

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

October 2023

Issue 05



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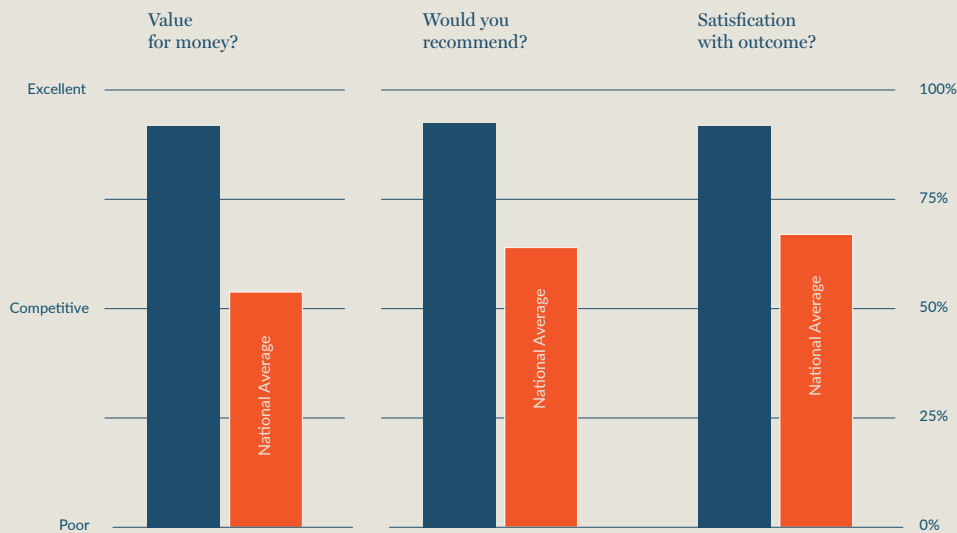
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Foreword

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

With the football season in full swing and Strictly back on our television screens it is clear the gallop through to Christmas has begun.

To ease the stress of those long wintry nights ahead we are delighted to bring you our biggest magazine of 2023.

Our cover stars are IT experts Forfusion who have recently achieved Cisco Gold Partner status.

Look out for a sumptuous five page property special from our old friends Sanderson Young.

Within a plethora of fascinating features read about The Better Man Project, a men's movement designed to help men save their marriages and connect with their families.

On our travels we visit the glorious Lord Crewe Arms in Bamburgh and make a special anniversary trip to Langley Castle Hotel.

212 pages bursting with content and all of the popular Northern Insight ingredients. We hope you enjoy it!

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

M J. Grahamslaw

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Till next month...

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Edition Sponsors

New members join North Tyneside Business Forum management team

The North Tyneside Business Forum has announced the addition of three new members to its Management Team. These individuals, representing businesses in the area, have generously volunteered their time and expertise to contribute to the growth and development of their local business community.

Rebecca Thompson, a Business Administrator at Plastic Metal Profiles in Benton, Chris Wilson, Proprietor of the Square and Compass Bar in Whitley Bay, and Angela Tuplin Director from NE Display Ltd on the West Chirton Industrial Estate, have joined the ranks of the North Tyneside Business Forum Management Team. Each brings a unique perspective and motivation for participating in the unique opportunity to help other businesses.

All three new members have numerous connections and links within the business community both within their own sectors and beyond. With all three bringing in new connections in manufacturing, printing, and hospitality the knowledge base within the team has increased for the benefit of others.



Michael James, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, warmly welcomed the new members. "I was very impressed with the quality and quantity of applicants from a wide range of businesses that applied for the roles. It was an incredibly difficult decision to make, and I'd like to thank everyone who applied. The addition of these three talented people, each bringing a wealth of experience, is truly motivating. Our entire Management Team operates on a voluntary basis, and their commitment to helping us to drive progress is commendable," he remarked.



Teesside firm creating new roles after exponential growth

Teesside-based Caswells Group celebrated half a century in business in 2022, employs over 100 people, and after adding seven figures to recent turnover, is creating 10 new jobs.

Founded in 1972, Caswells Group has spent 50 years supplying businesses from sole traders to bluechip customers across the country with PPE, janitorial, safety and hose/hydraulic supplies and has increased turnover by £10million in the last three years.

