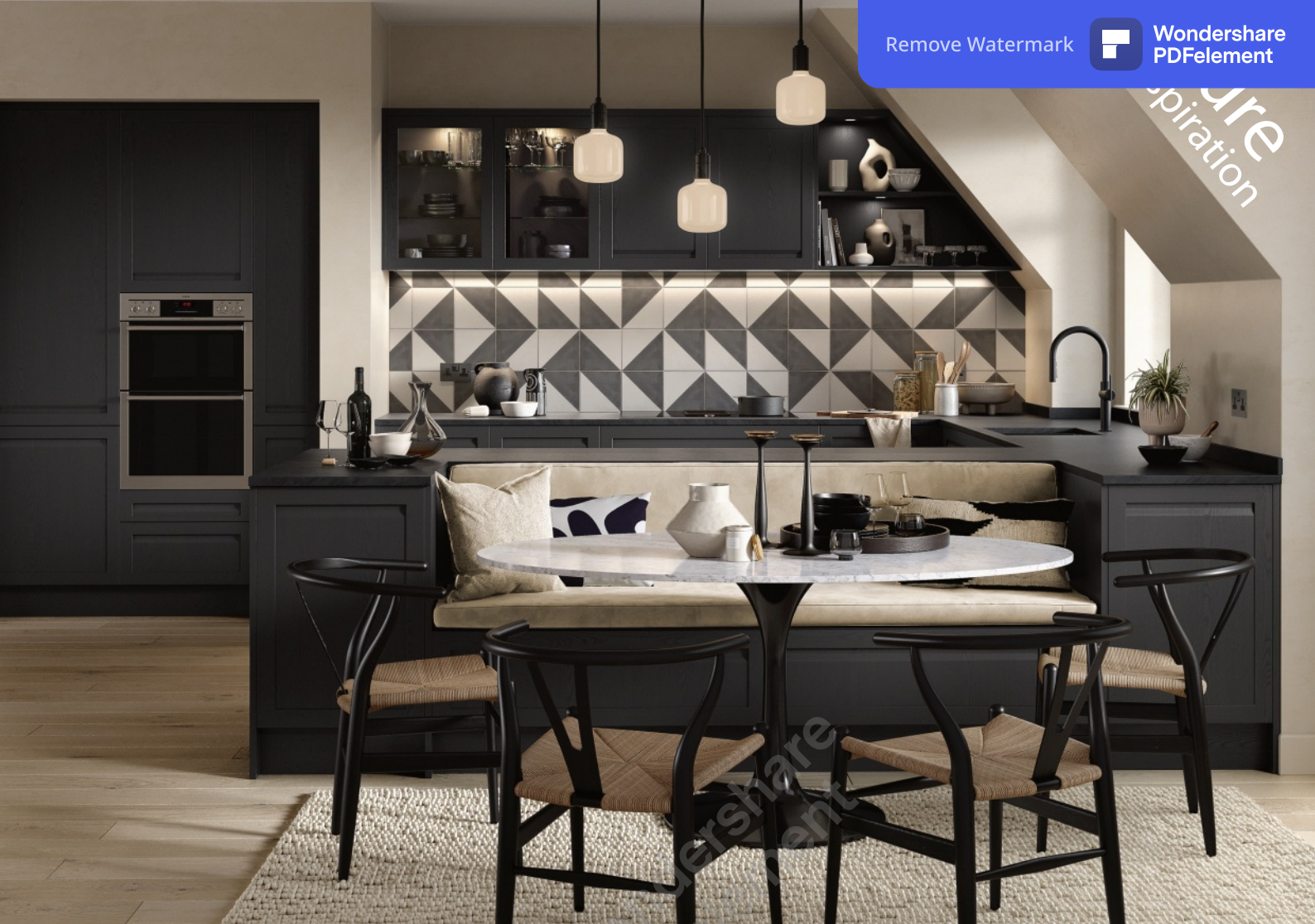
"We cannot buy or develop every single building in the city centre, but what we can do is nurture an environment in which our traders are given the best possible chance of success, by ensuring the right developments move forward and with our plans for Sunnyside - which will see the development of a new cluster of creative studio-homes - we want to knit this into the transforming Riverside Sunderland area and ensure the quality of offer in the city centre is as high as possible."

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Berwick Youth 'community crew' project gets financial boost to support town's young talent



The community crew from Berwick Youth Project which recently received £10,000 from The Bernicia Foundation.

A 'community crew' group set up to enable young people in North Northumberland to follow their aspirations and receive positive support and mentoring through social and purpose-driven work activities, has been given a valuable boost thanks to The Bernicia Foundation.

The Berwick Youth Project charity established the community crew pilot in May 2021 in response to young people from the town needing an outlet to reconnect and safely come together in small numbers.

However, due to its rapid popularity and rising demand, the initiative soon developed and now attracts more than 50 young people to the centre each week across two nights, coming together for fun and challenging activities in a safe environment.

The Bernicia Foundation has given the charity £10,000 to help run the community crew project which mainly attracts 12-17 year olds, as well as cover other essential (and rising) day-to-day costs at its Golden Square premises in Berwick town centre including transport and staffing.

Project Manager, John Bell, from Berwick Youth Project, explained, "We're a bit like a young persons' advice bureau and youth club rolled into one; a multi-faceted support network offering recreational activities,

counselling, social events, training and learning opportunities, community projects and school holiday activities.

"We offer solid support and mentoring, but fun social activities too. Our ethos is to 'do good things by others' personally as well as in the community, and this is very much the case with those young people that come here.

"The Community Crew is like one big family with everyone engaging in activities that are of real value. At the moment, we have a parks and gardens project which includes building and painting street planters to make the local area look nice."

Berwick Youth Project is free and confidential, and open to people aged 12-25 years old. The charity also helps those who may be experiencing difficulties, have financial or personal concerns at this time, or maybe living independently and need additional housing support.

Given Berwick also has the lowest wage-earning population across England and Wales, and many local families are now classed as 'working poor', charity mentors are also available to provide one-to-one guidance.

John added, "It's essential that we keep our young people engaged, giving them a sense of purpose whilst also bringing out their individual talents. Berwick upon Tweed has a declining youth population with many being attracted to other towns and cities for work or university once they can do so.

"Therefore, for the young people growing up here, there is a very serious issue in terms of what their future will look like, where the career and work opportunities will come from, and how we maintain and retain their skills and knowledge to help the local economy.

"Those that come into our centre each week are often keen, eager to learn new skills, sociable, and full of promise. They're great young people so the funding donation by The Bernicia Foundation is very much appreciated."

Additionally, some that have used the centre's services and facilities over the last 29 years have now gone onto become youth, community and social workers themselves, and still return with their own children who engage in the various clubs on offer.

Jenny Allinson, Director of Corporate Governance at The Bernicia Foundation, added, "This is a recurring theme that we hear time and time again whereby small charities of this kind are underfunded but at the very forefront of society issues, helping the next generation to be the best they can be. It is inspirational to see and hear about the work they are doing with teenagers in Berwick and the surrounding areas, so we're delighted to be able to offer support."

The Bernicia Foundation is a charitable trust set up by North East housing association, Bernicia Group, to help direct funds where they are most needed - supporting local people living in hard-working communities across Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, County Durham and Teesside.

Two funding streams are available - the inclusion fund for voluntary/community groups, registered charities and social enterprises which awards up to £10,000, and the inspiration fund, awarding up to £1,000 for young people, aged 24 years and under, who are actively working towards personal goals.

Applications are now being received for the current round of funding (closing date is Monday 14 August 2023). For more details, please go to www.berniciafoundation.com



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Lambton Park reveals its latest showroom



It is fast becoming one of the most prestigious addresses in the North East – with elegant homes surrounded by acres of woodland with history and a regional legend thrown in for good measure.

It's not surprising then that Miller Homes' development at Lambton Park – half way between Sunderland and Chester-le-Street – has seen properties snapped up.

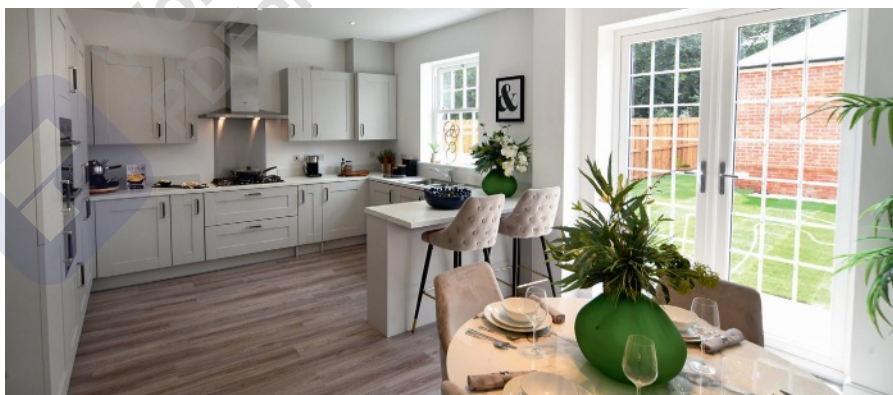
With Phase 2 of the development well underway, the company recently unveiled its latest showhouse – the four bedroom Pine which sits perfectly among the other three, four and five bedroom properties which are on offer.

Lambton Park is one of Miller Homes' flagship developments – and no wonder.

It is set in 1000 acres of woodland and even boasts its own Grade II listed castle, with residents also given access to 11.5k of country footpaths through the unspoilt countryside belonging to the estate.

There's not many homes that come with a substantial slice of local history as an extra, but there's no doubt that this has added to the overall appeal to buyers.

The next stage at Lambton is equally as exciting, with the creation of Bowes Gate.



The aim is to make Lambton Park a self sufficient community and with that in mind, this part of the development will create a range of facilities on the doorstep.

A Pavilion café bistro and a range of independent stores such as a delicatessen, butcher, florist and baker are part of the ambitious plans and will play a huge part in creating a sense of togetherness – not to mention convenience – for those who choose to live there.

At the same time the design of many of the properties at Lambton have taken into account the history and the surroundings and used them as inspiration.

The phase two homes reflects the Victorian Arts and Crafts movement, where artists and creators started to incorporate nature and rural life into their work – and that in turn is very visible at Lambton.

For Aisling Ramshaw, sales director at Miller Homes North East, this is one of the major selling points of the development.

"These are really special homes which represent the very best in modern design and architecture but at the same time have taken into account the history of the area they are in," she said.

"They are attracting a wide range of buyers, from people who are returning home to live in the North East to others who simply recognise the benefits of living in the region and with everything that Lambton has to offer right on the doorstep.

"Phase one has been incredibly successful and we are delighted that phase two is now also starting to sell really quickly."

For further information visit
www.millerhomes.co.uk/new-homes/north-east/lambton-park-lambton-park.aspx

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Hexham: Commercial Property Regeneration

The British high street has faced significant challenges in recent years, with even the North of England's famous and historic market towns unable to fight, what seemed like, the inevitable.

The rise of e-commerce and online shopping has dramatically altered consumer habits with many people preferring the convenience of shopping from home, leading to a decline in footfall on the high street.

This shift in consumer behaviour has profound effects on traditional brick-and-mortar stores, especially small, independent retailers. The Levelling Up agenda promised significant change but with stops and starts and changing plans many have questioned if regeneration will ever happen.

Hexham town centre was one of those very market towns to fall into a deep state of decline after the closure of Robbs department store, so



followed by other high street outlets but with strong local support, the vision to regenerate and improve the town centre, increasing footfall and making it more attractive to businesses is no longer a pipe dream.

A £2.4m programme of improvements, with funding secured from Historic England and The High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, is now well under way in the town's once thriving trade centre of Priestpopple, Cattle Market and Battle Hill, with an expected completion date of March 2024.

Several of the classically designed commercial properties that have recently come to market in and around these areas have already seen the benefit of the scheme with refurbishments to a mix of hospitality, retail, and town centre office spaces.

The former Royal Hotel, a Grade II Listed building dating back to the early 19th Century, has undergone extensive development over recent years. The last remaining unit is the bar and restaurant premises spread over the ground and first floors. It has undergone extensive refurbishment and benefits from an impressive staircase and original fireplaces. There is also a timber double glazed retractable frontage with retractable canopy to encourage the vibrant café culture.



A retail opportunity on Fore Street, ideally situated in the busy hub between Priestpopple and The Market Square, and which offers a single open plan retail area with a traditional timber framed shop front and fascia. The property is well positioned on the prime shopping pedestrianised street within the town centre, with nearby occupiers including Boots, Greggs, Costa, Mountain Warehouse and Seasalt.

The town, voted by the Rightmove Happy at Home Index as The Best Place to Live in Great Britain in 2019 and 2021 and still a firm favourite with domestic and international tourists, is definitely showing potential. Further lettings by youngsRPS that include shops on Priestpopple, Market Street and Market Place to a mixture of local traders, alongside the fit out of the former Argos store by the Loungers Group to create the Muro Lounge, its first in the region, are surely a sign of more confidence in the market.

If you would like to discuss commercial property opportunities in Hexham or the wider North of England you can contact youngsRPS' commercial team on 0191 261 0300 or email Newcastle@youngsrps.com

Finding the right contractor

By Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield

When I work with clients one of the key decisions is finding the right builder or contractor - so often at the moment clients bemoan the lack of interest from contractors or perceived lack of interest in their project.

As an architect I feel the pain of clients with the current high cost of materials, the lack of choice on contractors and the efforts required to find the right, skilled team for your specific project.

But is this the fault of the contractors? Well, actually, it is not.

No other industry works on the low rates of return experienced by contractors. On many projects building firms achieve profits of only 2.6% (compared to a national business average of 17%). With those margins, the risks are high. Clients (rightly so) want to tie down assured costs, but how do contractors do this when their own supply chain has pricing volatility and there are huge variables in material availability, cost, supply and programme problems.

Many architects and building professionals do not know how to tender a project or seem to think that their role is to be tough on the building contractor as this will somehow deliver the best result for the client team.

In the current market, I advise to work closely with the contracting teams. We have some superb building companies in the North East - national, regional and local builders. They have real expertise, skill and programming abilities. At the present time, they are all busy, so how do you get your project to the top of their list?

My top tips for clients are broadly these:

Do your research

Speak to the contractors about a project in advance, about their skillset and if the project hits their sweet spot. Look into their backgrounds, finance and references.



Neil Turner

Availability and finance

Get your funds agreed and show the contractor that payments are already arranged. So often projects stall when finance becomes an issue for a client.

Get your permissions in place

Having planning permission and building regulations permissions - or at least a programme showing when they will be achieved - shows organisational skills to the contractor.

Don't put obstacles in the way

In this market, the more issues or challenges then inevitably contractors will look to other projects that are more straightforward.

Advance planning

Do not assume there are contractors sitting waiting for immediate work and certainly don't think a gap will appear in the summer. Plan, book ahead.

Choice on contract - legal terms

There are many alternative contracts and it relies on an experienced architect to explain your options. Each comes with different approaches to pricing, risk, responsibility,

management and programme implications. Choose the right one that works for you. Get it wrong - and unfortunately, it can be painful, expensive and even legal.

Be nice!

A contract is a formal relationship between a client and contractor, i.e., a two-way agreement. The better both parties work together, in advance and throughout the contract, the higher the chance of success.

I am not saying there won't be challenges or decisions when building, but putting in place the right contractor at the right price will save a lot of trouble, angst and costs. Following the above advice is not about being soft or being a pushover.

An experienced consultant team can monitor and advise a client through a build sequence and agree extras (and savings) with the contractor so that everyone gets to the end - with what they want out of the project - ready to make use of their new building.

Neil Turner, director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email n.turner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com



The continued
adventures of...

Ziggy

and Cally!



Hi everyone,

Missed you all last month, however I have been on holiday to the coast with Aunt Lisa and Uncle Rob. The reason being that my clever sister, Cally, has had another litter of puppies! Back now and settling in, more to follow next month.

Q- Why has my homebuyers survey come back with excessive damp readings?

I've recently sold my house and our buyer had a homebuyers report done on the property. The surveyor has returned a scathing report listing three serious issues, excessive damp readings, dry rot/wet rot and electrics. I have lived in this property for 20 years and have never seen any evidence of the above. Since reading this report I have now become an armchair expert on damp although the Internet is a minefield of misinformation. When I test my walls I am getting readings of between 12-16% yet when I remove the wallpaper it drops to zero so I am assuming the damp is in the paper and caused by humidity. In the cellar the timbers which show no visible evidence of damp or rot give a reading of 21-26% these timbers were all put in 19 years ago so are still pretty new (the house was built in 1904). The cellar itself is not used and has not been tanked so is very damp. Would you interpret these readings as serious as I have read the fungal spores will not thrive until a reading of 30% is reached...the electrics he also wrote off were perfect as the house was rewired 15 years ago.

A- Electrical moisture meters don't actually measure moisture directly, but rather electrical conductance. They work by passing a current from a battery between two pins, which is measured on a meter. The theory is that the damper a material is, the more current will flow, and this can be used to differentiate between "dry" and "damp".

The trouble is, electrical moisture meters are calibrated for use on timber, not masonry walls. They can give reasonable estimates of moisture content in timber, but not in other materials. It does actually explain this in the instruction leaflet but, hey, who bothers to read that?

You are quite right, moisture meters give misleading high readings when used on wallpaper. Both wallpaper, and the paste used to stick it to the walls, are highly hygroscopic – meaning they naturally absorb moisture from the atmosphere.

In any case, 12% to 16% moisture content in wood is not "damp" – it is a normal state for this natural material.

Regarding the readings of 21% to 26% on the newer timbers in the cellar, these timbers are likely to have been chemically pre-treated to prevent timber decay. The chemical treatment is likely to have been "tanalith", or "CCA formulation", which stands for "Copper, Chrome, Arsenic". These three substances are all heavy metals (which conduct electricity), and their salts are also electrically conductive because – guess what? – salts conduct electricity, too!

The "surveyor" who did this report for your prospective buyers is woefully ignorant. I'm not surprised he also found fault with the electrics, as he probably knows as little about electrics as he does about dampness in buildings.