The company achieved record high levels of turnover in 2023 of £24million in the year, its best ever result in its 50-year history.

Financial Director, David Roebuck said: "Achieving this level of growth whilst maintaining margins, during such challenging trading conditions is testament to the hard work the whole team continuously puts in here at Caswells. Growth in the year has been a mixture of landing several significant new customers and also seeing a large increase in turnover with our established existing customer base. We pride ourselves on building long-term working relationships with our customers.

"We now employ over 100 people and we're looking to add a further 10 to the team to support our exciting journey. We are a family-owned business based here on Teesside and it's brilliant to be able to provide job opportunities for our local community.

The new roles include quality control operatives, picking/packing operatives, embroidery machinists, drivers and internal sales. Any applications or expressions of interest should be made to pmurphy@caswellsgroup.com.



Sunderland bid's achievements highlighted in new video

A £13m boost to the local economy, 440,000 additional visitors to Sunderland city centre and more than 12,000 interactions with local businesses are just some of Sunderland BID's achievements highlighted in a new video.

The city's Business Improvement District is set to go to ballot in November in the hope of returning for a third time.

And to highlight the important role the BID has played in boosting Sunderland city centre's prosperity; a new short video has been created looking back over the last four years – and highlighting the promise a further term would bring.

The video outlines the many activities and events created by the BID during its current second term, from the highly successful Sunderland Restaurant Week to the Food and Drink Festival to its seasonally changing app with its AR trail.

These events have helped give a substantial boost to the local economy, as have the introduction of initiatives such as the Sunderland Gift Card which now has more than 200 outlets accepting it.

Raising the profile of Sunderland to bring in more visitors has been a huge success, with the BID's activities creating a huge 27 million social media impressions, while clean-up initiatives – supported by the BID's SR1 Street Ranger – have seen a massive 120,00 tonnes of rubbish being collected.

The BID has also acted as a conduit for local businesses to have their voice heard by decision makers and stakeholders in the city, a vital role as Sunderland continues to grow and develop.



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

www.bradleyomahoney.co.uk



North East businesses join forces to raise over 28k for Alzheimer's Research UK

250 business leaders from across the region came out in force this month to raise awareness and vital funds for Alzheimer's Research UK, raising a mighty £28,745.

The popular Ladies Day, which is the brainchild of Sara Hoxhaj (Alzheimer's Research UK) and Sarah Gray (Leonard Curtis Business Solutions Group) returned for a 2nd year at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, and 2023 saw nearly a 300% increase in funds raised and an increase in attendees of over 40% compared to the successful event last year.

The ground-breaking event last year was the first of its kind for Alzheimer's Research UK not just in the region, but in the UK. The sold-out event saw a guest panel take to the stage hosted by Caroline Theobald MBE, owner of Bridge Club and Non-Executive Director at the Power of Women, alongside inspirational panel guests Amazing Jane Co-Founders, Claire Goodliff and Deb De Luen and Avril Matthews from A Liberty Life – life and crisis coaching, with world-renowned Researcher Daniel Erskine bringing the latest developments and insight from the field.

Casey Lane, Founder and Managing Director at Lanes & Co, the distinguished and internationally renowned luxury jewellery, antique and auction specialists kicked off a live auction on the day, which raised £4.5k alone

Collingwood Insurance unveils rebrand to 'reflect evolution and growth'

National car insurance provider, Collingwood Insurance, has undergone a brand overhaul to 'encapsulate its evolution and growth' over the years.

The rebrand comes as the insurer looks to adapt to the changing digital landscape and the ever-changing way that customers engage with and procure services from the firm.

Newcastle-headquartered creative agency, JUMP, worked with Collingwood on the design and implementation of its new look.

JUMP's extensive experience, working with organisations such as the NHS, Co Wheels, Newcastle University and National Trust, was what Collingwood felt made them the perfect fit to oversee the process.



"It was an incredible experience collaborating with Collingwood Insurance on this rebranding project. Our goal was to help position the company as a modern, customer-focused brand while preserving their core values," said Andrew Baxter, Creative Director at JUMP.

As part of the rebrand, JUMP created a new visual identity for Collingwood Insurance, including a fresh and dynamic logo that represents the company's 'forward-looking' approach.



North East teacher's new career is the perfect fit

The success of Newton Aycliffe-based Sophie Clothier in building an international client base has led to the publication of her first cookbook.

Sophie set up her online healthy eating and exercise platform @fitfooddiary_x – to inspire people to get in shape, as well as creating a whole host of tasty recipes.

And now her success has seen the unveiling of Fit Food Diary, featuring many of Sophie's delicious and easy-to-follow recipes.

The book is now available to order, which a very excited Sophie is delighted about.

"I can't believe I'm going to have my own cookery book," she said.

"It looks absolutely fantastic and hopefully it will help inspire other people to try out some of the recipes."

Sophie, 31, was a teacher for seven years but decided to make the leap into a new career.

"I decided last year that this is what I wanted to do so I gave up my teaching job so I could focus on the fitness full time."

Sophie's book has been published through Found, an innovative system which helps influencers turn then content into cash – with absolutely no outlay from them.

Found turns the recipes into stylish books with the influencer's only obligation to promote them via their platforms, for which they receive a percentage of each one sold.

She hopes her own journey – including her own weight loss – will help inspire others.

"You can't deprive yourself of everything you like to eat so my recipes include all kinds of food which I hope will inspire people," she said.

"I try to create content which is aimed at showing how you can improve your fitness and I'm glad that I've built a really nice community.

"The book is the next step on that journey, and I am so excited about it."

Fit Food Diary is now available on order here and costs £24.99 for a hardback version, and £8.99 for a digital download.

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Steve Underwood & Nikki Alcorn

Bonded Takes on Scotland: Newcastle-Based Media Agency Launches New Edinburgh Office

After a successful first two years in business, Newcastle-based media agency, Bonded, is expanding its horizons with a new Edinburgh office, as it plans its strategic expansion into the Scottish media landscape. The launch marks a significant milestone in the agency's growth journey, having quickly established itself as a major player within the Northeast of England.

It may not have been long since Bonded first opened its doors for business; a start-up agency that promised to prioritise connection in a market saturated by technology and automation. But just two years on, the agency has achieved remarkable success, winning a multitude of awards for its client work and even outgrowing its first office. A momentum they are keen to continue with their new venture into Scotland.

Founded by four leading figures from the industry, Bonded has come a long way since it first opened its doors for business back in 2021. Since then, the agency has grown to a team of 20, won a multitude of awards for its work in SEO, paid search and paid social, and even been named one of Prolific North's 'Independent agencies to watch'.

To help carve its space within the Scottish market, Bonded has appointed Nikki Alcorn to lead the Scotland operation as Client Director. With over 15 years' experience in the market and a thorough understanding of

the Scottish media landscape, Alcorn will facilitate the vital responsibility of liaising with clients, establishing a local presence and fostering connections that will help drive the agency's growth in Scotland.

Sharing in Bonded's core values surrounding the importance of connection and building strong and trusted relationships with clients, Alcorn sees joining Bonded and navigating this next chapter for the agency as the natural next step in her career. She comments, "Scotland has a vibrant business community, and in an ever-changing digital world, brands need an agency and a team that they can trust – and Bonded is exactly that".

For Bonded, a presence in Scotland offers regional diversity, access to a thriving market, and an opportunity to connect with Scottish brands that they have long admired. Steve Underwood, Managing Director at Bonded explains that contributing to the region's media ecosystem as well as being able to invest

in and create jobs are also big motivating factors in the agency's vision for their Scotland branch.

Steve comments, "Expanding into Scotland represents an exciting new chapter in Bonded's journey, as we embrace fresh opportunities, cultivate new relationships and continue to redefine the digital and media landscape. We are not only crossing borders, but bridging connections".

The rest of the team share in the excitement for the agency's launch into Scotland. With a proven track record in the Northeast, there's no doubt that Bonded's expansion into Scotland will be met with the same level of enthusiasm and success that has become synonymous with the agency.

To Scotland and beyond.



Meet Bonded's Freshest Faces

As the agency continues to expand, Bonded welcomes several new additions to its growing team...