The problem is, you now have to spend time disproving this idiot's ignorant assumptions. Your first step should be to write to this surveyor, and your prospective buyers' solicitor, pointing out that he is clearly not aware of British Standard BS6576, which states that electrical moisture meter readings on their own cannot be used to diagnose dampness problems.

Fortunately for you, it's a bit of a house-sellers' market at the moment, so hopefully your prospective buyers won't pull out. If they do, and you need to take this further, then Abbey Independent Surveys (www.abbeyis.com) carry out impartial and accurate dampness surveys throughout the UK, and will provide evidence to disprove this ridiculous report.



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's good pal Michael Grahamslaw at Northern Insight on michael@northern-insight.co.uk



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Rachel Sweeney Media and JAM Marketing join forces for collaboration

Rachel Sweeney, a renowned North East TV presenter, established broadcast journalist, and news personality, has taken a significant step in her career by going freelance. To bolster her regional presence, Rachel has formed a collaboration with PR agents JAM Marketing, bringing together their expertise and experience to make the dual force to be reckoned with.

With a diverse portfolio spanning 15 years, Rachel has excelled in producing, reporting, and presenting news, human interest features, and entertainment television. As a self-assured and skilled one-woman video reporting crew, she handles content production, self-shooting, and editing. Rachel's multifaceted approach allows her to operate at the highest level, placing emphasis on news clarity, attention to detail, fairness, and balance.

Having enjoyed a successful career presenting the Daybreak and Good Morning Britain news headlines on ITV for the Tyne Tees and Border regions, Rachel has made the bold decision to freelance her skills and establish her own business, Rachel Sweeney Media Limited.

Commenting on this move, Rachel said, "I know the region, and I am very grateful that the region knows me. I joined families for breakfast before the school run and worked with business professionals and political leaders. It is a privilege to have such a strong relationship



within regional and local communities."

To amplify her PR presence, Rachel has joined forces with JAM Marketing, an established marketing company with 19 years of experience. Throughout her career as a reporter, Rachel has collaborated with JAM Marketing on a number of occasions, appreciating the quality and care they bring to their work. She is excited to embark on new ventures with them, saying, "I am looking forward to setting my big plans in motion alongside Jackie and her team."

Rachel has an active presence on social media, with over 17k followers on Twitter, including notable figures like Piers Morgan, Lord Sugar,

Susanna Reid, Eamonn Holmes, Denise Welch, and Steph McGovern, as well as numerous TV personalities, business leaders, politicians, and writers.

Jackie Marston from JAM Marketing expressed her enthusiasm about the collaboration, stating, "Rachel and I have known each other and worked together on projects for many years. Everything from panto, venue openings through to presenting and much more.

It will be a pleasure working with Rachel again, and we hope to see many positive collaborations in the future."

Punk Exhibition Celebrates the Legacy of Tyne and Wear Youth Music Collectives



In the early '80s, young teenagers in Newcastle found solace and a vibrant music scene in an old, disused warehouse venue called The Garage. This iconic location became a haven for young punks, featuring performances by bands such as Total Chaos, The Reptiles, Model Workers, and The Village Idiots. This do-it-yourself music space was run by the kids, for the kids with minimal adult supervision and a huge amount of teenage angst.

However, after The Garage closed in 1981, the Gateshead Music Collective breathed new life into a former police club in Gateshead, known as The Station, which became the new epicentre for punk music in the area. The venue also hosted rehearsal spaces too reinforcing the community spirit and fostering the development of local bands. A similar venue, The Bunker, in Sunderland, continues to thrive today.

Now, four decades later, a group of people who were part of the Garage and Station scene are coming together to host an exhibition that pays homage to the culture and significance of these venues. The exhibition will feature a captivating array of video footage, photographs, and memorabilia, including posters, that chronicle the energy and spirit of those times. Visitors will have the opportunity to delve into the punk movement's history, explore the enduring impact of the Tyne and Wear Youth Music Collectives, and gain insights into youth engagement methods that can inform current and future practices.

The exhibition, hosted by Newcastle Contemporary Art, will be held at their gallery on High Bridge, Newcastle, starting from the 18th of November.

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Dark Skies are the Stars on Radio Northumberland

Community Radio Station, Radio Northumberland, have added a new programme to their already impressive roster of shows. "The Great Geordie Space Race" is dedicated to astronomy and astrophysics in the North of England and comes in what appears to be a very exciting time for this region.

The show's presenter, David Hughes says "It may come as something of a surprise to learn that this small corner of the Universe has been working at the cutting edge of astronomical research for more than thirteen hundred years. The story begins with the work of The Venerable Bede at Jarrow and Monkwearmouth, and later with the Golden Age of Victorian science, leading all the way up to the present day with the work of our local Universities and our emerging space industries."

The programme is primarily aimed at the 'armchair astronomer'. Listeners won't need an in-depth knowledge of mathematics or physics to understand what we're talking about - just a willingness to explore the strange and unusual, and whatever else is 'out there' in space.



There will be historical features detailing the exploits of some of the major players from our region namely the surveyor Jeremiah Dixon from Cockfield in County Durham and polymath Thomas Wright from Byers Green, as well as astronomers such as T.H.E.C. Espin and Thomas Backhouse, Robert Sterling Newall and Alexander Herschel.

The programme airs several times a week and new shows are uploaded monthly, or perhaps more often if something dramatic happens in the sky. Listen at www.radionorthumberland.com



Horizon Works expands visual media capabilities

B2B marketing company Horizon Works has enhanced its digital and creative capabilities with the appointment of an animation, virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) specialist.

Paul Smyth will be leading on the company's visual media services, which are in increasing demand from businesses across sectors including manufacturing, engineering and renewables.

A renowned specialist in his field with nearly 20 years of experience of working at the forefront of visual media, Paul has created content for companies including Chrysler, Osbit, Toyota, Black Rock, Yorkshire Bank and Formica.

He lectures part-time Newcastle College and is programme lead on the BA Hons Digital Design Apprenticeships.

During the Coronavirus pandemic, Horizon Works produced animations and interactive media for clients who were unable to demonstrate products and services face to face to their customers and prospects, host tours of their facilities or exhibit at trade events. It supported businesses with animations for product launches, technical presentations and company showcases.

With an animation, VR and AR specialist now integrated into the Horizon Works team, the company has fully embedded these capabilities into its digital and creative services.

Horizon Works, which is based at Northumberland Business Park near Cramlington, supports innovators in complex industries and offers a wide range of integrated marketing services including strategy, PR, design and digital.



North East company wins bid to deliver groundbreaking NHS VR training videos

A Newcastle based video production company is celebrating after successfully delivering a groundbreaking training video series for the NHS.

North East based Media Borne was awarded the contract after beating production firms across the UK to produce a number of interactive virtual reality videos for the NHS Wales.

The six-figure project will save the NHS tens of thousands of pounds year on year as medical staff will no longer need to travel for face to face training sessions.

Instead, the virtual reality videos will allow staff from 10 hospitals around Wales, who form the South Wales Trauma Network, to train from their own hospital and at their own pace.

The first round of videos were produced and directed by the Media Borne team and their partners over one week's intensive filming using real life scenarios.

As the main contractors, Media Borne assembled a team of specialist partners to create immersive experiences that can be accessed by one central platform in-order to provide staff with virtual hands-on training.

Managing Director Chris Thompson said: "We were delighted to have secured the bid for the contract. It was an exciting and groundbreaking project that we all worked incredibly hard to bring together.

"These are the first training videos of this kind and we believe that there will be opportunities to produce similar videos for the wider NHS in the future."



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Sarah O'Mahoney and Neil Stephenson.

Vital ingredient for game-changing venture capital

Bradley O'Mahoney has launched three products to propel tech and other business gearing for fast growth.

The products are there to provide solutions to some of the most important issues facing young, highly ambitious firms.

Sarah O'Mahoney, said: "We have looked carefully at the issues facing fast growth companies and provided solutions based around our core skills and that of specialist partners who we will call upon to assist us deliver the programmes.

"We have also been closely advised by Neil Stephenson of Stephenson Ventures, who is an investor, coach and mentor to many companies in the tech sector in the North East and has a clear understanding of the strategies needed to drive growth. It is with Neil's guidance that we have launched one of our products – 'The Vital Ingredient For Game-Changing Venture Capital' which looks at the critical importance of brand building and profile raising in persuading investors to put cash into a business."

"It is a great time to be involved in tech and we are very keen to begin conversations with tech companies and other advisors actively involved in the sector to explain how the solutions we offer bring real added value."

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- Prepare the management team for first stage interviews with investors to include presentation skills and production of materials
- Review of website and social channels to ensure these 'front of house' channels are providing investors with messages that build confidence and show a company that has a clear position in its chosen market
- Prepare the senior management team for interview by the news media
- Build a positive profile of the business and its management team in important trade media in advance of seeking funding

For further information go to
www.bradleyomahoney.co.uk/specialist-products or email sarahomahoney@bradleyomahoney.co.uk



Marketing and Media Matters

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

Stacey Nottingham

Director, Bombshell Design

Did you always envisage a career in the Media industry?

From a very young age I always wanted to have and run my own business. I can't remember specifically what age this began. I didn't really know what I wanted to do but the older I got, I realised that my talents and love was in drawing. Initially I thought my line of work might take me into fine arts however this changed when I started university. There I discovered a passion for digital art. It was only at this point I knew that graphic design was the way I wanted to go. Then into web and then marketing!! So I suppose the answer is a resounding yes!

What has been your career path so far?

Once I left university I began, like thousands of other students to search for graphic design work. This was a lot harder than I imagined and as such I had to take jobs in other areas. Through what I can only assume is fate I crossed paths with an old friend who was a graphic designer. She re-located back to the North East after losing her job and without sounding cliché it was a lightbulb moment. We got our heads together and confronted what was a male dominated sector. There were no other female only run design companies and we decided to make that change. I then took over as owner a few years later and the business has gone from strength to strength and continually growing. 19 years in business and still going strong. I totally think working part time when leaving school in various jobs really gave me my confidence, structure and discipline to start my own business.

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

The challenges were establishing myself in a world that I had previously found it difficult to get a job in. There were some pre-conceived ideas which I had to battle and I knew that by being myself would ultimately prevail. Slowly this started to gain momentum and I was becoming well known in the Tees Valley area. Personal circumstances took me the South of the country in East Anglia where I spent many years. After several years I realised that the North East was for me. I re-located and again the portfolio of clients began. I'm at a place where I am very happy in life and work and I am overjoyed to being doing business in the greatest part of the country. We have now grown to a team of three and looking forward to what the future holds.

Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

Piglet from Winnie the Pooh! It's safe to say I am a worrier. Whilst it frustrates my partner to near death, I try and use it to my advantage and ensure the things I am worried won't get done, do! – I'm working on it though!

What has been your proudest achievement?

The biggest achievement is actually setting up the business itself. I was fairly young when I did it and had to mature quickly in a business sense. However, like any business, it can have its up's and downs. I took sole ownership of the business and this came with its own rewards and struggles. I personally, full of self-motivated strength and determination have transformed this business. Bombshell is going from strength to strength and this has only happened because of me and a great family and circle of friends.

Sometimes you have to look back and pat yourself off the back. This has only encouraged me to achieve greater things and really put Bombshell design on the map. My aim is to have Bombshell design as the go to marketing company in the North East and UK. What a goal to have!

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

Like most industries the marketing world is ever evolving. There is no denying that we are now in the digital age and therefore people are more skilled. We are quite an impatient nation so with the evolution of technology we seem to want everything at our fingertips with just one scroll or click away. With AI and other digital sectors continually evolving it is certainly exciting times.

As we move forward, the digital industry is bound to emerge as one of the strongest pillars of global economy. From e-commerce to social media, we already see a shift in the way we interact with each other and with businesses. However, the real transformation is yet to come. Over the next 10 years, we are likely to witness unprecedented innovation, integration and collaboration.

One of the most significant changes is the rise of artificial intelligence (AI). With machine learning, natural language processing and advanced analytics, AI is set to transform many industries. From healthcare to finance, from transportation to education, AI will revolutionise the way we work and live. By 2030, it is predicted that AI will have added \$15.7 trillion to the global economy.

The digital ecosystem is also likely to become more immersive, interactive and personalized. With virtual and augmented reality, we can expect to see a newfound wave of creativity, where people can experience things like never before. Gaming, tourism and advertising are just a few of the industries which have already started integrating VR/AR in their operations.

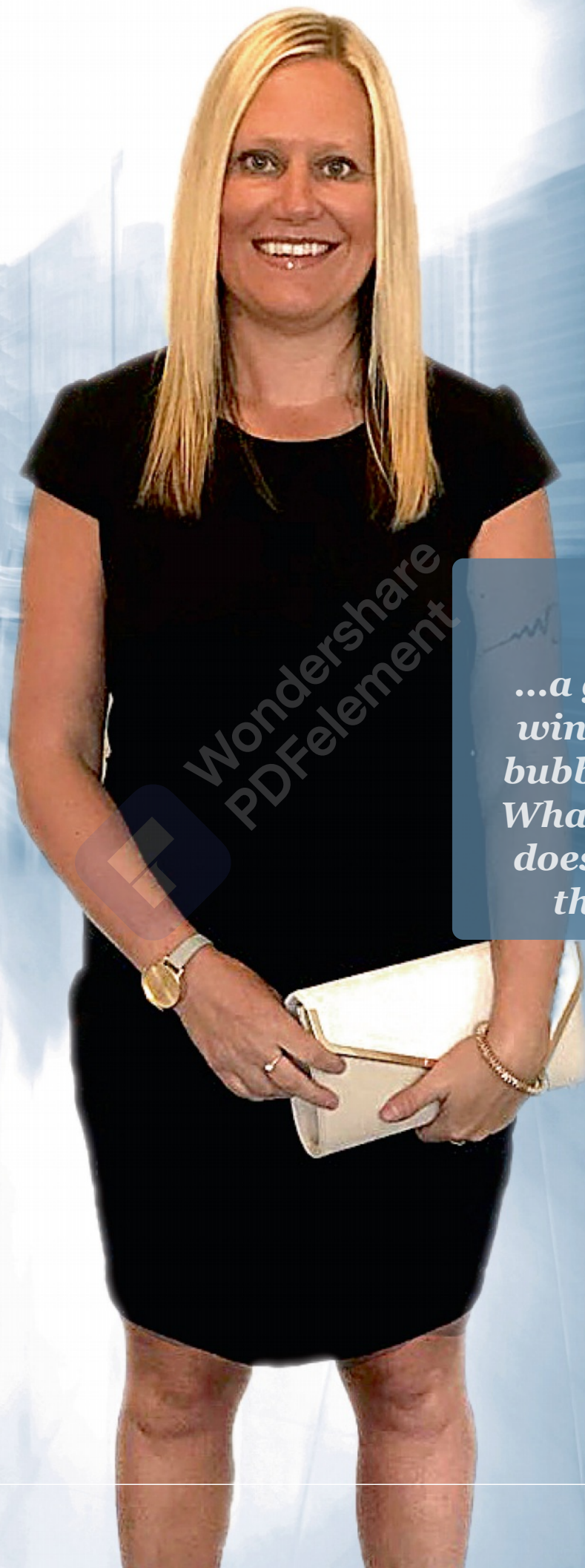
Another key trend is the increasing importance of data privacy and security. As data breaches become more common, consumers are demanding stricter policies and better protection of their personal information. Firms who are able to provide transparency and accountability are likely to win the trust of their customers and stay ahead of their competition.

In conclusion, the digital industry will continue to evolve at a rapid pace over the next decade. By embracing newer technologies, enhancing user experiences and prioritizing data privacy, businesses will have the opportunity to stay competitive and thrive in a world that is increasingly digital.

How do you like to unwind?

The simple things in life help me relax and unwind. I like to go for a run with or without the dog and walk her for miles. I do things with my partner and of course a glass of wine and a bubble bath. What female doesn't like that?

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“

*...a glass of
wine and a
bubble bath.
What female
doesn't like
that?...*



Veronica Swindale

Succeeding in the digital marketing world

If you want to get more up-to-date digital marketing skills for yourself or your team, you will be delighted to know that nesma has added four more digital specialist awards to its portfolio.

With many recent reports, (The Times, PWC) citing that 25% of people are looking to move their job, we have a strong indication that our dynamic environment will become even more shaken up.

What does this mean for employers?

You might be working on prioritising your staff, investing in their well-being, and allowing flexible working and personalised benefits, but are you focusing on their career progression? (PWC).

If your team does not know their next step on the ladder, they will be inclined to go and look at new employers with a more straightforward pathway. Understanding job security and longevity has become even more critical alongside a cost-of-living crisis.

At nesma, we often meet employers who discuss the need to demonstrate how much they value their employees and their competencies but also how much they worry about developing their expertise to help them secure their career pathways, which will benefit not only the individual but also have an immediate impact on contribution and performance

When we ask managers why they support team members through a CIM or CIPR qualification, they cite that their employees show greater confidence and capability in the jobs they are doing and exhibit a more significant commitment to stay in the company as they recognise the investment the company is placing in them.

If employers choose to do a bespoke training programme with us, we look to identify what skills gaps they have on the one hand and what progression they would like to embed on the other.

This approach gets everyone working on their personal development plans and investing in their continuing professional development.

Upskilling is not a one-off event. You need to keep training; it is not the best investment to only provide training once or even occasionally.

We regularly find that one of the most urgent challenges is keeping teams up to date with the advancement of digital marketing. For example, with the growth of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and ChatGPT, whether we like it or not, we need to learn how to manage these technological opportunities.

nesma itself has not stood still, and we are always adding to the breadth of study modules available to our learners. We now offer 21 qualifications and 36 modules covering marketing, digital marketing, and communications. Most recently, we have added three new sustainability learning options to our portfolio, and in July, we launched four new CIM Specialist Awards focused on the digital aspects of marketing. These cover the topics of Content Strategy, Social Media Management, SEO and Paid Search Management, and AI Marketing.

CIM Specialist Award in AI Marketing

develops skills to enable a strategic approach to its use in marketing.