Nikki Alcorn, *Client Director*

Craig McMenemy, *Senior Paid Search Manager*

Bert Van Eetvelde, *Paid Social Manager*

Freya Wilson, *Content Executive*

Renee Fraser-Shepherd, *Marketing Executive*

Abi Simons, *SEO & Content Executive*



The Leadership Team

Under the guidance of its directors - Siobhan Byrne (*SEO and Content Director*), Steven Underwood, (*Managing Director*), Kevin McEwan (*Media Director*), Kevin Sung (*Digital Performance Director*) and Dave Lucas (*Chairman*) - Bonded has risen as a dominant force in the digital and media industry.

Each bringing over 15 years' experience in leading agencies, the directors each have a deep knowledge of the media industry and have worked with some of the world's most successful brands. With expertise across SEO, paid search, media consultancy and above and below-the-line media, the team deliver fully integrated campaigns that truly connect with the audiences of their clients.

For more information, visit bondedagency.com

Cover Story

Forfusion strikes Gold

And it's unique in the North East. It's so rare that no other company headquartered in the region has managed to find it. So, what rare find is this? It's Cisco Gold Partner status, and only the very best companies are allowed to discover it.

Which means the Tyneside-based IT experts Forfusion have achieved the highest level of customer credibility in the marketplace and demonstrated their superior service and support capabilities.

If you rely on an outside company to look after your IT, you want them to be experts in their field, a safe and secure operator who will design, implement, and manage your critical IT infrastructure to the highest standards.

Which brings us back to the all-important word... credibility...when you are dealing with a firm that has been awarded the Cisco Gold Partner accolade, it means you no longer need to take the word of Forfusion or any of their clients or rely on their reputation; you now have proof from one of the world's leading IT and networking brands.

Certifications from Cisco Systems follow a rigorous audit process and are among the most widely respected designations in the networking industry and are not awarded lightly.

In other words, attaining Cisco Gold Partner status and the fact that this is the first award of that standard to be given to any firm headquartered in the North East, proves that Forfusion are an IT company you can rely upon.

Trusted by the NHS, local and central government, and prestigious private sector companies, Forfusion's impressive client list speaks volumes about their expertise and how they're disrupting the market by outperforming much larger and slower-moving Gold Partners across the country and beyond.

"We're incredibly proud to have been awarded Cisco Gold Partner status," said Forfusion CEO Steven Forrest. "It shows to our customers that when we promise the ultimate in secure, large-scale networking infrastructure design, deployment and support, that's exactly what we will provide...and we can officially prove that we meet the most exacting standards demanded by a world leader. It

also needs to be emphasised how difficult it is to achieve the ultimate in Cisco certification, alongside top-level certificates across all Cisco architectures."

This Cisco Gold Partner award is in addition to their many other Cisco Specialisations, including five at Advanced Level, underpinned by their recent ISO 27001 certification. These accreditations guarantee that clients can expect the highest standards in network design, security and privacy protection.

Forfusion is based on the Cobalt Business Park in North Tyneside and are experts at designing, implementing, and managing mission-critical IT infrastructure for large public and private sector companies. They approach every project meticulously, providing incredibly detailed solutions that identify issues before they arise.

They are second to none in their problem-solving capabilities and can assist in developing an IT strategy, deploying new infrastructure, or running existing systems 24x7x365.

Tired of unresponsive systems integrators? Considering a different type of Cisco Gold Partner that is agile and responsive? Need a safe and secure IT firm to look after your critical IT infrastructure?

Talk to the Forfusion team; they'll help you transform your business.

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“

*...We're
incredibly
proud to have
been awarded
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status...*

First impressions count...Part One

I was sat having lunch with a good friend the other day at Pink Lane Bakery in Jesmond (you have to go!) chatting through why I do what I do and why sales are the lifeblood of any business. He questioned why sales continue to have the negative association it so often does and why it remains a profession most stumble into rather than choose. My response was simple and candid – Sales has to be about solutions, relationships and personalisation.

Yet still so many continue to product-push and make their solutions force fit their prospects circumstances, send continuous personalised messages on LinkedIn, and almost get to the point of harassment in some cases. We are all trying to achieve more, develop more and hit the numbers, but we have to pause and think.