CIM Specialist Award in Content Strategy

develops knowledge and skills to enable a strategic content planning and creation approach.

CIM Specialist Award in SEO and Paid Search Management

develops knowledge and skills for a strategic approach to organic and paid search channels.

CIM Specialist Award in Social Media Management

provides strategic insights into how social media can enable an organisation to reach, nurture, and engage with its target audience.

Each course is level 6, a BA Hons Degree equivalent level, and takes just six weeks to complete. It's an experiential learning experience with work-based tasks applied to the theory and practice, with no lengthy assignments. Any two of these awards can contribute to the CIM Professional Diploma in Marketing or the CIM Professional Diploma in Digital Marketing. They can count towards those qualifications or bolt on to existing CIM Diplomas.

Our expert digital marketing practitioners and nesma tutors, Joanne Dolezal and Steven Parker, will deliver these modules in September. You will enjoy plenty of work-based exercises and group discussions around the topics, and the assessment is via a Multiple-Choice Question online examination.

These CIM Specialist Digital Awards are fast and focused qualifications for marketers who want to enhance their strategic digital marketing skills. And an excellent choice for anyone wishing to improve their digital marketing effectiveness with up-to-date knowledge in an efficient time frame.

So even if you or your team have robust marketing qualifications, these top-up modules will be a fantastic way to enhance your skills base with the latest trends in digital.

To get your name on one of these courses to start in September, please get in touch with hello@nesma.co.uk or call 07734 222 254.

nesma's courses can be studied individually or combined to form a bespoke training programme for your corporate or agency team.

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...International Youth Day...

12th Aug 2023 is International Youth Day which brings youth issues to the attention of the international community and celebrates the potential of youth as partners in today's global society. Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what their business does to help young people?



Leading Link is all about working with young people. We were established as an independent Charity in 2012 and we've worked with thousands of young people supporting them to understand and achieve their aspirations. To further reinforce our commitment to young

people we have appointed Karen Goldfinch to manage our new Future Proof project, connecting young people to the community and helping them understand the varied range of career opportunities available to them. She'll also be involved with Children's University

too as young people are the future and we are privileged to be able to have a small part in shaping it for the better.

Lyn Horton, CEO, www.leadinglink.co.uk

Karen Goldfinch, Your Business Pilot, www.yourbusinesspilot.co.uk

My company writes and produces occult related books alongside other publishers. My books are read by adults and older youths.

Younger people are not the usual target for occult books, but some young people need information that adults normally get because they are more advanced. The main thing they will gain from my company's books are literacy and a better understanding of unusual concepts. But of course, occultism has made its unique contribution to art and literature not just directly but indirectly as information for horror literature, films etc.

S Rob, Author, www.srob.co.uk



The Shaun on the Tyne sculpture trail for St Oswald's Hospice is a fantastic initiative that aims to bring joy and support to families in need. As a trail artist, I had the privilege of creating a vibrant and colourful Shaun the Sheep sculpture called Club Tropicana. Designed to evoke the feeling of summer, my creation aims to uplift and inspire all who encounter it. It is truly fulfilling to be part of something that not only brings happiness to people's lives but also raises awareness and funds for St Oswald's Hospice. This incredible organisation provides vital support to babies, children, and young people with progressive, life shortening conditions from across the North East. Being involved in this sculpture trail has been a wonderful experience, knowing that my contribution will make a difference in the lives of those who need it most.

Corinne Lewis-Ward, www.powderbutterfly.com



We (Celebrate Difference) are launching a programme for 18 -25 years in the Autumn 2023 for young people who are Autistic and Adhd and have other Neurodivergence, which will cover life skills and employability, self-employment and more!

It will be led by our soon- to-be-finished award-winning Apprentice, Holly Knight who is 21 and ND herself!

Nicola Jayne, Little MINT Business Club, mintbusinessclub.co.uk



Off The Grid Adventures are big believers in Youth Social Action Projects and the power of youth led interventions in local communities. We have recently become delivery partners with the amazing Children North East Charity for the new National Citizen Service Social Action Programme. Over the next two years we will be working with over 250 young leaders across the North of Tyne, training them to run and develop projects within their local communities. If you're interested in being part of the programme or working with us drop me an email at paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk

Paul Kirkpatrick, www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk

dwmedia recently took part in a work experience programme with a local school. Through the week we helped the student learn key skills within the industry working on jobs with clients and even producing his own video content. This has sparked an interest within the company to look to educate and work with more young people and help them reach their potential within the media industry. We are now in the planning stages to work with more young people over the coming years.

Daniel Wilkinson, www.thedwmedia.co.uk



Learning a language is said to be the door to another culture. And I couldn't agree more with this. Opening up the world to our young people is essential if we are to compete in the global market place. I support young people who are studying A level and GCSE French and I've supported many who have achieved A* at A level and nine at GCSE. But for me the fact that they are studying a foreign language (which is seen as a hard subject) means that they are outward looking and are more likely to be accepting of others. I love working with and supporting young people.

Barbara Allen, barbara@linguaforme.co.uk,
www.linguaforme.co.uk

Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact keith@highlightspr.co.uk or call Keith on 07814 397951.

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Joe Hilton

How did you get in to specialising in personal growth and mental wellbeing?

I got into this field through my own personal experiences of suffering with poor mental health. I felt very lost in life at a young age, I hated my career path, and I studied for a five-year degree before realising I did not want to work in that field. I was deeply unfulfilled and struggling to make sense of the world. "Is this all there is?" was a common theme. I started reading self-help (personal growth and wellbeing) and became hooked, I started applying the tools I was learning for myself (in-particular journaling) and then I started sharing it with the world. Ironically, this then led to pursuing a career in this field, which helped overcome these obstacles related to career issues. I wrote my own self-help book and then with my business partner Nathan Marr, we started creating bespoke planners and journals for organisations, as well as coaching in this field to work alongside the products. I use the mental wellbeing aspect to understand my own thoughts better, then I use the personal growth element to create my own goals and ambitions for my own future.

I always say I am not 'fixed.' I am human and I still have extremely challenging days, but I have found a field which not only serves my own mental wellbeing and personal growth, but positively serves others too. It's a win-win.

Who or what inspires you?

There are many names who inspire me in this field including the likes of Tony Robbins, Mel Robbins, Paul Mort etc. There are also many great business folks who inspire me.

However, in general, people who are completely themselves really inspire me. I feel we live in a society where there is a lot of expectations of who we are supposed to be and how we are supposed to act.

I fell into it... "go to college, go to university, get a job and live happily ever after" and I found out the world does not work like that. It was making me really unhappy working in jobs I simply hated. I believe we should all define success on our own terms.

It's very cliché, and my tagline is "none of the fluffy stuff", but everyone is completely unique. Some people will like you for who you are, some people will dislike your approach. However, fundamentally, your happiness and wellbeing are the most important things in the world. Not your parents, not your bosses, not societies. It's why personal growth is so important because it makes you stop to ask yourself these deeper questions. It's also why I believe in journaling so much.



Joe Hilton

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into personal growth and mental wellbeing?

I personally believe some of the tools we teach within our businesses should be taught in schools from a very young age, that's how much I believe in the subject. For me, I would have taken so much more value from learning about my emotions and how to handle my thoughts, as opposed to Pythagoras's theorem.

When it comes to personal growth and mental wellbeing there is no 'one size fits all', however, I cannot see any downsides to trying to learn tools to manage your wellbeing and make growth on a personal level.

One of my ethos is that 'nobody is perfect' meaning that we all make mistakes in life. However, we all have areas we can be working on to improve too. That's what personal growth is about. I genuinely believe the path to personal growth is never ending. Therefore, it's a field that you can apply for all of your life.

My advice then would be to embrace this field. Read books and learn the tools. Give things a go.

Without the tools I have learned I would still be working in jobs I severely disliked and merely just floating through life. Now I am constantly setting goals and trying to improve myself. I don't always hit them, but it makes life more meaningful.



I enjoy all aspects of the 'hands on' work in the subject field.

That said, it's worth noting the flip side too. I am terrible with admin, I despise emails, and I would describe myself as quite 'chaotic.' Thankfully, I have my business partner Nathan who does this side of things very well, keeping things in order. The opposites work well.

What has been your most memorable moment to date relating to your business journey?

I pinch myself how fortunate I am to be in this position. The biggest up for me is getting to work for yourself every day. I love the freedom.

Some other wins include securing investment to get the business off the ground. Working with some amazing organisations such as Teesside University, Middlesbrough Council, Beyond Housing amongst others.

However, that said, I do not take anything for granted at all. I have found running a business extremely hard at times. It certainly ties in well with the field of personal growth.

Thankfully, due to the support of Nathan my business partner, Semester Student Planner has just had its second birthday, and growth planner co. is starting to gain some traction.

I am enjoying the rollercoaster journey, but it's all about celebrating the little wins along the way. Hopefully, there will be many more to come.

What are your favourite magazines?

I am more of a book person. However, anything related to self-help, mental wellbeing & personal growth, I am all in.

What's the future hold for Joe Hilton ?

I want to grow our businesses to a level that we can bring in my business partner Nathan full time. He does so much to support me, that it would be great to have him permanently working with me.

It would also be great to get to a position where we also had a team working with us.

I want to keep improving my knowledge of the field, grow my personal reputation, as well as the businesses and see what opportunities arise.

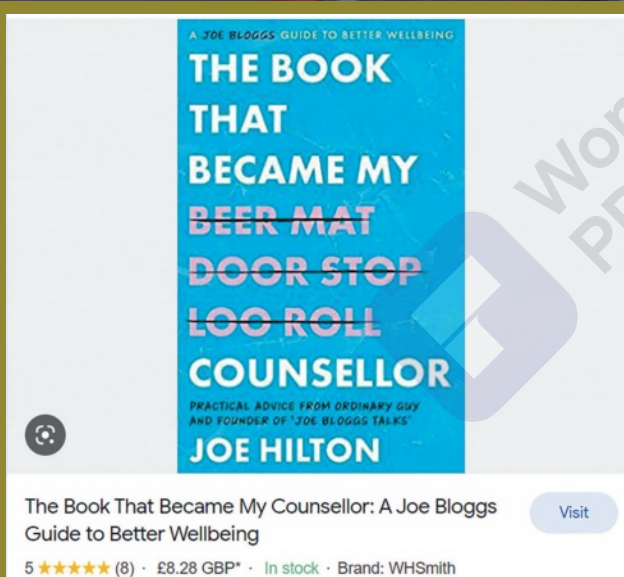
On a personal level, I want to publish a second book, as I know so much more now compared to when I started.

But most importantly, I just want to keep enjoying it, keep making a difference, and hopefully this will all take care of itself.

www.joehilton.co.uk

www.semesterstudentplanner.com

uniquemagazines.co.uk



What is your favourite part of your job?

My favourite part of my job is the creation of the bespoke planners and journals. I genuinely love making them as I believe in the tools so much. Taking all the research from positive psychology and the self-help field and creating the product from design stage into the hands of the client. I love the process of it. We have a core framework of personal growth and mental wellbeing, but no planners or journals are ever the same. For each client, they want something a little bit different, so I enjoy the feeling of knowing nothing else exists like it on the market once its complete. I also love the feeling of 'we made that', it gives me a real sense of pride. I have a shelf in the office which documents each new planner or journal we make. Whereas footballers have trophy cabinets, I have that, it probably gives me the same satisfaction.

I also love public speaking and coaching workshops. However, this is because I could take about these subjects all day long. It's great when you know it's had an impact.

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The beat goes on with Highlights PR

In the heart of Royal Quays Marina, Keith Newman, the owner of Highlights PR, runs his office from an unconventional location—a boat. A man of diverse talents and a deep passion for music, Keith has carved a niche for himself in the music industry as a volunteer radio presenter, PR professional, and event coordinator.

With a genuine love for the artistry and the ability to connect with both local and national bands, Keith has become a go-to figure for music-related organisations seeking effective publicity. Let's dive into the world of Keith Newman, where music and PR seamlessly intertwine.

The Music Enthusiast

Keith Newman's connection with music runs deep, fuelling his desire to work alongside artists and event organisers. As a volunteer radio presenter at Radio Northumberland, he passionately hosts the "New Wave With Newman Show," sharing his favourite tracks and introducing listeners to new and emerging talent. This hands-on experience has given him valuable insights into the music industry and further ignited his dedication to promoting artists and helping fill venues.

PR Projects with Bands and Documentaries

Keith's expertise extends to managing PR campaigns for both local and national bands. Throughout his career, he has collaborated with renowned artists such as Slalom D, Hector Gannet, Penetration, and Punishment of Luxury. Notably, he spearheaded the PR efforts for a BBC documentary about Alan Hull, the legendary Lindisfarne figure, which featured the narration of Sam Fender. Keith's ability to connect artists with their target audience has been instrumental in amplifying their reach and increasing their visibility.



Music Festivals and Stage PR

The thrill of working in the music festival realm has always captivated Keith. He has been involved in numerous festivals, including Blyth Live, Gallagher Park Live, and The Shoe Shifter 90's Festival. Recently, he took charge of the PR responsibilities for The Sunday for Sammy and Tyne Idols stages at the Coast Fest in North Shields. From coordinating media coverage to ensuring a seamless experience for both performers and attendees, Keith goes above and beyond to ensure the success of these events.

The Defining Moment

Among Keith's remarkable achievements, coordinating the media for the last Sunday for Sammy show at Newcastle Arena stands out. This star-studded event featured renowned artists such as Jimmy Nail, Tim Healy, Joe McElderry, Kevin Whately, Jonny Vegas, Chris and Rosie Ramsey, and the talented house band led by Alan Clark, the keyboard player for Dire Straits. Keith's meticulous planning and dedication helped create an unforgettable media presence for the charity, leaving a lasting impact on the Newcastle music scene.

Going the Extra Mile

Whether working with community choirs or major groups like the Lightning Seeds, Liberty X, or The Undertones, Keith invests his

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heart and soul into every client and project. His unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional results is evident in his work. The passion he brings to the table, combined with his expertise in PR, has made him a trusted figure in the music industry. For Keith, working in the music industry is not just a job; it's an added bonus that fuels his enthusiasm and drives his success.

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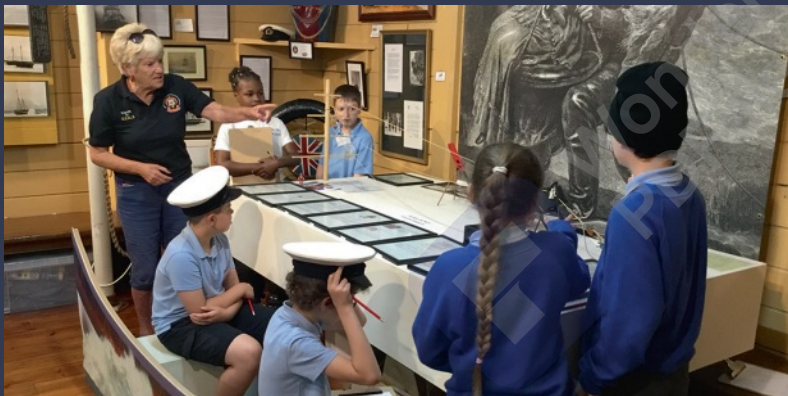
Parker demonstrates commitment to STEM education at high profile event

Parker Hannifin's Bioscience Filtration experts helped to inspire the engineers of tomorrow at a major UK STEM event in July.

More than 3000 young people aged from ten to 13-years-old attended the event, which was created to showcase the range of careers and job roles available in the STEM sector, and encourage interest in STEM subjects. The Parker team also ran a number of 'hands-on' activities at the stand, including building a filtration set and analysing organisms, to help young people gain a better understanding of filtration technology and applications.

Richard Purdy, Project Engineer and STEM ambassador at Parker Bioscience Filtration, said: "This was Parker's second time at STEMfest, and once again, we greatly enjoyed sharing our knowledge, insight and passion for filtration technology with young people from North East England. We were also able to strengthen our relationships with local schools and higher education providers.

"Parker is deeply committed to STEM education and engaging with our local community: STEMfest 2023 provided the opportunity to inspire young people and show them the exciting careers they can have in science and engineering."



Arts brought history to life for South Shields schoolchildren

From creating their own songs to delving into the archives to dig out hidden gems of history, children from a South Shields primary have loved learning more about local history.

Year 5 pupils from SS Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, worked with Hand Of charity's Tyne and the Tide Project South for a week

of hands-on activities at South Shields Volunteer Life Brigade Watch House Museum (SSVLB).

The children worked with a theatre practitioner, musician and artist, plus an archivist from the Houses of Parliament travelled from London to work with the children, who had the opportunity to view copies of original plans for South/North Shields piers and an Act of Parliament.

The project has enabled the children to explore history and the arts as well as political and environmental issues, and their fun week culminated in a performance for parents and carers at the Watch House.



Sunderland school retains 'Good' Ofsted rating and earns 'Outstanding' feedback

A Sunderland secondary school could be judged 'Outstanding' at its next graded inspection if it keeps up the good work witnessed by inspectors at an ungraded inspection.

St Aidan's Catholic Academy, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was inspected by Ofsted in June and awarded a 'Good' rating.

Ofsted lead inspector, Matthew Vellensworth, said in his report: "There is more than enough evidence of improved performance to suggest that the school would be judged outstanding if we were to carry out a graded inspection now."

Inspectors described the academy as a place where pupils are "encouraged, every day, to 'climb the mountain'", adding that "these small, daily steps encourage pupils to believe in themselves". Pupils "feel safe" and are "incredibly well prepared for life after they leave the school" and "relationships between teachers and pupils are kind, respectful and caring". Many teachers eat lunch with pupils creating a "positive atmosphere" which continues into lessons where learners are enthusiastic and focused.

They added that the culture within the school is one of "high standards" and that pupils are "happy" with "exemplary" behaviour and understand the importance of the underpinning "core values of trust, hard work and fairness woven through every aspect of school life". Also acknowledged was "the academic rigour" and "ambition" of the curriculum described as "exceptional". Inspectors noted that planning and transition from primary school "takes account of what pupils learn" and that on their academic journey, "pupils are well supported to identify, prepare for and access high-quality university courses and apprenticeships".

"Staff are proud to be part of the school," continued the report. Recent approaches to reduce workload marking are "appreciated" by class teachers whilst leaders' focus on ensuring a "calm, purposeful and respectful atmosphere means that teachers can focus completely on delivering the planned curriculum". It added that staff feel "highly valued".



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Looking back on a year of opportunities

Principal of Dame Allan's Schools in Newcastle, Mr Will Scott, reflects on a year in which pupils embraced all that their education had to offer, and looks forward to the exciting changes ahead.



No matter what age we are, we all have a spark of excitement around the idea of a summer break. For our pupils, these holidays mark the culmination of a year of hard work, self-development and adventure. Summer is the time to do some playing and planning, dreaming and exploring. It is also a time of reflection for members of Dame Allan's staff. As with any organisation, the end of a cycle is a moment to celebrate our successes, evaluate our performance and identify the areas where we can continue to improve.

Reaching the end of my third year at Dame Allan's, I have experienced three very different years, each with unique opportunities and challenges. This has been the first full academic year 'post-Covid', in which we have been able to run a full co-curricular timetable and enjoy our planned school trips. From skiing to rock climbing, fencing to FemSoc, and even a World Challenge adventure to Eswatini and Mozambique, it has been inspiring to see pupils jumping in with both feet.

The co-curricular programme has been a jewel in our crown this year. Every member of teaching staff is involved with running a co-curricular activity, and every pupil is encouraged to take part in a range of activities outside lessons. Not only does this enrich the school life of our pupils, it also helps us to develop the whole child, creating well-rounded, confident and self-aware individuals. Taking part in a new sport, intellectual activity or school trip is valuable in forging friendships and exploring as yet undiscovered passions and talents, pupils learning from their experiences, and developing character and resilience in the process.

A highlight was the launch of our high profile speaker series, The Lectures - where guest speakers, including Dragon's Den star Sara Davies, brought invaluable real-world perspectives to pupils. We are delighted that this series will return in the new academic year, with another group of inspirational speakers set to take the stage.

At our Junior School, we were proud to launch our OPAL (outdoor play and learning) programme, which incorporates play as an essential tool for younger pupils. With the launch of this programme, it is hoped that pupils will benefit from improved socialisation skills and increased concentration levels after play - it's also a lot of fun too! Pupil feedback has been an essential part of getting OPAL up-and-running, and will continue to play a role in how the programme grows and develops.

You may appreciate that our pupils are immensely proud of the academic achievement and progress made over their years with us. We don't only celebrate exam results, of course, but also their key contributions to school life and good citizenship at our prize giving ceremonies, with awards for endeavour as well as excellence. Pupils are not only encouraged to celebrate their successes but also to reflect on where they can improve for the coming year beginning in September - could they develop more intellectual confidence or try out for that sports team they were interested in? This self-efficacy is a key 'Attribute for Success' at Dame Allan's, and one that is embraced by the teaching staff, as well as our pupils.

We are always listening to pupils and not only in lessons. One innovation this year is the launch of our Principal's Breakfasts. These informal events give us an opportunity to hear feedback from our most important people - our pupils. This, along with our pupil-led school councils, ensures that every child has a voice at Dame Allan's, to be heard and known while helping their school to continue improving.

The Senior Schools are undergoing some exciting physical improvements over the coming months with the refurbishment of our Sixth Form centre, the Queen's Building. This work will ensure that our senior students will have access to the space and facilities they need, including a brand new café and flexible study areas.

I knew when I applied for this role that it would be a demanding but fascinating one - it has been both of these and much more over my first three years. It has been rewarding to see such progress at Dame Allan's in the past few years and I am looking forward to another year of excitement and opportunities over the year ahead.

To find out more about Dame Allan's Schools, from Nursery to Sixth Form, please visit dameallans.co.uk





“

*...every child
has a
voice at
Dame Allan's...*



What did Newcastle School for Boys set out to achieve this year?

By David Tickner, Executive Head, Newcastle School for Boys

In 2022, the School launched a five-year strategic plan. Its key focus is to continue to develop and deliver excellence in teaching and learning and character development whilst preserving the current values and ethos of the School.

The plan's key themes include the application of technology, development of our staff, curriculum development as well as maintaining the strength of the School's financial position, its assets and resources, particularly in the current climate.

Whilst we are delighted to have been able to make significant headway in each of these areas this year, it is perhaps in the application of technology where we have seen the most progress. All our Senior School pupils now operate daily with one-to-one devices and this is starting to transform how they access and progress their learning both in the classroom and beyond.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Nothing ever goes entirely according to plan but part of the purpose in having a strategic plan is to allow us to prioritise and focus on the areas that we have identified as being most important for our pupils and school. Consequently, we have been able to reach nearly all the milestones that we set out to achieve in the current academic year.

How has the school fared in the field of sport?

School sport continues to make significant contributions to our pupils' wellbeing and character development. In March of this year, we organised Under 8 and 9 football tournaments at Goals in Gosforth for nine local primary schools. With around 200 local children involved, the tournaments were supported by our sixth form sports leaders who helped organise and run them.

Our 49 runners, pupil, staff and families, who took part in this year's Newcastle Children's Cancer Run race raised £1,000 of support of Children's Cancer North.

There were the usual team successes, notably our Under 15s winning county schools cricket and rugby titles, as well as the Newcastle futsal league championship. Our Under 14s combined very successfully with girls from Westfield School, to become North East touch rugby champions and national finalists.

In July, our senior cricketers undertook a cricket tour to India and in the autumn, we look forward to opening a new outdoor gym and fitness facility for our Senior School pupils.

What have been the most popular extra-curricular activities?

The co-curricular offer at Newcastle School for Boys is broad and offers a remarkable number of opportunities for a school of our relatively small size. Each term there are close to 100 co-curricular activities engaging pupils across the whole school.

Some changes to the timings of the Senior School day from September will facilitate even more co-curricular opportunities in an impressively extensive programme for our pupils from next term.

A particular highlight this year been the opportunity for Senior School pupils to develop cooking and food-based skills under the guidance of our catering staff, preparing hundreds of meals, delivered locally to the People's Kitchen in support of the homeless and vulnerable.

A new addition to the Junior School programme this year has been a very well attended voluntary service club, which included numerous local litter picks, positive messages left around Gosforth, biscuits

baked and delivered to the staff at the RVI Paediatric Intensive Care Unit and an afternoon spent at the Feeding Families Foodbank Packing Centre.

Another highlight has been the Senior School's outstanding joint production of The Addams Family with Westfield School at Northern Stage, which saw three sell-out performances in March.

The Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme remains very popular and it is great to see our pupils making progress and developing their character through the scheme, including two pupils receiving their gold awards at Buckingham Palace this year.

How has your team evolved?

Schools and their staff are in a state of constant evolution. We have made several exciting new appointments for the next academic year, including bringing in some new specialisms. We have been pleased to appoint this year an additional school guidance counsellor, who has been a very welcome addition and provided much valuable support to our pupils and staff. We have also been pleased to appoint a careers specialist for September to support further our pupils in this important area. Within our Senior Leadership Team, there has been some further clarification and definition of roles, including to allow me to have greater developmental and strategic focus to take our School forward.

What has been the most enjoyable school event?

Perhaps the single event that I enjoyed the most was the inaugural Newcastle School for Boys maths problem solving competition, hosted at our Senior School site in February for nearly 80 children from Years 5 to 6 from eleven local state and independent primary schools. It was fantastic to see the engagement and enthusiasm of the young contestants.

Describe the 2022/23 school year in three words?

Busy, (at times) challenging and successful.

What are your early aspirations for next year?

As usual, we welcome many new pupils to the School at the start of the academic year and one of our earliest priorities is to help them settle and quickly become comfortable in our environment, so that they are happy in school and able to make the most of their talents. Due to growing demand for places, we have been delighted to add an additional new class to our Year 5 from September.

We will also be looking to embed our new extensive co-curricular programme at the Senior School in a re-vamped school day.

newcastleschool.co.uk



David Tickner

RGS Newcastle's inaugural Social Impact Report

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster of Newcastle Royal Grammar School

At the Royal Grammar School Newcastle, we recently published our first formal Social Impact Report laying out our work supporting schools across the North East and engaging with young people throughout the region.



In the 2022/23 academic year, our partnership teachers, who are funded by donors including the Reece Foundation and British Engines, not only had direct impact through regular engagement with as many as 10,000 students in over 100 local schools but also had longer term indirect impact by helping to support and upskill as many as 600 of the region's teachers. We are looking to expand this programme substantially and, in the coming academic year at RGS we are also launching School Centred Initial Teacher Training (SCITT) for Maths and Physics, with the intention of helping to address the teacher shortage in these key subjects.

In addition to our partnerships with State schools, we are consciously developing the scale of our means-tested bursaries, indeed one in 16 children now attend the school on a fully funded place.

Bursaries are targeted at families living in the most deprived areas of the region and in the past 20 years, the RGS has supported 447 bursary families, enabled by loyal donors who strongly believe in our school's social commitment. Our intention is to scale up the impact that we have both inside and outside our school gates and we are consciously investing in our capacity to support this ambition.

Our social impact is of course not a new construct; as Newcastle's oldest learning institution, approaching our 500th anniversary in 2025, RGS has educated many thousands of 'Old Novocastrians' who have gone on to shape the economic, social, physical and cultural landscape of our region and country. These – including many who attended only because of fee assistance – have built businesses, created jobs, attracted inward investment and designed infrastructure. Alumni who have gone on to become inventors, researchers, medics, authors and artists – to name just a few – have realised their potential at RGS. We are unapologetically aspirational for any child or young person born in the North East.

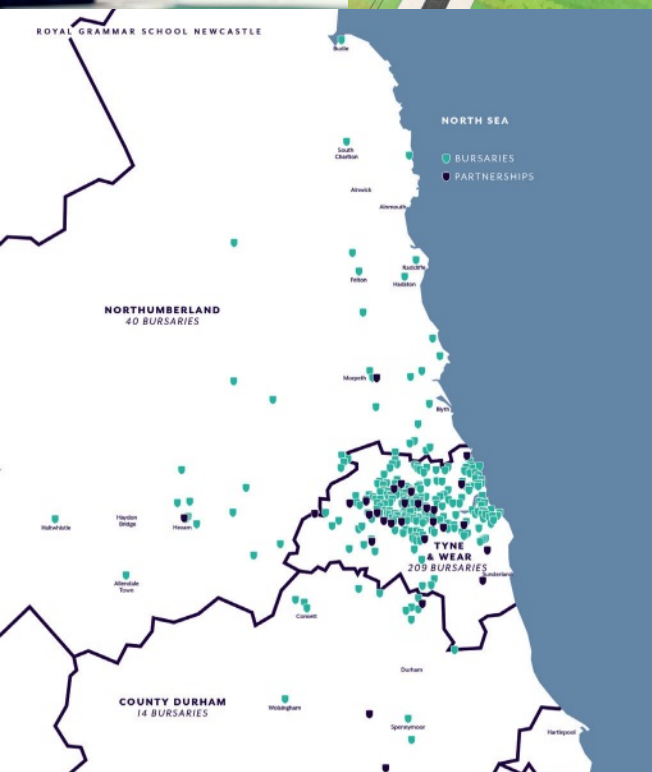
At the RGS, we consciously aim to keep fees as accessible as possible. Our parents are in main, hard-working families, who make sacrifices in order to choose a private education. Crucially, they already relieve the State of the cost of educating their children. It is for this reason that I am thoroughly unconvinced by proposed political policies, which would see VAT added to the fees of independent schools, presenting an existential threat to schools like the RGS. The seemingly easy headline of raising income by further taxing private schools, hides a number of unintended consequences for everyone.

Adding VAT to education will serve to make schools like the RGS less affordable while causing significant disruption for those families who could no longer manage the fees. This in turn will put additional burden on the maintained sector as those families look for places in local schools. It has been estimated by the Independent Schools Council that this would directly affect 25% of independent school pupils. In our regional context, it may well be a higher percentage but, even if it were this proportion, it would mean well over 300 additional pupils from the RGS alone needing to be educated by the state. The new burden on the region's education bill could become very large very quickly, potentially obliterating any income the policy intended to raise and it will not address the wider issues currently faced by the maintained sector. My fear is that the policy will merely accentuate the postcode lottery that already exists with more affluent parents accessing a State education and redirecting school fees to private tutoring. The North East faces significant deprivation in schools that we partner with and I would not want another unfortunate outcome of the policy being to reduce our ability to fund our bursary and partnership work.

We all share a common goal of improving aspirations, educational attainment, skills and opportunities for young people in the North East. At the RGS we are actively collaborating to ensure joined up thinking with a range of organisations. While some may take different philosophical positions on how education may be best served in the region, I am deeply concerned by the introduction of a policy that is likely to negatively impact the state schools around us and have such a detrimental impact on the RGS's ability to play our part in the development of the region.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk





RGS PARTNERSHIPS

Over 10,000 plus individual students in local state schools benefitted from RGS Partnerships' activities, for a total of around **20,000 student-hours**.



105 different schools across the region were involved in RGS Partnerships activities.



Over 750 teachers received **950 hours** of CPD or collaborated on curriculum development.



Over 50 RGS Partnerships' projects have taken place, including STEAM, Sport, Languages, Classics, Debating, UCAS Mentoring and much more.



RGS BURSARIES

82 (1 in 16) students at RGS attended on transformational means tested RGS Bursaries.



94% is the average bursary awarded, focussing our finite funds where we can make the most transformational difference.



447 bursary students have been supported since RGS Bursaries were established in 2002.



320 different donors donated an incredible **£800,000** in the year.



RGS SCHOOL

1,350 students attended RGS, which would have otherwise cost the taxpayer an annual **£10m** if educated in the state system.



Over 4,000 hours of volunteering were delivered by RGS students.



13 members of RGS staff are governors at local schools and **2** are in Director/Trustee positions.



35 local community groups and organisations accessed RGS buildings and facilities for their events and activities.



A day in the life of a primary school teacher

Kate Bertram

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

Teaching is one of the most challenging career paths to take, but one of the most rewarding.

As Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) launches its first SCITT programme with Teach First, one of the Trust's deputy headteachers shares a 'typical' day in the life of a teacher.

Deputy headteacher and reception teacher Kate Bertram, from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School in Jarrow, is also a mum of two boys aged nine and four. She explains why being super organised is, for her, the key to teaching.

6am: Alarm. My mornings run with military precision. I do food prep at weekends for teas for Monday and Tuesday and I iron our week's outfits on Sunday. In my deputy headteacher role, I have responsibility for arranging cover for absent teachers, so I like to check my emails before school.

I get my children up, get ready, feed our rabbits and hang a load of washing out. I listen to my boys read and we do spellings practice and homework. My mother-in-law takes them to school, so I drop them off on the way to work.

I arrive in school by 8am and meet the headteacher and business manager, call into breakfast club and go to my office.

8.15am-12.30pm: I teach in Early Years and lessons include daily phonics. We have areas of learning in EYFS (Early Years Foundation Stage) to support their fine and gross motor skills and learning skills.

I work with two teaching assistants and an HLTA (higher level teaching assistant), who covers me if I get called away. As I'm also deputy headteacher, I need to be alert and available if any urgent situations arise requiring the involvement of a senior leader.

I couldn't do my job without the people I work



Kate with her two sons

with. I share all my planning with my TAs, so everyone knows what the lesson plans are.

There is nothing else I can imagine myself doing; I have always wanted to be a teacher. As a practising Catholic, it's such a privilege to not only teach children but also to support them on their faith journey.

12.30pm-1.30pm: I do a half-hour lunch duty with a child who needs 1:1 support and then I have lunch.

1.30pm-5pm: I have a quick catch-up with the head, then check the diary and quality assurance calendar and, as teaching and learning lead, I will carry out learning walks.

For me, I feel I must be super organised but to be honest, it's not a natural skill, I had to train myself - and I do love a list!

I start working on the next week's diary on Wednesdays, plan staffing, and look at school trips e.g. risk assessments.

Between 4pm and 5pm: Before I leave I prepare resources for the next day.

Although that is my typical school day, there isn't a typical day. I can be called to sort urgent safeguarding issues or assist with challenging behaviour.



Kate in class

5.30pm-7.30pm: My school is very understanding about the importance of family and provides flexibility for me to attend my boys' school liturgies or sports days. Once I have collected the boys, we play football or games. It's important to me that we play when I get in and have tea together as a family. There are times when I need to open the laptop, but I wait until the boys are in bed; we are strict on prioritising a work/life balance.

7.30pm: Boys' bedtime and it's not long after that I totter off to bed to read as it helps me switch off. And then the next day, it starts all over again.

Anyone interested in opportunities at BCCET and its 30 schools, visit www.bccet.org.uk



Northern Leaders Trust Aspirations Day Success

Wilfred Webster, a finalist in TV show, *The Traitors*, dropped in at St James' Park recently to take part in an 'aspirations day' event organised by Northern Leaders Trust (NLT) to raise awareness amongst Year 10 students about careers choices.

Students from both NLT schools - Kenton School and Studio West - enjoyed hearing about Wilfred's life and the difficulties he had overcome. Two additional inspirational speakers, Cameron Parker and Action Jackson - the self-styled UK ambassador for happiness - also joined the line up. Twenty local businesses took part in the 'speed dating' style event.





Community Champion Awards a huge success

The first ever Northern Leaders Trust's Community Champion Awards, sponsored by Northern Insight Trust was a huge success. Seven outstanding young people from primary and secondary schools in Newcastle each picked up an award.

Guest speakers were Chi Onwurah, Labour MP for Newcastle Central and Naomi Riches MBE, Paralympic gold medal winner.

Nominees, parents, carers, and friends along with Lee Kirtley, CEO of Northern Leaders Trust and special guests enjoyed the glittering awards ceremony at Kenton School.







Raising the standard of child protection across the globe

International charity Save the Children is working with North East-based NCFE to raise global standards of child protection. We spoke with Clare Allsopp, Learning Specialist at Save the Children, to find out how the educational charity's Accreditation and Employer Services is making this possible.