So, it would be remiss of me not to mention the impact that AI and Chat GPT are having on our industry, and I am all for simplification, automation and efficiency but we risk losing or damaging one key element in all of this.

Personalisation and Relationships

No eye rolls here, please. I am not naive enough to think that price etc doesn't play a part in the decision-making process, but I believe in discussing this with as many people as I do – that we simply don't take the time to personalise our communications and develop relationships like we once did. We do not take the time to truly consider what our prospects and customers require; we simply do not listen. We presume to know; we get ready to speak rather than listen and think we know best – but here's the thing.... We don't.

Sales is simple

You have to take the time to understand and be a signpost and solutions provider. I still come across far too many people in the industry today who are desperate to tell me all about their solutions before even asking what I need. I was at an exhibition the other day which consisted of c40 businesses



Jessica Williams

exhibiting and I was casually strolling down one of the aisles, coffee in hand. 12 of them thrust a business card or leaflet into my hand without even trying to engage in a conversation, 8 of them looked me up and down already deciding I wasn't a fit for them, 6 of them were on their phones and totally ignoring any form of engagement, two booths were empty, four were eating, one was vaping (don't ask!) and one was having a heated debate with his colleague.

First Impressions Count

We all operate at speed these days, to achieve more, to hit numbers, and to be as effective as we possibly can be at every minute of every hour. But slowing down and having more meaningful conversations, engaging with people, and taking the time to listen will actually have a much more profound impact on both your time and your prospects. We think about numbers, emails, calls, outbound, inbound, conversion rates and so on – as do I. But I also think about the value of relationships, retention, referrals, and reputation.

Professionalise Your Sales Reputation

So, answer this rather uncomfortable question for me, honestly.

How do you think your business is reflected when it comes to your sales provision?

Your customer service and salespeople can often be the first touchpoint your prospects have with your organisation. Is it a positive one? Is it a product-pushing exercise to hit the KPIs you've set or is it a meaningful engagement that forms the foundations of a long-term relationship, beneficial to all? Whether converted or not, that and every interaction matters. We are all brand ambassadors of the organisations we work for and every interaction we have online or in person matters.

My perception of the businesses that where

individuals vaping, on their phones or eating has been impacted. My perception of those who didn't take the time to get to know me or enquire as to my needs and just thrust their literature in my hand, has been affected. Was your business one of these? And if I made a judgement call, how many others did too?

What are the first impressions a prospect would have of your business and team?

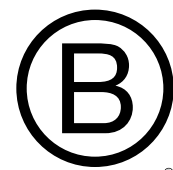
You have to invest in your team, continually train, upskill and develop them – we aren't all born with incredible interpersonal skills. Communication has become a lost art and one I am dedicated to reignite.

That's why three years ago we set out to professionalise the sales industry and to date have trained over 3000 individuals on customer service and sales skills. The Art of Communication has been our most popular session over the last few months. Working with SMEs across the UK from full training days, mentoring, coaching and development, we are passionate about professionalising your perception in the market.

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

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It's all about the SOLUTIONS...Part Two



Emma McDonald with Jessica Williams

‘Solutions Providers’ – so many of our websites say this phrase and like so many values companies claim to live by, they are just words. Inaccurate and possibly insulting if what your team and colleagues are doing is the exact opposite.

We rarely take the time to engage more than at a superficial level with our prospects and customers. We presume we know what they need. We continue to work transactionally. We fail to ask, to enquire, to ultimately care.

The question I regularly pose is ‘how well do you truly know your customers?’ The reason that brought them to you may not be the reason they stay. If your business has

changed, then the likelihood is that so has theirs.

So, have you adapted your offering?

Have you asked them about their future plans and looked at ways you can innovate to support them?

Have you added value?

We forget our existing customers and focus on the new opportunities when it comes to growth. Yet as I say and train people on, retention is everything. Customer Lifetime Value is key, understanding your customer and supporting them is crucial to your long-term sustainability.

Over the years, we’ve changed, adapted and amended our offering Starting life as sales consultancy, we listened to our customers and as a result, have evolved into a sales and marketing solutions provider. One size does not fit all and as such we now have a host of solutions developed on the back of customer feedback allowing us to innovate, capture new markets, retain customers and grow.

If you want to explore this further, we work with business owners and leaders to help decipher this through our mentoring and consultancy solutions. Or if you are looking for a solution to your sales and marketing as a whole – we have a ready-made team at Just Williams.

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

Jessica@JustWilliamsLtd.co.uk

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The Big Interview...

Making special days extra special

Unveiled Venues update- the perfect places for a perfect day.



Ellingham Hall



L:R Michael Patterson GM The Highlander, Lynn Sanderson, Group Sales & Marketing Manager, Anthony Hunter, Group Director, David Fordham-Scott, Group General Manager

As wedding venues go, multi award-winning Ellingham Hall in Northumberland rates as one of the most desirable places in the UK for a couple to enjoy their special day. The entire Hall and its picturesque grounds are exclusively yours to enjoy with your guests, for the duration of your stay.

Ellingham specialises in delivering an unforgettable two-night wedding experience which will also be embraced by their new luxurious venue, Lemmington Hall. Currently, Ellingham Hall caters for parties of 140-180 guests, while Lemmington will cater for more intimate weddings of between 80-100 guests.

Both properties come under the group name of Unveiled Venues...a company which was formed last year to bring Ellingham Hall and Lemmington Hall together under a single brand. Ellingham Hall has been owned by the company since 1995, while Lemmington was introduced early last year.

The Unveiled Venues portfolio has further expanded and now consists of three properties with the recent opening of The Highlander pub on the outskirts of Ponteland.

“The opening of The Highlander is part of the second phase in the growth of Unveiled Venues,” said Group Director, Anthony Hunter. “We bought The Highlander last year and immediately set about renovating it back to its former glory. The 18th century coaching inn has been stood empty since 2018, so it’s been a huge workload to get everything ready to finally welcome our first guests into what is now a stylish family gastro pub.

At Unveiled Venues, we don’t want to be a company that hosts weddings and then loses touch with our couples and their guests beyond the wedding celebration. We view The Highlander as a venture which can complement our exclusive use venues by providing a space to enjoy other lifetime celebrations such as birthdays and anniversaries. The Highlander also provides the wider community the chance to experience the great hospitality and superb attention to detail that our wedding couples and guests have enjoyed over the years.”



The Highlander Bar

The Highlander Ponteland





Ellingham hall - The Ceremony Room



Ellingham Hall - The Chapel



Lemmington Hall - The Grand Staircase



Lemmington Hall - The Forgotten Tower



Anthony Hunter

Anthony said that the team at Unveiled venues had leaned heavily on their experience in renovating and sympathetically updating heritage buildings interwoven with a modern-day luxury. Lemmington Hall is currently being refurbished and will be ready to welcome its first wedding party in summer 2024. It has already taken bookings and once work is complete, it will be a truly stunning place for couples to exclusively enjoy their special day.

The Highlander opened its doors last month and is receiving fantastic feedback from diners about their quality food and welcoming service. They will be releasing their Christmas menu soon and it's worth keeping an eye on the Unveiled Venues group website for news and events such as wedding open days at both their stunning Halls along with upcoming Christmas events at the pub.

Contact the team at Unveiled Venues via their website www.unveiledvenues.co.uk or call 01665 568 118.

Lemmington Hall





Summer sizzler for the inaugural CYBER CUP™ at Close House

The region's leading tech provider CMYK | Business Technology were delighted to welcome their clients, partners, and guests to their annual summer golf day at Close House.

The weather and course conditions were superb as Team Spoofing and Team Phishing went head-to-head in the match play event. The day concluded with a delicious Close House signature BBQ, refreshments and a prize giving.

Craig Pratt, regional sales director at CMYK commented; 'Massive thank you to our clients, partners, and guests for attending our annual summer golf day and the launch of the CYBER CUP™ – we couldn't have wished for better weather. Huge thanks for your continued support throughout 2023 it's truly amazing and we are extremely grateful. Special thanks to our client and partner Close House for being the first class host venue. Congratulations Team Spoofing for winning the inaugural CYBER CUP and well done to all the other prize winners - we look forward to welcoming you all back very soon.'