Could you tell us about Save the Children and its goals?

Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for child rights, and we champion the rights and interests of children worldwide, putting the most vulnerable first. We have over 25,000 dedicated staff across 116 countries responding to emergencies, delivering development programmes, and amplifying children's voices through campaigns.

Our global aims are clear: to ensure that no child dies from preventable causes before their fifth birthday, that all children learn from a quality basic education, and that violence against children is no longer tolerated.

Why did you need NCFE's Accreditation Services?

We required NCFE's help to support Save the Children in reinforcing objective and consistent standards of excellence for technical expertise and, ultimately, to contribute to the quality assurance of our programmes for children across the world.

NCFE developed unique accreditation criteria based on our Save the Children technical competency frameworks for us to work from. Through close collaboration, these criteria resulted in the COMPAQT programme (COMpetency-based Approach to Professional Qualifications and Training), which takes the approach of identifying, addressing, and improving core competencies and knowledge

within participants' existing skillsets.

Our end goal is for the programme to help with enhancing the lives of children and families in the many communities that Save the Children operates in.

Can you tell us more about the COMPAQT programme?

The programme accredits staff who, for the most part, do not have a formal qualification in their area of work and expertise, such as Child Protection and Child Rights.

COMPAQT has enabled us to recognise and document their achievements which hasn't been possible previously. As well as benefitting individuals, this also helps their managers – often themselves not experts in this area – to understand the level of expertise of their staff.

Our first pilot took place in 2021, which involved 17 participants in Asia. Following its success, the programme was rolled out globally in 2022, enrolling 56 new participants in Child Protection and, as of 2023, Save the Children have enrolled another 54 participants to formally accredit in two more technical areas – Social Protection and Child Rights Governance.

The cohorts represent participants across five regions, more than 30 countries, and three languages. We've exceeded our expectations in how quickly the programme has gone from being a pilot, to being onboarded, embedded, and fully established globally.

In what ways did NCFE support you?

NCFE offer a comprehensive consultancy service, from the design and planning through to the delivery, monitoring, and evaluation of our accreditation programme.

Specifically, the team has helped us to adapt and tailor the accreditation criteria and process to meet the specific needs of our audience, whilst also ensuring consistent standards. They are also readily available to support with the development and delivery of training to enrol participants, as well as supporting them throughout the programme.

How has using NCFE's Customised Qualifications impacted COMPAQT participants?

Our participants have reported feeling more recognised and valued for their professional expertise. 84% of programme participants think this accreditation will help them to achieve more impact for children and 100% of our participants have recommended COMPAQT to a colleague.

The programme has also had an impact on our staff retention; participants who completed the programme feel more supported and clearer about their career development within the organisation, with some also leveraging their accreditation to move into more senior roles/responsibilities.

Would you recommend working with NCFE's accreditation team to others?

Yes! The partnership with NCFE has given the scheme and the accreditation a level of credibility and rigour that we could not have achieved independently – from the design of the individual qualifications to the training and support for assessors, to the quality assurance processes.

We've really enjoyed working with NCFE's very supportive and collaborative team. This accreditation programme reinforces Save the Children's technical expertise and helps us stand out even more in the sector.

Find out more about NCFE Accreditation Services and Endorsed Programmes by visiting www.ncfe.org.uk/learning-for-work/accreditation-and-employer-services

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In a happy and caring environment, our pupils are inspired to achieve great things both in and out of the classroom.

We combine small class sizes, inspirational teaching, outstanding pastoral care and exceptional co-curricular opportunities to nurture, support and challenge every individual.

Our inclusive philosophy is unique, making our school a wonderful place to learn and grow.

Register to attend our Whole School Open Day on Saturday 23 September to find out more.



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Education as it should be



www.teessidehigh.co.uk



Barney celebrates 'Excellent' success

A unique education system that prepares today's children for the world of the 2060s and '70s has won the highest praise from official inspectors.



The Independent Schools Inspectorate awarded Barnard Castle School the top rating of 'excellent' for both 'Academic Achievement' and 'Personal Development'.

The achievement follows the introduction of 'A Barney Education', an innovative approach to developing a dynamic curriculum for its 730 pupils, aged four to 18.

'Barney', as the School is affectionately known, provides an inspirational, compassionate and unpretentious environment in which young people develop character, becoming confident, resilient, intellectually curious, tolerant and driven, with an undercurrent of humility, leaving them ideally placed to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

A six-strong team of inspectors spent three days at the Senior and Prep schools, exploring every facet of learning.

They scrutinised compliance in key areas including the quality of education, the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of children, welfare, health and safety, the suitability of staff, the premises and the standards of leadership and management.

Inspectors examined the curriculum, observed 80 lessons and sampled work, from Reception class to Sixth Form. They analysed parent, pupil and staff surveys, spoke with pupils, staff and governors, experienced countless extra-curricular activities, House meetings and Chapel and also visited boarding houses and the Academic Support department. In each area the school was awarded 'excellent'.

Headmaster Tony Jackson said: "This was a rigorous and comprehensive inspection and we are unbelievably proud of the outcome, which is validation of everything we endeavour to do.

"Our children are preparing for a rapidly changing world and are having to contend with adversity on a local and global level. Throw into this mix the volatile and ubiquitous nature of social media and technology and it is clear that we need to evolve constantly to meet their learning needs as we prepare them for work in the 2060s and 2070s."

Inspectors highlighted the excellent quality of academic learning and pupil achievement, praising children's communications skills, their engagement with learning, their self-confidence and understanding of how to improve their performances further.

They also noted pupils' progress and skills across the curriculum including reading, writing and numeracy. They commented on how children expressed themselves with increasing sophistication and their expertise in public speaking, their ability to apply their knowledge and think logically.

Inspectors picked up on the School's sense of spirituality and community, the inspiring surroundings, pupils' morals and positive attitude towards each other, their excellent, courteous and well-mannered behaviour, their awareness of social issues and diversity, their contribution as global citizens, including charity work, the high degree of student input into school life and their understanding of how to stay safe, both physically and mentally.

The "comprehensive and experienced" pastoral care team was singled out for praise, being described as a "huge strength of the school, embodying the values and ethos they wish to promote".

The report also stated: "The excellent personal development of all pupils is a direct result of the values and ethos of the school. This is driven by the senior leadership team through the innovative use of assembly and tutorial time, endorsed by the governing body, thus fulfilling the aim to develop young adults with character."

Mr Jackson added: "It is a pleasure to work alongside so many talented professionals and be part of such a special, unique community, and we are excited about what the future holds for our School."

If you are interested in hearing more about what makes a Barney education so special, we are hosting a Whole School Open Day on Saturday 7th October 2023, including a Prep School Open Week from Monday 2nd October 2023 until 7th October 2023. To register your interest, please get in touch with a member of our Admissions Team on 01833 696030 or admissions@barneyschool.org.uk

www.barnardcastleschool.org.uk





“
*...a rigorous and
comprehensive
inspection and we
are unbelievably
proud of the
outcome...*

Tony Jackson



Journalist and former MP appointed Chair of regional museum group

Journalist, author and former Member of Parliament, Chris Mullin has been appointed as the new Chair of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' Strategic Board – the organisation that manages nine of the region's most popular museums and galleries.

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (TWAM) welcomes over 1,000,000 visits a year to its venues including the Great North Museum: Hancock, Discovery Museum, the Laing Art Gallery, Hatton Gallery, Shipley Art Gallery, Segedunum Roman Fort, Stephenson Steam Railway, Arbeia, South Shields Roman Fort and South Shields Museum & Art Gallery.

It also manages the Archives Service for Tyne and Wear, cares for over 1 million artefacts safeguarding North East heritage and art and delivers educational programmes to over 90,000 children and young people each year.

Chris Mullin was Member of Parliament representing Sunderland and during his time in the House of Commons he also served as a Minister in three government departments between 1999 and 2005. He was Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the North East of England from 2012 to 2017 and is also a Member of the Northumberland National Park Authority.

Baroness Joyce Quin, current Chair of Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums who will step down in September, said:

"I am personally very much looking forward to working with Chris - he is a respected figure who will bring Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums excellent networks both in the region and nationally and provide great leadership to support the executive team. The recruitment of such a senior figure as chair is also an indication of the very high regard in which Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums is held."



Is that your final answer?

Further casting has been announced for James Graham's thrilling and provocative drama, *Quiz* coming to Newcastle Theatre Royal Tue 3 – Sat 7 Oct 2023.

Joining Rory Bremner, Britain's top satirical impressionist and renowned comedian who stars as Chris Tarrant, will be TV favourites Charley Webb, Lewis Reeves and Mark Benton.

Recognised to millions for her role as Debbie Dingle in *Emmerdale*, Charley was nominated at the 2014 British Soap Awards for Best Female Dramatic Performance. Since leaving the soap in 2021, she has appeared in *Better for the BBC* and will be seen in *The Long Shadow* which will air in September on ITV. Trading the drama of the Dingle family and stepping into the scandal of the Ingrams, Charley will take on the role of wife and accomplice, Diana Ingram.

Lewis Reeves starred in the hugely popular black comedy-drama *I May Destroy You* which was nominated for nine Emmys in 2021, and has recently appeared alongside Keeley Hawes in the Sky science fiction series *The Midwich Cuckoos*. He is best known for his role as DC Jake Collier in the ITV drama *Unforgotten*, for which he appeared in four series of the show. *Quiz* will be Lewis' first UK tour and will see him in the hot seat, called for duty as 'The Coughing Major' Charles Ingram.

A beloved TV and stage star, Mark Benton recently appeared on stages up and down the country in *Ramps on the Moon's Village Idiots*, and other critically acclaimed touring productions including *Glengarry Glen Ross* and *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*. He has also been a regular on our TV screens since the early 90s, and best known for roles including Eddie in *Early Doors*, Howard in *Northern Lights*, Martin Pond in *Barbara* and Daniel 'Chalky' Chalk in *Waterloo Road*.

The production explores the real-life story of Charles Ingram, aka the Coughing Major, who conned the world's most popular TV quiz show, *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire* out of £1,000,000. Or did he?

Madagascar The Musical roars into Sunderland Empire



Selladoor Worldwide and Theatre Royal Plymouth have announced a brand-new tour of smash-hit family favourite *Madagascar The Musical* which will tour to Sunderland Empire from 22 November 2023.

Based on the smash DreamWorks animated motion picture, *Madagascar The Musical* follows all of your favourite crack-a-lackin' friends as they escape from their home in New York's Central Park Zoo and find themselves on an unexpected journey to the madcap world of King Julien's Madagascar. *Madagascar The Musical* will roar onto Sunderland Empire's stage from Wed 22 – Sat 25 November 2023. Tickets from £13 available online now at [ATGTickets.com/Sunderland](https://www.atgtickets.com/Sunderland).

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A force of nature

By Mary Ann Rogers

As the summer exhibition 'Force of Nature' comes to a close, preparations are well underway for the annual trip to Harrogate for the Home & Gift Festival, where the shops, galleries, boutiques and garden centres source all the beautiful things to fill their shelves with in the run up to (dare I mention it?) Christmas.

A team of us head down with a van filled with prints, cards and gifts, also lighting, flowers and furniture, towing a caravan, which will be our home for the best part of a week. Working in sweltering heat to create a fabulous stand has become the norm. In July 2022, people were being advised to stay at home to avoid overheating as the temperatures soared. Meanwhile, in an air conditioned marquee, we hoped the buyers would make the effort and come to the show!

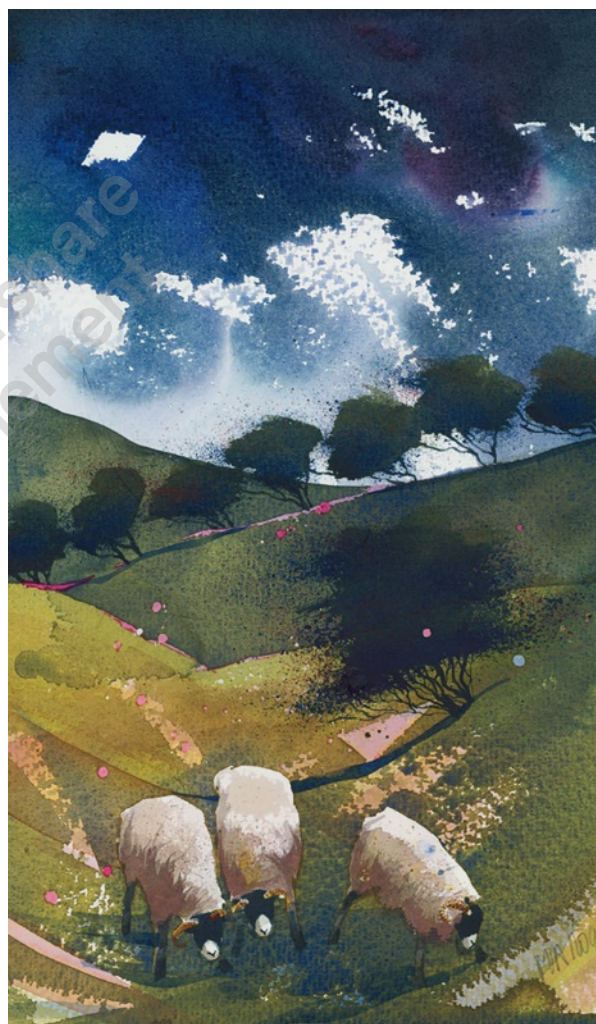
This year, the weather is due to be cooler, mercifully!

A very strange pattern has emerged this year, with visitors from New Zealand buying original artwork and having it shipped across. We are used to sending things all over the world, but to have three separate packages of paintings, one of which is frighteningly large, all heading to the other side of the world is nerve racking, and we place a great deal of trust in our shipping partners.

Summer brings abundant growth, many shades of green, a garden bursting with promise and the usual gluts of vegetables to plough through. Paintings of guinea fowl creeping through the undergrowth emerge, also flamboyant and fleeting red poppies painted from life. As summer moves towards autumn the most exciting time for painting these hills and valleys approaches. Watch this space!

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Pop icon shows the world is his oyster at North East event

One of the North East's much loved events will this year include a side order of pop magic, as one of the UK's music icons takes to the stage.

The annual Oyster Festival held at Hardwick Hall Hotel near Sedgefield is one of the region's top day time celebrations, where

guests enjoy amazing entertainment while dining on a lavish seafood banquet.

And to celebrate the 20th festival, organisers have pulled out all the stops, with superstar Rick Astley headlining on the day on Friday 29 September.

Rick, whose hits include Never Gonna Give You Up and Together Forever, will be one of many attractions at the event, which will also feature Irish band the Emerald Thieves, JJ Galway Band and comedian Josh Daniels.

Guests will also enjoy a DJ set by the legendary Brandon Block, with the whole proceedings overseen by compere, Steve Walls.

The event kicks off at noon and runs until 6pm, with guests enjoying oysters brought in fresh from around the country, as well as delicacies such as dressed crab, Dublin Bay prawns, Scottish poached salmon and mussels.

Following a champagne reception, attendees will be able to enjoy complimentary Guinness and wine throughout the day, putting everyone in the party mood.

The Impeccable Pig goes the whole hog with new menu

Anyone wanting to pig out at a pocket friendly price can do just that – thanks to the new lunchtime menu at an award-winning County Durham restaurant with rooms.

The Impeccable Pig at Sedgefield is renowned for its unique and quirky style, which can be seen everywhere from its luxury bedrooms to its pub and dining areas.

And now to make the experience even more memorable, the restaurant has unveiled its latest lunch time offering, with a selection of both UK and international favourites on offer.

The lunch menu starts at £9.95 for one course, £14.95 for two and £19.95 for three, served between noon and 5pm and available Monday to Saturday.

Guests can choose from starters including chicken liver parfait, white onion soup, mushroom arancini and goat's cheese salad, with mains such as homemade fishcake and fries, steak baguette and fries, pork steak Thai curry, mature cheddar soufflé and a selection of pizzas.

An additional range of dishes are available with a small supplement, including a flat



iron steak and frites and panko breaded chicken Milanese.

For those with enough room, the dessert range offers a selection of classics such as lemon posset, strawberry Eton mess and a brownie sundae.

The lunch menu – which runs alongside the A La Carte menu – also features a range of special cocktails with a distinctly summer feel.

They include an Aperol Spritz – Aperol, Prosecco and soda – as well as a Classic Mojito and a Peach Bellini.

For anyone who prefers a cocktail closer to home, the restaurant has also created an English Garden, comprising gin, elderflower, apple juice and cucumber.



Newcastle's Purple Peacock puts the sizzle into summer

The fun, spectacle and entertainment of the Rio Carnivale is coming to Newcastle this summer, as a city centre venue raises the heat with a Latin twist.

Cabaret venue, Purple Peacock, at 55 Degrees North, Pilgrim Street, is about to unveil its new summer show which will bring together aerial artistes, fire breathers and a team of singers and dancing to bring the spirit of one of the world's most famous events right to the heart of the North East.

Carnival De Peacock launches on Friday 28 July for an eight week run, where visitors can book to see the production – or go the whole hog and enjoy pre show entertainment and dinner.

Anyone who opts for the full experience can arrive at 6.30pm and eat from the a la carte menu, which offers everything from sushi sharing platters to steaks, along with dishes that include pan roasted cod to rack of lamb to lobster, with a number of vegetarian options also available.

Early arrivers will also be able to enjoy early evening entertainment from Matt Pagan, who as part of the group Collabro went on to win Britain's Got Talent.

The main event begins at 8.30pm where the aim is to turn up the temperature with a sizzling show, featuring the music of celebrated artists such as Gloria Estefan, Enrique Ingesias, Shakira and Jennifer Lopez and a number of exciting circus style acts.

Fabian Pritchard, marketing director for Purple Peacock and other North East venues, can't wait for people to see the show.

"We've put together a unique experience which is unlike anything else that is currently available in Newcastle or in the North East as a whole," he said.

"The costumes, the music and the talent of our entertainers is really going to make this a night to remember."

Tickets for the show only are £29.95. Anyone wanting the pre-show experience will pay the same price, plus the cost of dining from the main menu.