“

...It really is fantastic to be able to help so many businesses in our region...

Joanne Whitfield

Straight talking funding solutions

Loans of £100,000 up to £7 million to help businesses grow. Taking a business forward and securing its future is very rewarding but it involves a great deal of hard work and money.

The hard work is down to you, but accessing finance can often be the sticking point. Like most financial matters in life, it can be difficult to know where to turn. There are various options available but finding the right one can be tricky.

As one of the UK's largest regional fund managers, FW Capital is in a great position to help. Their team has strong track record of providing flexible finance to dynamic businesses in the North of England across various funds under their management.

To date 12,000 jobs have been created and safeguarded because of funding from FW Capital, with a total impact of over £600m. This has significantly boosted the economy and local communities, backing over 730 businesses with their growth plans since the launch of the Funds in 2010.

Leading from the front at FW Capital is Fund Director, Joanne Whitfield.

"FW Capital is celebrating a key milestone after investing approaching £300m of funding to businesses across the North of England," said Jo. "It really is fantastic to be able to help so many businesses in our region. This is something I'm passionate about because I'm from the North East and I want to help businesses in the place that I call home. SMEs are the lifeblood of the economy here in the North East and their funding needs can be diverse. We offer solutions to fill gaps in the market and have three funds under management to support ambitious businesses. These are NPIF - FW Capital Debt Finance which is part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund, the North East Property Fund and the North East Commercial Property Investment Fund, both of which are backed by the North East LEP.

Through NPIF - FW Capital Debt Finance Businesses can access loans of £100,000 to £750,000 to established SME businesses based in the North of England - these areas include the Tees Valley. We provide finance to established businesses with ambitions to grow.

Thanks to the 'Levelling Up' initiative, the market is buoyant and whilst there are clear challenges in the economy, companies are looking to push ahead, but many of them need support. We're seeing some great opportunities across the region.

An example is Teesside-based construction management firm Wade Construction Management Consultants who has been enjoying fast growth after recording a nearly threefold increase in sales in the last two financial years and expanding its skilled workforce from four to 31 at over 11 UK sites. The firm is focused on further growth after securing a six-figure investment from NPIF - FW Capital Debt Finance.

The North East is a great place to live and work and is a fertile patch for people and firms that want to move on, they're strong and full of enthusiasm and shouldn't be held back."

In 2017 we launched the North East Property Fund with the North East LEP which offers short-term loans to businesses in the Tyne & Wear, Northumberland, and Co. Durham area from £250,000 up to £2 million. The fund is a response to strong demand from smaller construction and property development companies who have struggled to access development finance. We have funded schemes totalling £48m to date with many more enquiries coming through.

We're also really proud to have launched the North East Commercial Property Investment Fund with the North East LEP earlier this year, which provides loans from £1million to £7million for speculative and non-speculative developments with repayment terms available up to five years. The £35m fund, will run for 15 years. We want to address a gap in the market and facilitate the delivery of new commercial property development projects that support employment creation and economic growth in the North East LEP area. The £35m will provide £119m of investment over the lifetime of the fund after repayments are recycled into new schemes. We've already done our first deal providing over £1m to support a couple of industrial units in Durham.

Interest in the North East Commercial Property Fund has been strong and we've had over £100m worth of enquires which shows the level of demand.

This is testament to the resilience of the North East property sector. We're seeing increased demand, with lots of great things coming out of the region. Dynamic and ambitious developments are coming to the fore, and we're delighted to help fund them.

And it's about more than funding to us, we will do our utmost to help businesses and individuals develop, be successful, and to add to the rejuvenation of the North East."

If you want to find out how you can tap into this potential funding please contact Jo and her team at FW Capital. They can help and point you in the right direction using their understanding and experience.

***Call 0191 269 6969 or email info@fwcapital.co.uk
You'll also find additional details on their website www.fwcapital.co.uk***

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schemes



Mixed use
schemes



New office, industrial
and warehouse
developments



Phased
developments

We offer loans:

- > from £1million to £7 million
- > terms of up to five years
- > for speculative and non-speculative schemes

Funding is available to construction companies and property developers* looking to build projects in the seven local authority areas of the North East:

Northumberland • County Durham • Gateshead • Newcastle upon Tyne • North Tyneside • South Tyneside • Sunderland

*The developer doesn't have to be based in the region, as long as the project is.