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Looking back on Stavanger

By Stuart Forster

Tom Cruise famously hung out here in the film *Mission: Impossible – Fallout*. A neck-wrenching 1,942 feet above me, the sheer face of Pulpit Rock juts reminiscent of Thor's anvil high above the placid blue surface of Lysefjord. The serenity of today's summer weather contrasts with the exquisite drama of the landscape in this steep-sided Norwegian fjord.

We sailed from Stavanger in a surprisingly quiet, electric-powered catamaran about 90 minutes ago. Passengers stand on deck snapping photos, filming and murmuring appreciative wows. The captain of the Rødne Fjord Cruise informs us that she's going to take us right up to the normally powerful Hengjane foss waterfall. Following five weeks without rain, today it's cascading down a nearby rockface with far less force than usual.

Following the brief pause, we turn back towards Stavanger, a charming city that's made a positive impression over the past few days. Old Stavanger, a five-minute stroll from Vågen – the harbour – is like a living postcard. Its cobbled streets and 173 white-painted wooden houses are adorned by hanging baskets and plant pots in full bloom. Occasional signs remind visitors that these are people's homes and not part of a museum.

There is, though, a sizable twin-centred museum



at the top of the hill. IDDIS tells the story of fish canning and printing, industries that were major employers a century ago. After viewing colourful labels and smoking ovens, I head up a creaking wooden staircase to former offices and read about Angus Watson, who imported canned brisling – known as Norwegian sardines – into Newcastle under the Skipper brand. The museum's suntrap terrace outside is a gorgeous space to enjoy a coffee before continuing to explore.

At the Viking House, down by the harbourside, I take a seat in a longboat and pull on a Virtual Reality headset. The 25-minute immersive show provides insights into Harald Fairhair's rise to power. Inadvertently, I find myself twisting to avoid a hail of incoming arrows during the section about the Battle of Hafrsfjord. A key moment in Norway's unification, it was fought in 872 at a point now roughly halfway between Stavanger's airport and the city centre. In commemoration, three vast swords plunge into weather-worn rocks by the waterfront.

Their scale prompts me to think of North East England's Angel of the North. Coincidentally, the artist behind the angel, Antony Gormley, also created Stavanger's Broken Column, 23 identical steel sculptures collectively forming an art trail. One faces into the harbour outside Fisketorget, a highly regarded restaurant where I enjoy an excellent lunch of fish soup accompanied by an IPA from the local Lervig Brewery.

Gormley's artwork is among many public pieces adorning Stavanger and the surrounding region, where street art is clearly embraced. In the neighbouring city of Bryne, there's a clenched-fisted depiction of free-scoring footballer Erling Braut Haaland celebrating a goal in Borussia Dortmund colours. While I stand appreciating it, a local explains that it's by Pøbel "Norway's answer to Banksy".

Bryne is my first stop on a self-drive day trip encompassing pretty coastal villages. By the mouth of the River Sokna, Sogndalstrand is a popular destination because of its restored heritage buildings and nearby salmon fishing. And driving, on roads that twist through Magma Geopark, proves fun in its own right. An undoubted highlight is heading up to Gloppeidalsura, northern Europe's largest scree,



and gazing over rugged boulders high above Vinjvatnet Lake.

Perhaps it's filling the hybrid vehicle before returning it that piques my interest in visiting the Norwegian Petroleum Museum. The waterfront attraction tells the story of Norway's oil exploration in a balanced manner, conveying lessons learnt from offshore accidents in the 1970s and also examining environmental considerations. Symbolically, the main building represents bedrock while overwater platforms introduce aspects of working life on rigs.

Strolling between boutiques on nearby streets brings opportunities to pick up presents for family members while appreciating the colourful facades and character of the city. To gaze over Stavanger I visit the Clarion Hotel's 14th floor Espier Bar. A fellow guest lends me his binoculars.

Through the lenses I see a city that's ideal as a short break destination and distant mountains that form part of a landscape I would not hesitate to return to explore as part of a campervan adventure.



Travel information

Loganair's (loganair.co.uk) direct flights take approximately 85 minutes to reach Stavanger from Newcastle. Stavanger's airport buses (Flybussen) take about 30 minutes for the journey into the city centre. The edgeofnorway.com and visitnorway.com websites provide information about attractions in and around Stavanger. Explore the region by picking up a rental car from Hertz (hertz.no) at Olav 5's Gate 13 – by the railway station. The Radisson Blu Atlantic Hotel Stavanger (radissonhotels.com; Olav 5's Gate 3, 4005 Stavanger; tel. +47 5176 1000) is a 365-room hotel. Relax in its 12th-floor sauna while looking out over the city. The Eilert Smith Hotel (eilertsmith.no; Nordbøgata 8, Stavanger; tel. +47 480 50800) is a boutique property with 12 individually designed rooms and suites. The ground floor host RE-NAA, a 2-Michelin star restaurant with 21 seats named after chef Sven Erik Renaa.



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A bit of Tyneside in Turkey, Hadrian's Gate and the beautiful old City of Kaleici, Antalya

By Caroline Preston



Publius Aelius Traianus Hadrianus Augustus, or Hadrian for short, is the ambitious and aggressive Roman Emperor who's pretty famous here in the North East. He's the man who left a great big 73-mile-long wall here when he ruled the Roman Empire from AD 117 to 138.

This famous wall stretching from Wallsend in the East (Tyneside) to Bowness-on-Solway in the West (Cumbria) was built in an attempt to bring security and stability to the northern frontier of the Roman Empire. At 15 feet high at points and almost 11 feet wide, the wall was designed to protect. With its deep ditch in front and series of gateway forlets (milecastles) it was certainly a deterrent. These little checkpoints served as a sort of guarded border monitoring and possibly taxing those wishing to enter.

What does this have to do with Turkey you ask?



Well, Hadrian was one busy ruler. Before the wall, he rebuilt the Pantheon in Rome and during his reign, the Basilica of Neptune, the Forum of Augustus, the Baths of Agrippa, and many temples.

Hadrian's Wall took six years and 15,000 men to build (AD 122 - 128) and two years later, Hadrian's Gate was built (AD 130). It's thought the gate was built to welcome Hadrian to Antalya, Turkey. It's believed this impressive gate once had an upper level, this no longer exists, but remarkably the rest of the gate is extremely well preserved, due to being mostly hidden by adjacent buildings until its discovery in 1817. It wasn't until the 1950s that it became fully exposed and restored. It's now the main pedestrian gate to the inner city of Kaleici (meaning: "Inside the Kale" or "Inner Kale" - Kale means castle or fortress.)

Now known as Antalya's 'old town' to the visitor, Kaleici was once the main hub of the city. Nowadays Antalya spans 1,417 km² and is home to 2.5 million people. Antalya is also a tourist Mecca, with golden sands that stretch for miles there are accommodations for just about anyone. Resorts like Lara Beach and its 8km blue flag beach are known for their five and six-star offerings that are often comparably affordable for the same standard elsewhere in the world.

Despite the mass metropolis that is Antalya, Kaleici, protected by its historic walls means it remains almost unspoilt. Access to vehicles is restricted to taxis, deliveries and two-wheels only. Many visitors come here for just a day, however, if you are lucky to stay longer you'll find a host of boutique lodgings waiting to welcome you. We stayed at Hotel Dogan perfectly located in the heart of old Kaleici. Tastefully renovated in Ottoman style this friendly hotel and restaurant feels homely and welcoming.

Exploring by day, here you can simply wander, and get lost in a maze of retail and restaurant-laden narrow cobbled streets. Wandering further downhill will take you to pretty Kaleici Harbour, it's a pleasant downhill stroll or a surprisingly free glass elevator ride in either direction. Explore the fortress-style walls or perhaps take a boat trip to

Antalya's waterfalls. A highlight was the freshly squeezed fruit juices from the many vendors on the quayside. The pomegranate was an absolute delight, think superfood in a glass!

If you've ever been to Turkey you'll know that as a nation they're not shy when it comes to a night out. Although some will argue the bars in Kaleici have spoiled this serene and historic location, it's absolutely possible to escape it too. Staying a week, we did both. Our favourite hang-out was the Viking-themed, Odin Pub. This live music rock and metal bar offers a fun atmosphere with inquisitive locals all keen to know their visitors.

On the quieter side of town, we spent a few evenings at Karaf Bistrot. This popular Ottoman-style local space offers delicious wine, pizza and Turkish antipasti. We ate, drank and chatted with young professionals about life in Turkey and the challenges they face. Fascinating.

If you're looking for a city break that could easily be a beach break, a culture break, and a nightlife break, Kaleici has something for everyone and is a 'gateway' to unlimited adventure.

www.thejarvisjotter.co.uk



Travel notes:

Caroline travelled in November 2022 to Antalya with JET2 Holidays jet2.com with accommodation provided by Jet2 at Hotel Dogan, Kaleici Old Town pranaresorts.com/antalya-doganhotel. Notable experiences: Locals eats at Karaf Bistrot facebook.com/people/karaf-bistro-kalei Perge, Aspendos, Side and Waterfall Day Tour by mehturtravel.com

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Places to go...Glasgow



I visited Glasgow to seek out the famous Burrell Collection, huge, accessible, and most importantly free! From the North East you can travel to Glasgow Queen Street via Edinburgh with LNER/Lumo/XC, continuing to Glasgow by Scotrail. Alternatively, use Northern Rail via Carlisle to pick up the Avanti West Coast service into Glasgow Central. From there, the local service to Pollokshaws West takes only nine minutes followed by a short walk over the park to the Burrell Collection, set in the beautiful Pollok House grounds.

Sir William Burrell made his fortune from one of the leading cargo shipping companies in Britain and made a substantial profit when he sold his ships during World War I. He had an interest in art as a boy and used his wealth to acquire an amazing collection of artefacts and art. As a Glasgow businessman he bequeathed his collection to the City of Glasgow as long as it was situated in a building in parkland.

I only explored one floor properly and was surprised to learn that there were two more as I left. However, I wanted to pack in a few more visits using the Glasgow Subway, which has an All Day ticket for £4.20. Singles are £1.55 between any two of the 15 stations, and it takes 24 minutes to complete either the Outer Circle (clockwise) or the Inner Circle (anti-clockwise). Three or more trips and the All Day ticket is better value. Frankly, the attractions detailed

here are better visited over two days.

I went first to Partick from where it is a ten minute walk to the Transport Museum which covers cars, lorries and bicycles, as well as public transport with mock-ups of streets from the past. Free and fascinating.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh (CRM) is recognised as Glasgow's most famous architect. He famously created the Glasgow School of Art which was destroyed by two fires in the last few years, due to reopen 2030. In 1896, the Free Church of St Matthew, Glasgow, commissioned a new church and hall from the experienced Glasgow architectural practice of Honeyman and Keppie, to be located within the developing area of Springbank. John Honeyman allocated the job to his young, talented, trainee architect, CRM. The site at Queens Cross was an awkward plot, being on a corner plot and butted by tenements and a large warehouse. In keeping with their beliefs, the Free Church required simplicity in design. It opened in 1899, but following declining attendances, the building was acquired in 1977 by the CRM Society. It's a bit of a hike along Maryhill Road from St. George's Cross Subway. Queen's Cross was the only Mackintosh church to be completed.

Back on the Subway to Shields Road station to find that my favourite Mackintosh building, Scotland Street School Museum, (open as a school 1906-79) is temporarily closed. So instead on to a building completed in 1996 but designed by CRM and his wife Margaret MacDonald in 1901. The "House for an Art Lover" is situated in Bellahouston Park, walkable from Ibrox station. The house is a prominent example of



the Modern Style. It serves as a venue for art exhibitions, weddings etc, as well as being itself a visitor attraction.

And so round the circle to Buchanan Street for Queen Street for a train back towards Edinburgh, selected from the best fares on Nationalrail.com. There are many options for finding the best value journeys to Glasgow so make sure you check them out online. We are great supporters of railway ticket offices, but try us out 24 hours for the full picture.

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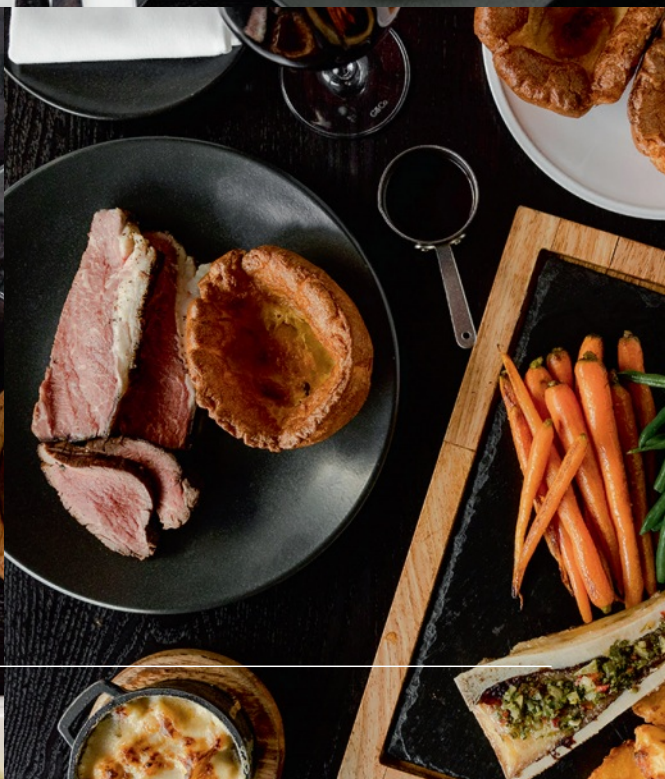
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A sizzling summer in the city

By Michael Grahamslaw

Gaucha Newcastle has been carving out a fine reputation for itself since opening earlier this year to great acclaim.



The glitzy launch event welcomed the likes of Alan Shearer and Lee Westwood and raised the curtain on the region's first 'carbon neutral' steak restaurant, offering high-quality sustainable steaks and premium Argentine wines.

Serving up only the most prime cuts, Gaucha Newcastle also occupies a prime slice of real estate on the corner of the city's Market Street. The area is undergoing a sizzling spell of regeneration with the Pilgrim Place redevelopment in full swing and news of Newcastle's first 5-star hotel.

Gaucha will sit at the heart of the pedestrianisation project and is a real headline addition, perfect for destination dining, weekday lunches, romantic evenings and after-work events.

Inside, dark warm tones and ambient lighting create a supremely stylish interior, while Argentinian wall murals and pampas grass hint at the restaurant's Argentinian roots.

With a warm Geordie welcome on arrival, we were superbly looked after all afternoon by Manager David Taylor and waiter, Craig. All staff were very well educated on Gaucha's offerings, with recommendations aplenty and a real credit to their craft.

We were first invited to sample a cocktail at the bar before adjourning to one of the restaurant's highly prized corner booths.

This proved the perfect place to kick back with a sumptuous bottle of Malbec. Gaucha has one of the most extensive offerings of Argentinian wines we've ever seen (in addition to other world favourites) and this place is sure to be a hit with wine lovers as well as foodies. Fortunately, we'd be enjoying both.

Of course, it's the steaks that assume centre stage, but we also kicked off with an excellent couple of starters. My son Jack enjoyed the sautéed prawns in a tomato broth – singing with olive oil, chilli and garlic.

The empanadas really caught my eye – delightful little pockets of joy filled with a tongue-tingling blend of spiced ground beef and vegetables, encased in a perfectly, flaky pastry.

My preferred cut of steak was fillet – or 'lomo' as it's known in Spanish. Cooked exceptionally well, lean and tender with a delicate flavour, this was paired with a side of sautéed greens and a signature peppercorn sauce.

Jack chose the rib eye, delicately marbled throughout for a rich, full-bodied flavour which was accompanied by hand-cut chips and spinach infused with garlic and lemon.

Of course, supreme flavour was a given, but this was a meal in line with forward-thinking sustainability principles as well. All of the beef used is 'carbon-neutral' while the restaurant runs on 100% renewable energy and is committed to a zero food-to-landfill policy.

This classy restaurant is raising the 'steaks' in Newcastle's hospitality scene.

For more information and table reservations, visit gauchorestaurants.com/restaurants/newcastle





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Let loose at Lui's

By Michael Gramshaw

I had the pleasure of visiting the recently revamped Lui's restaurant on Newcastle's Quayside. The restaurant – formerly Sabatini then Sabas – has had a modern facelift and is still serving up some of the best Italian food in the city.

On a sun soaked Sunday afternoon, the dining area packed a buoyant atmosphere with an upbeat bringing the good times.

There's ample outdoor seating too where diners can enjoy al fresco dining or simply sit and sip an Aperol spritz while catching some rays.

Lui's is a family-run venture which means a warm welcome is assured with Mark and his team always on hand.

We kicked off proceedings with an excellent bottle of pinot grigio for my son Jack and I and a bottle of pinot grigio blush between my wife Lisa and daughter, Holly.

The menu has returned to a pizza/pasta offering with a parade of Lui's signature dishes – old

favourites featuring many modern inflections – in addition to from-the-grill specialities.

The meal got off to a promising start with the old classic gamberoni all aglio – succulent prawns sauteed in a garlic butter.

Next up was the mussels bianco, an Italian classic that showcased the chef's expertise in handling seafood. The mussels were perfectly cooked in a fragrant white wine and garlic broth, which added a touch of sophistication to the dish. The broth was delicious and really lent itself a good dunking of some Italian sourdough.

The girls meanwhile enjoyed a grand sharing plank of Antipasto Sardo - filled with an assortment of Sardinian delicacies, including cured meats, olives, cheeses, and grilled vegetables.

It was a perfect dish for sharing with each element carefully chosen to capture the flavours of Sardinia. The combination of salty cured meats, tangy cheese and smoky grilled vegetables was a winning mix and transported us to the island's sun-kissed shores.

For mains, Jack enjoyed the salmon calabrese, a stunning dish with a spicy calabrese sauce adding a delightful kick without overpowering the natural flavour of the fish.

For pasta lovers, the traditional penne romana was a real must-try and lapped up by the girls. The penne pasta was cooked al dente and tossed in a rich tomato and cream-based sauce with white wine, garlic and mushrooms.

The combination of savoury flavours with the sharpness of the wine created a burst of flavours which made the dish an instant classic.

Last but not least, my pizza calzone was

another revelation. The golden-brown crust was filled with mozzarella, ricotta, pepperoni, mushrooms, and tomato sauce. Each bite was a medley of flavors and textures, and the pizza was cooked to perfection, with a crispy crust and gooey melted cheese.

Totally replete, we swerved desserts in favour of some bracing espressos and a round of obligatory limoncellos.

We certainly had something to drink to. The Lui's site has a longstanding association with good quality Italian food, and based on this visit, the local Tyneside icon remains in very good hands.

**For more information, visit
www.luisbarandkitchen.co.uk**



The spirit of Las Vegas is alive and well – in the heart of Newcastle

It's hard to enter Newcastle city centre and not notice the Purple Peacock.

It occupies a prime position at 55 Degrees North – on the roundabout which marks the main route in and out of the city.

It's only fitting then that such a highly visible spot should have a programme to match and that's exactly what this unique venue is now offering, with its Las Vegas style immersive cabaret and dinner experience.

The venue has recognised the need for something a little different from the multitude of bars, restaurants and club which the city centre is awash with – not that there's anything wrong with that of course.

But it also means there's room for another type of night out – one which combines the chance to dine, drink and be entertained in one stylish setting.

New to the Purple Peacock party is Fabian Pritchard, who comes to the venue with years of experience in some of the city's top hospitality venues.

Fabian has just taken up the role as sales and marketing director with One Management Services which owns the venue and he's now using all of his expertise to really put Purple Peacock on the map.

"Purple Peacock is something really unique for Newcastle," he said.

"It has massive appeal to anyone who wants to have a night out with a difference and enjoy some entertainment that wouldn't be put of place in some of the top venues across the UK and beyond."

The latest show – Carnival De Peacock – which draws its inspiration from the colourful spectacle of events such as the Rio Carnival – will be a display of high quality circus style acts, dancers and music with a real Latin flavour.

The pre-show dinner experience includes everything from sharing sushi platters to main course choices of steaks, lobster or a variety of vegetarian dishes.

The whole ethos of the Purple Peacock is to create an unforgettable experience, with a regularly changing programme to ensure people return.



Christmas is already very much on the horizon, with a whole host of shows planned – from The Greatest Show Christmas Special to Santa is Coming Motown.

While show nights are on Fridays and Saturdays, other nights of the week the venue is available for private hire – and there's also the famous bottomless "drunch" – where for 90 minutes guests can enjoy bottomless cocktails, beers and spirits, sharing platters and live entertainment.

In a city renowned for its night life, Fabian is now determined to make Purple Peacock stand out from the crowd.

"We are very different from anything else currently on offer in Newcastle or in the North East as a whole," he said.

"It's the fact that we cater to a wide age group and there's something for everyone to enjoy.

"People who have been tend to come back time and time again and now we want to ensure that the message is spread far and wide so that everyone can enjoy the Purple Peacock experience."

Further details or bookings can be made at www.purplepeacockncl.co.uk





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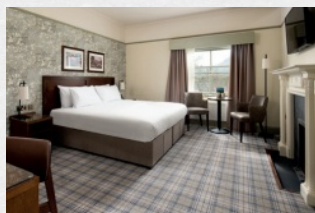
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Gala launch brings The Harrogate Inn to life for The Inn Collection Group

North Yorkshire is the focus of attention for The Inn Collection Group this summer, as three of the Newcastle-based pubs with rooms operator's prime sites emerge from multi-million-pound refurbishments.



First out of the blocks, The Harrogate Inn was welcomed back into trading with a gala launch event on Thursday, July 20, when VIPs from across the country arrived to sample this stunning new venue in the heart of the famous North Yorkshire spa town.

Welcomed by a pair of Georgian footmen in a nod to Harrogate's links to George III, the site's old St George Hotel identity and the named bar, Barking George within the inn, the assembled dignitaries were able to sample all the delights offered by the new-look site.

Taking place since January the programme of works has been extensive, creating a brand-new place for eating and drinking on the town's famous Parliament Hill, as well as six new, ground floor guest rooms.

With a new feature entrance enticing people to step inside, Barking George is a stylish venue with a commanding position that will be open all day, every day offering delicious food and delectable drinks.

Named in recognition of both the site's former moniker and the links between Harrogate and King George III, Barking George has been designed by Newcastle-based BXB Interiors, with the new look giving the feel of a grand established pub befitting its location in the town.

With opulent furnishings and decoration throughout, the inn creates the look and feel of a traditional pub with its own unique character and features.

This includes the commanding stained-glass dome that has been restored and bathes the main bar area of Barking George with a mellow natural light further enhancing the atmosphere of the site.

The refurbishment also incorporates two new outdoor patio features, boosting the number of covers and providing a relaxing place to look out over the scene towards The Royal Baths and enjoy the hustle and bustle of this part of town.

Whilst creating stunning surroundings for visitors to enjoy, the project has also seen the premises' kitchens completely revamped to ensure the highest quality of dishes is served to diners.

Completed in just 152 days, the project has been managed by Silverstone Building Consultancy and delivered in partnership with 7Formation.

Hailing the completed renovation, The Inn Collection Group's property director Louise Stewart said: "We're delighted to have The Harrogate Inn back and welcoming guests after what has been a rapid refurbishment that has delivered a superb quality venue."

"The works have been extensive with a total refurbishment of the old function rooms and reception area of the old St George Hotel, the creation of the new grand entrance and remedial works to the building's roof.

"It has delivered a venue which has been warmly received by those we have shown around prior to reopening, and I hope that the inn is going to delight guests going forward."

www.inncollectiongroup.com





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Les Reay (Owner, Catering Units) hands over their bespoke vehicle to Zak of Tango Durham, which has recently opened.



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New summer menu at The Northumberland Arms

One of Northumberland's most popular food venues has launched a summer menu reflecting the finest seasonal British produce.

Locally sourced meat and fish are sharing the stage with hand crafted pies and Northumbrian cheese at The Northumberland Arms, at Felton – where diners can opt to eat in – or outside on a picturesque terrace overlooking the River Coquet.

Starters on the new menu include twice-baked Cheddar soufflé, ham hock terrine with onion chutney, house pickles, a soft hen's egg and puff pastry soldiers and hot smoked sea trout with pickled cucumber, buttermilk, crispy sourdough and fresh apple and coriander salad.

There then comes a choice of classic dishes, from steak frites with watercress and shallot salad or a Northumberland Arms burger made from beef sourced from the nearby Blagdon Estate to traditional fish and chips.

A plant-based burger with vegan cheese on a brioche style bun with chips and salad is also available as is the Pie of the Day, created by award-winning Newcastle bakery Kennedy and Rhind.

And a crispy chicken schnitzel comes with a fried hen's egg, garlic and parsley butter and truffle and parmesan fries while sausages are served with triple mustard mash, crispy bacon and onions, Northumbrian cheddar and roast onion gravy.

The à la carte choices include a classically prepared and served market fish of the day, a choice of ribeye or sirloin steaks with hand-cut chips, grilled tomato and mushroom, onion rings, watercress salad and a choice of sauces.

Or diners could opt for pork fillet Wellington with caramelised cauliflower purée, cabbage and onions and cheesy truffled potatoes,

12-hour braised ox cheek with cheddar and mustard dumpling, pan-fried chicken breast with chorizo and parmesan croquettes or grilled hispi cabbage with potato and onion bhajis.

A choice of side dishes – from beer-battered onion rings and buttered greens to mixed salad and black truffle and aged parmesan fries – is also available, as are sharing platters for those looking for a less formal option.

These consist of sea salt and olive foccacia with marinated olives, salted butter, olive oil and balsamic, a fish platter of mini fishcakes, breaded haddock, smoked salmon, prawn and crayfish cocktail and a garlic and rosemary baked camembert with onion chutney and warm baguette.

Customers with a sweet tooth can choose from a wide selection of desserts, such as sticky toffee pudding, dark chocolate tart with griottine cherries and orange mascarpone, vanilla crème brûlée with fresh raspberries and strawberry and white chocolate cheesecake.

Ice creams, sorbets and a duo of Northumbrian cheese are also on offer, served with grapes, walnuts, chutney and biscuits.

Stuart Young of the Northumberland Pub Co, which operates The Northumberland Arms, said his team had put "a huge amount of care, and skill into creating one of our finest menus yet.

"It offers something to suit every taste, using the best available ingredients as always," he said.

For more information about The Northumberland Arms, or to book, visit www.northumberlandarms-felton.co.uk





Brand new enchanted light trail opening in Newcastle City centre this Christmas

Offering a magical world of illuminations, Northern Lights Newcastle is set to become Newcastle's very own light trail.

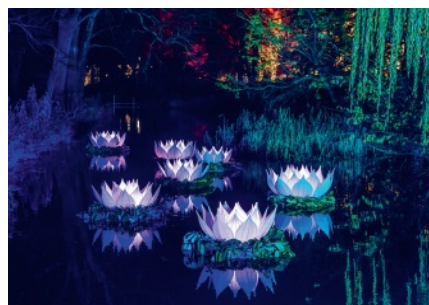
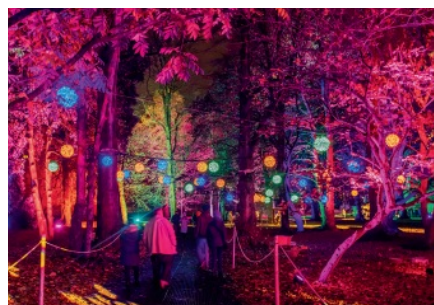
Lighting up the iconic Leazes Park like never before, a brand new immersive light trail is coming to Newcastle city centre this Christmas. 'Northern Lights Newcastle' will enthral visitors with a stunning after-dark attraction of immersive visuals, audio and jaw-dropping illuminations in what will become the only light trail in the city.

The breathtaking festival of light in the heart of Newcastle's oldest park includes original audio compositions, dynamic choreography and intelligent design to create a 90-minute magical experience for the whole family to enjoy. The fully accessible, mile-long route will see epic illuminations light up Leazes Park, along with a Christmas Village filled to the brim with delicious festive food and drinks by local artisans.

Opening on 23rd November 2023 and running for five weeks until 1st January, Northern Lights Newcastle will completely transform Leazes Park in the year of its 150th anniversary, with

incredible illuminations set among woodland glades, heritage architecture, statues and the lake at the centre of the park. Welcoming people of all ages, visitors to Northern Lights Newcastle will experience between 10-12 light attractions, discovered across a mile loop around illuminated parkland, starting and ending at the southern park entrance (via Barrack Road). During the 90-minute event, visitors can also enjoy vintage fairground rides and a variety of festive treats, including mulled wine, hot chocolate, and toasted marshmallows.

Northern Lights Newcastle is led by the company behind multi award-winning Bluedot, Kendal Calling and Christmas at Bute Park. The light show will be produced by a combination of local and national talent, including creators of headline installations for Kew Gardens, Netflix, and Glastonbury, so visitors can expect a host of mind-blowing features and special effects from the UK's leading trail creators!



Dates and opening times:

Northern Lights will run for five weeks from 23rd November 2023 to 1st January 2024

4:30pm – 8:15pm (23rd November until 30th November)

4:15pm – 8:15pm (1st December to 1st January 2024)

Pricing

Pricing for a single ticket starts from £13.50 for children over 13 years, £19 for adults (children under two go free) and £61.50 for a family ticket of four.

Accessibility

Ensuring everyone can enjoy the magic of the moment, and be able to take part in the festivities, the whole trail is inclusive and accessible via a flat trail along wheelchair-accessible paths, seating areas and ramp access points. Special provisions will also be in place to reserve Access time slots, where quieter audio and reduced visitor numbers aim to support neuro-divergent visitors. Queue jump wristbands will also be available for those with additional needs.

Tickets are now on sale via the website:
www.northernlightsnewcastle.com

Instagram: @northernlightsnewcastle

Facebook: Northern Lights Newcastle

Twitter: @lightsnewcastle

Address: Leazes Park, Newcastle.



My weekend

Cat Morton

Fund-Raising Coordinator at YMCA North Tyneside based in North Shields.

The charity helps vulnerable people with housing, supports social enterprise and provides facilities such as a gym and a nursery. Their focus is to help people thrive, contribute and hope.

Here she tells us about her weekends.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

Yes, I work at the YMCA North Tyneside and often plan community and fundraising events that happen on Saturdays. We recently had 'Picnic in the Park' in Northumberland Square, a free community event which saw 4000 wonderful residents and local businesses come to support. There was lovely music, a BBQ, stalls such as hook a duck, fire engines and the sun was shining all day.

Are most weekends the same?

I'm lucky enough to say no, my weekends are not the same. They can vary from work events to hiking in The Lakes, to being in the pub on a sunny afternoon with the local Shields gang.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

If I'm struggling to switch off, I take myself off for a walk or a big hike to release some energy and I find that helps me to relax and enjoy my time off, it's my way of unwinding from a busy work week and settle into the weekend.

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

Adventures. I love exploring and being outdoors, even if it's just walking along the Fish Quay or along to Whitley Bay, and then through Holywell Dene and back. I'm known for my long walks, around 10-12 miles is my usual. I always take my little rescue dog, Gary. He's had plenty of adventures too, I rescued him from a



Cat Morton

bucket in Beijing and now he goes all over the North East with me.

Big night out or a night in the house?

I do enjoy socialising, so probably a night out, even just for an hour or two. I've recently also been to a local music festival which was like two big nights in one! Music, lots of friends and a great atmosphere. Looking forward to next year's Coast Fest already.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

Both, it depends on what shenanigans have happened the day before. If I've been out hiking, it's normally an early rise with a cuppa. If I've been to the pub, it's a lie in.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

My passion is walking and hiking. It's free to do and uses up lots of energy too. I also get to see some fantastic scenery and meet new people too.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

Just Italy in North Shields. Authentic Italian food, run by an Italian family. Superb people and superb food. Love it.

How important is the weekend to you?

Very. I believe that it's important to do the things that make you happy with the people that make you smile.

What's the best thing about weekends?

Being happy and smiling.

Of a weekend, you'll usually find me most happy...?

Outside taking in the sun (that includes a beer garden!)

To find out more about the work of YMCA North Tyneside checkout www.ymcanorthtyneside.org

Wingrove Motor Company adds David Guy to Senior Leadership Team

A family-owned North East car dealership group has added one of the regional motor retail industry's best-known names to its senior leadership team.

David Guy has joined Wingrove Motor Company as its new group commercial director and is now part of the directorship team that is driving the business's profitability, customer service standards and future expansion plans.

David brings almost three decades' industry experience to his new role, the last decade of which was gained as head of business for Stratstone Tyneside BMW.

Wingrove Motor Company, which is set to celebrate its centenary in two years' time, operates the official North East franchises for global brands Citroën, Peugeot and DS, and employs around 85 people across its Silverlink, Newcastle West Road and Cramlington dealerships and service centres.

David Guy says: "From my first meeting with the Wingrove management team, it was clear that there was an exciting opportunity to join a dealership with real growth ambitions and that the experience and insight I could offer were exactly what they were looking for.

"Their professional approach and clear strategy for the business really ignited my interest and got me excited about rising to a new challenge, while the family values and ethos on which Wingrove's success has been



David Guy

built offers the firmest of foundations for its future development.

"The whole Wingrove team is extremely impressive, there's a huge amount of growth potential here and the sky really is the limit."

Wingrove Motor Company is the largest family-owned and operated motor company in the North East and was the only regional dealership to be shortlisted for the Large Dealer Of The Year at the recent 2023 Citroën UK Awards.

Managing director Josh Parker adds: "We're continuing to make significant investments in keeping all our facilities up to date and have some big expansion plans in the pipeline that David's expertise will help us bring to fruition."

www.wingrovetorgroup.co.uk

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Leading Link get on their bikes

The health benefits of using a bicycle to get to work have been trialled by Bedlington based charity, Leading Link.

Working with young people and with funding via Thriving Together from the Health Inequalities Fund, the project is operating in rural areas or places where public transport is limited. Using state of the art E Bikes supplied by Bike 4 Health, young people are being encouraged to get on their bikes and enjoy the health benefits associated with exercise and fresh air.

In addition, the project is opening up accessibility to businesses and organisations such as Alnwick Gardens where participants are being shown behind the scenes activities to enhance their knowledge and awareness of the roles and opportunities available to young people.

Young Leader Aidan Barker (21) said: "It's much more fun riding to work than getting a bus or car. It helps me to keep fit and also, it's giving me time and space to think which is important for my mental health."

Lyn Horton, Chief Executive Officer of the charity said, "the health benefits are huge from increasing cardio activity to simply enjoying the open roads and the countryside. Even a short ride on the E Bike helps and couple this with the businesses that are opening their doors to our young people it can only be good news."



Jay uses personal experience to champion LGBTQ+ health and social care issues

Jay Conlon, recently appointed Engagement and Involvement Officer at Healthwatch Newcastle, is leveraging their own experiences and identity as a queer person to advocate for crucial health concerns within the LGBTQ+ community.

Hailing from Durham, Jay is not only an accomplished musician but also an integral part of the LGBTQ+ band, Runaway Samba. Comprising entirely of LGBTQ+ members, including individuals who identify as trans and non-binary, the band was formed in 2012 under the community arts company Jack Drum Arts in County Durham. Through their music, Runaway Samba provides a safe and inclusive space, fostering a sense of belonging and celebration for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Speaking about the importance of support within the band, Jay said, "It is crucial for LGBTQ+ individuals to feel validated, safe, and protected. When performing, especially in front of an audience, it is essential to know that your bandmates have your back. While progress has been made, there are still dangerous situations and negative reactions surrounding identity, gender, and sexuality."

In Healthwatch Newcastle and Healthwatch Gateshead Jay has been met with acceptance, comfort, and proactive measures to ensure their safety and well-being at work-related events. Jay's commitment to their role at Healthwatch allows them to offer valuable insights and guidance to individuals within the LGBTQ+ community who may lack the same level of understanding and support.

Union Jab sessions build confidence for women

Safety is always front of mind for all women- whether it's walking home from work or a night out- or just walking past large groups of people. The fear that women feel is real.

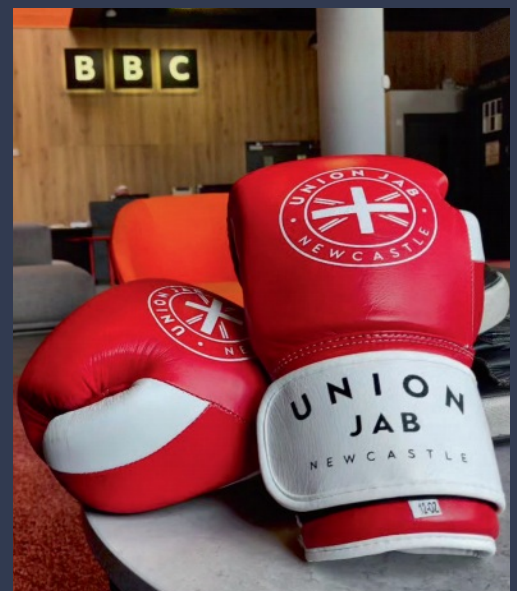
In Britain, women are three times more likely than men to feel unsafe in a park during the day. This is worse after dark, when as many as four out of five women say that they would feel unsafe walking alone in a park, compared to two out of five men *

Charlie Cooke runs Union Jab which provide boxing classes for all. They promote not only physical health but also emotional and social health through a relaxed but hard-working environment. Charlie is also an accredited Nutritionist, personal trainer, and general proponent of healthful and meaningful living

Boxing is a great way to build self confidence, learning to defend yourself is an empowering experience for women. As well as increasing confidence, boxing will help improve strength and can teach individuals how to punch effectively and powerfully.

Charlie was recently invited by BBC Newcastle to visit the studios and teach Anna Foster and some of the women who work with her a few boxing moves that would help them feel more empowered and confident. Their conversation about self defence was recorded and will go on Anna's show in the next few weeks.

Union Jab run boxing classes in Wylam and Greenside and are always welcoming to more female members looking to learn real-world boxing skills in a safe and friend-focussed environment. *2023 research by Leeds University.



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Internationally acclaimed cosmetic doctor from Teesside inspires on Channel 5's 'Rich House, Poor House'



Dr Rashpal Singh, his wife Kiran and their four children.

Dr Rashpal Singh and his family recently made an inspiring appearance on Channel 5's popular documentary series, 'Rich House, Poor House.' The episode aired on Sunday, May 28, and showcased the transformative experience of the Singh family as they swapped lives with another family from a different financial background.

On the show, Dr Singh and his wife Kiran, who own a successful cosmetics clinic in Middlesbrough, exchanged homes and budgets with Natalee, a single mother aspiring to build a career in the beauty industry and living on a weekly budget of £60.

Reflecting on their participation in the show, Dr Singh shared, "Being part of this programme has been an incredible experience for myself and my family. The opportunity to support someone and help them realise their dreams has been truly rewarding."

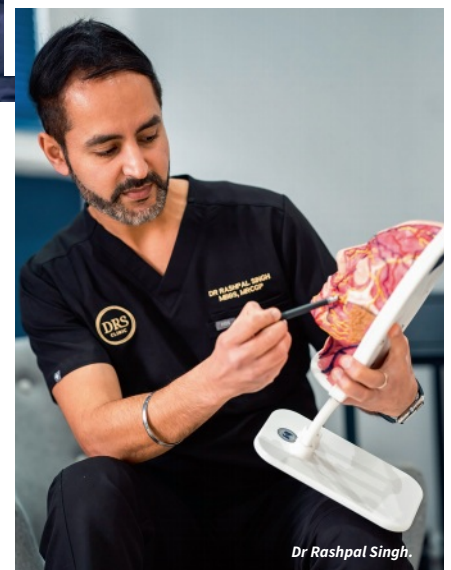
Throughout his medical career, Dr Rashpal Singh has demonstrated a strong commitment to providing opportunities for young people in Teesside and County Durham. From conducting outreach programs in local schools during his time as a junior doctor to offering expert mentoring and training to aspiring aesthetic practitioners in the region, he has always been dedicated to giving back to the community.

Dr Singh attributes his drive to succeed to his upbringing in Middlesbrough, where he witnessed the importance of a strong work ethic and supporting one another. "These early years shaped my approach to both my professional and personal life," he said. Participating in 'Rich House, Poor House' provided him with the opportunity to instil appreciation for what they have in his children's lives and inspire them to use their privileges to make a positive impact.

The experience also had a profound impact on Natalee, who expressed her gratitude, saying, "Filming 'Rich House, Poor House' and meeting Rashpal and Kiran has brought me an incredible amount of happiness and pride. It has completely changed my outlook on life."

About Dr Rashpal Singh

Dr Rashpal Singh MBBS, MRCGP has passion and exceptional skill in natural, balanced results for his patients, which has led to him being recognised as one of the leading facial aesthetic doctors across the UK. He was selected as one of the four doctors across the UK to be personally



Dr Rashpal Singh.

mentored by one of the world's leading plastic surgeons, and he is often found travelling across the UK and internationally sharing his expertise with other medical professionals.

Dr Rashpal and his team's ethos is to treat their patients like family when they welcome them into their purpose-built clinic, located in the heart of the North East and Mayfair, London.

Alongside his work at DRS Cosmetic and Skin Clinic, Dr Singh is a key opinion leader and a trainer in medical aesthetics.

For media enquiries, interview requests, or further information about Dr Rashpal Singh please contact: Stacey Penrose, 07834 414 856 or stacey@racemarketingagency.co.uk

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Presentations (less than an hour)

Our presentations are the perfect fit for lunchtime or smaller meetings. They also work well as standalone sessions, for example, as part of wider speaking events or conferences. During these presentations, we can discuss the benefits of chiropractic care, how it can help with workplace stress, and how to maintain a healthy spine.

Workplace Biomechanics, 'Spine Checks' and Ergonomics Assessments

We are happy to set up at your office to encourage your workforce to think more about their workplace well-being. As part of this, we can assess your workforce from a musculoskeletal point of view.

We provide tips and tricks to help your workforce move better or feel better throughout the course of the working day. We can set up in a small area or provide more focused workshops as required.

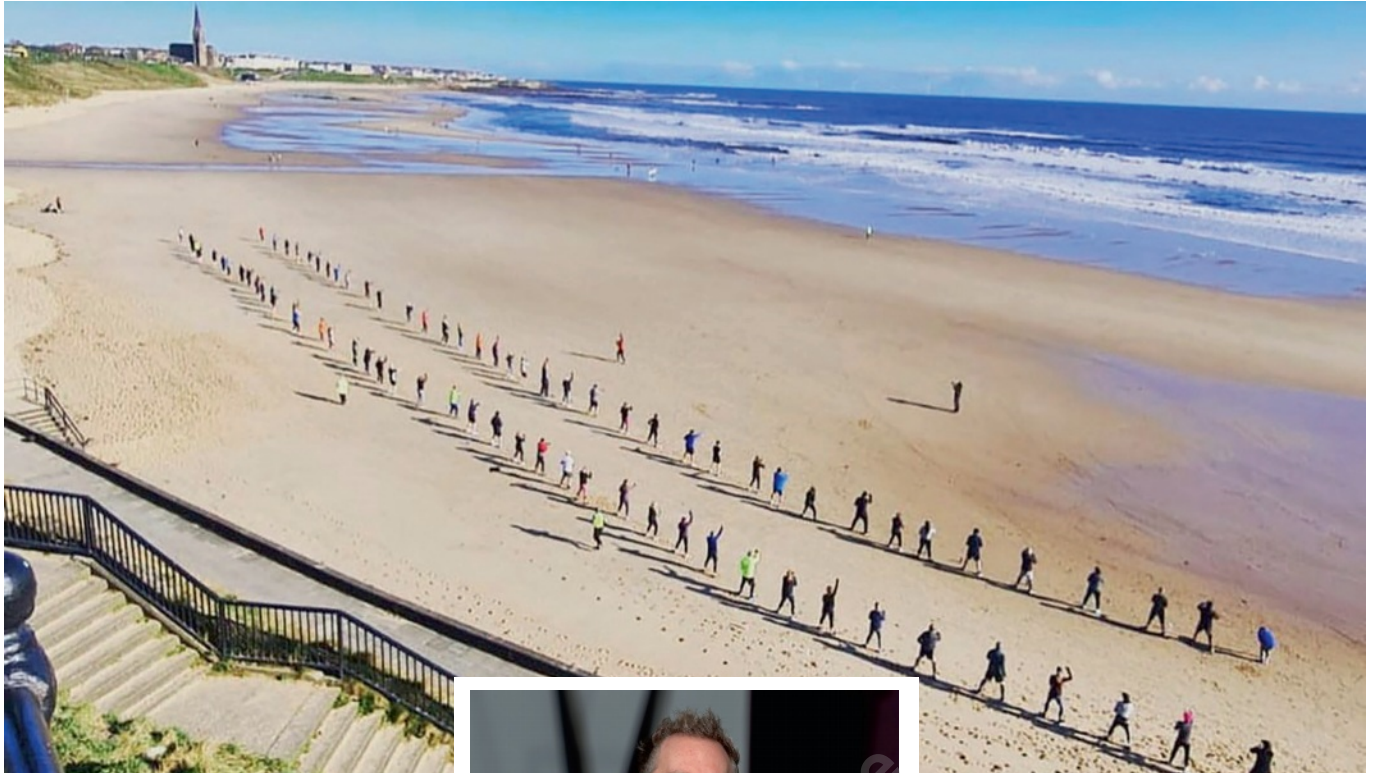
We believe that our services can help your business and your staff stay healthy, happy, and productive.



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Midlife fitness

The importance of maintaining and increasing activity levels during midlife (40s to 60s) to combat the natural decline in fitness, strength, and stamina can't be stressed enough. Our fitness, strength, and stamina start to decline in the 30s but accelerate in the 40s and 50s, partly due to hormonal changes like menopause and andropause. A sedentary lifestyle accelerates these changes.

Here are some tips on where to start:

Benefits of Physical Activity

Increasing physical activity levels, even in midlife, can greatly improve fitness and cardiovascular health. Research shows that individuals who engage in activities like walking and cycling for a few hours per week have a lower risk of dying from cancer and heart disease.

Quick Walking

Walking at a brisk pace of at least four miles per hour (100 steps per minute) can provide significant cardiovascular benefits. Even short bouts of fast-paced walking can be beneficial.

Incidental Workouts

Incorporating short bursts of vigorous activity into daily routines, such as running for the bus or climbing stairs, can reduce the risk of death from cancer and cardiovascular disease. Aim for four 1 to 2 minutes of exercise, collectively each day.

High-Intensity Interval Training (HIIT)

HIIT is suitable for individuals of all ages and can offer various benefits, including improved heart health, calorie burn, muscle and bone strength, and metabolism. Combining both



David Fairlamb

high-intensity and moderate-intensity workouts is recommended.

Strength Training

Strength training is crucial for preventing muscle loss and slowing physical decline. It increases bone density, raises metabolism, and reduces cardiovascular risk factors. Bodyweight exercises like squats, lunges, and deadlifts can be effective.

Racquet Sports

Tennis and badminton are particularly beneficial for maintaining brain and body health in midlife. These sports engage multiple muscle groups, improve coordination, and strengthen the heart and lungs.

Balance and Flexibility

Practicing balance exercises and improving flexibility are essential for maintaining mobility, preventing injuries, and promoting overall fitness. Activities like yoga, tai chi, and sports involving multi directional movement can be beneficial.

Protein Intake

Adequate protein consumption becomes increasingly important in midlife to maintain and repair muscle. Aim for 20-35g of protein per meal and ensure a steady flow of protein throughout the day.

Stretching

Flexibility exercises should be incorporated into the fitness routine, along with strength and balance training. Stretch major muscle groups after each workout or consider activities like yoga or pilates.

Plyometric Exercises

Plyometric exercises, such as jumping and hopping, can help strengthen the body and prevent injuries associated with sudden movements. Start with bunny hops as part of the warm-up.

Proper Nutrition

Under fueling the body can negatively impact fitness and overall health. Match carbohydrate intake to activity levels, focusing on lower-to-moderate carb meals for rest days and moderate activity, and introducing high-carb meals before and after long-duration or high-intensity workouts.

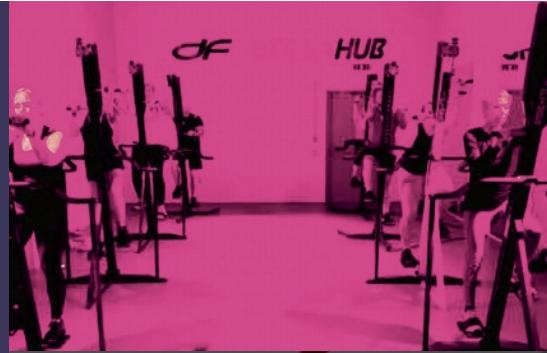
www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

David's summing up...

If you are looking to keep fit and strong and be able to do the things you enjoy for longer in life, it is vital you find a health programme that is suitable and consistent.

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Barry Speker

The Last Word

It is undeniable that Nigel Farage displays more than a hint of Marmite. Views about him can be extremely varied although his campaign and his UKIP party were very influential in PM David Cameron agreeing to a Brexit referendum leading to Britain voting to leave the EU (and Boris getting it done).

Nigel Farage chose to fade into the background but reappearing regularly to expound on Brexit, befriend Donald Trump and share his views on various issues.

His recent announcement that his accounts had been closed by Coutts Bank (famously the Queen's banker) and without reason, was greeted with a certain Schadenfreude by aspects of the media and political classes, and in particular annoyed remainers.

Challenging the closure, Farage discovered by forcing disclosure of bank documents, that it was untrue that he did not 'fit financial guidelines' but that Coutts had taken the view that he was

unsuitable because he had retweeted a Ricky Gervais joke about trans women and was a friend of anti-vaxer Novak Djokovic, therefore concerns he was 'xenophobic and racist' - and had links with Russia (which he denies)

This embarrassing scenario produced a speedy and fulsome apology from Dame Alison Rose, CEO of the NatWest Group, which owns Coutts. She apologised for the 'deeply inappropriate comments made about yourself in the now published papers' released and stated these were not the views of the Bank.

She emphasised her belief in freedom of expression, and access to banking saying it was not their policy to 'exit a customer' on the basis of legally held political or personal views.

She offered him alternative banking facilities with NatWest - but revealingly not with Coutts. She promised that Coutts processes will be reviewed and that there will be compliance with Government regulatory rules associated with Politically Exposed Persons.

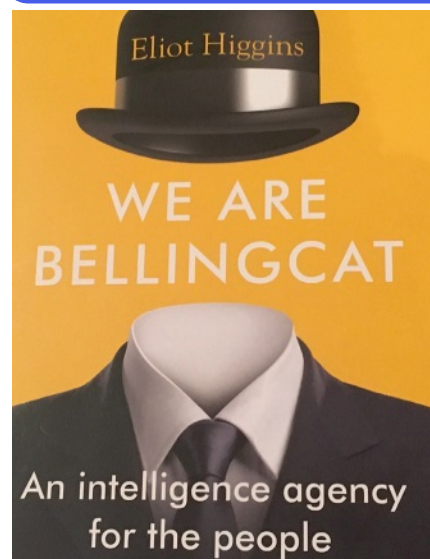
Coutts and others may think wokery and cancel culture are insurance against scrutiny and criticism. It is to be hoped that this case will ensure banks cease their Orwellian policing of customers' opinions and return to the business of banking and treating all customers with respect.

Currently there is much to be concerned about. The state of the economy, widespread strikes even by committed doctors, the cost of living crisis, our worryingly shrinking defence capability, War in Ukraine and the existential threat from articulated intelligence which the World Economic Forum predicts will destroy 83million jobs in the next five years.

Is it worrying that while Rome burns, the escapists obsess about the latest series of Love Island, the private lives of Huw Edwards and Philip Schofield and that the most talked about film is *Barbie* concerning a plastic doll designed for six-year-olds? What of Ken as a stereotype characterised as something of a spare part?

Will the other big film, *Oppenheimer*, be a serious counterbalance? - reminding us of Oppenheimer 'father of the atomic bomb', who lamented 'I am become death, the destroyer of worlds'.

For some fascinating though not too reassuring summer reading, I recommend *We Are Bellingcat* by Eliot Higgins. It shows how self taught sleuths have used the internet and social media to solve some of the biggest crimes including identifying the agents responsible for the Salisbury poisoning. Also demonstrating, by accessing covert material, the misreporting by false reporting of incidents around the world. In particular the Bellingcat intelligence agency has discovered the truth behind lies propagated by Putin's Russia.

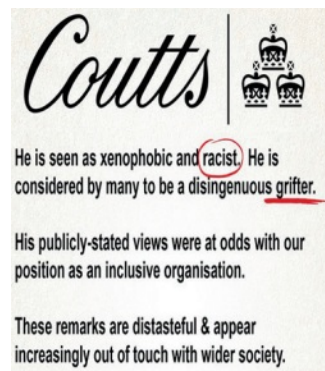


A great Wimbledon, particularly with surprises such as Czech Marketa Vondrousova the first unseeded female to win Wimbledon. Then in the men's final, 20 year old Carlos Alcaraz, albeit the first seed, defeated 36 year old Novak Djokovic in five thrilling sets. Alcaraz was suitably respectful of the old master whilst Djokovic was magnanimous, describing the champion as a complete player and a combination of Roger, Rafa and himself.

The best headline was 'The Kid beats the GOAT'. Will Djokovic, despite his amazing record and sustain his hero status despite his disgraceful violent racket smashing, for which he was rightly fined. St Roger will forever be the favourite not only for his style, ability and grace but significantly for his sportsmanship.

Too soon for me to predict the outcome of a thrilling Ashes campaign!

barryspeker@hotmail.com





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