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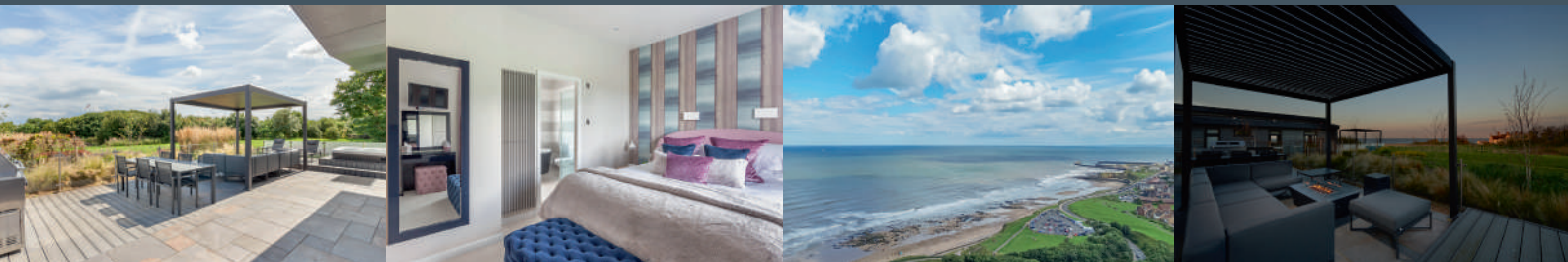
North East
Local Enterprise Partnership 

North East
Commercial Property
Investment Fund

Property of the Month



The Residences at Seaham Hall, Seaham, Co. Durham



Guide Price: £695,000

Positioned within the delightful landscaped grounds of the prestigious Seaham Hall Hotel, are five luxury detached Residences set on a stunning cliff top location overlooking the Durham coastline and towards Seaham Beach below. Open 365 days a year, with 24 hour security and access to the beautiful 37 acre grounds, owners of The Residences will have the benefit of utilising the magnificent facilities of the hotel, including its award winning Serenity Spa and restaurant, as well as being entitled to perks such as 20% discount on food and four Serenity Spa memberships. Each high specification residence offers two or three bedrooms and two bathrooms and the purchaser can choose to rent it out all of the time or for just a few weeks of the year, or alternatively use it themselves. Owners of The Residences must have another permanent address where they pay council tax.

Tenure: Leasehold

Contact Sanderson Young on 0191 213 0033 julie.summerbell@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk





WHY BUY A NEW HOME?

As we enter a more unpredictable property market following two years of significant inflation in asking prices and buyer demand post-lockdown, more buyers are assessing their needs much more rigorously. The appeal to “future-proof” their home with lower energy costs, less maintenance and refurbishment has resulted in many selecting a new build home as their preferred option.

So, what are the benefits of buying new?

Everything in the property is fresh, bright, clean and a blank canvas ready for you to make a home. They enable you to inject your own style and personality, rather than live with someone else’s choices.

New Homes are built to the latest environmental standards, and can be up to 6 times more energy efficient than second hand homes. The benefits to the environment are significant, with around 60% less CO² emissions generated by new buildings. Additionally, this upgraded energy efficiency can positively impact your pocket, with latest figures showing a reduction in average annual utility bills by more than £500.

New Homes are ready to move into as soon as the transaction completes, allowing purchasers greater flexibility and no waiting for owners to move out or find somewhere suitable. This removes the upper chain to your purchase, enabling you to have greater certainty that the sale will not fall through and you can work to appropriate timescales.

All new build homes available through Sanderson Young come with an insurance-backed 10 year structural warranty, which gives homeowners peace of mind and no additional unexpected costs for renovations or repairs.

New Homes are built in line with current safety standards, relating to every aspect of construction – covering their structure,

insulation, wiring and fire safety. This means new homeowners can enjoy their new home stress-free.

New developments offer a great opportunity to be part of a new community. As most purchasers all move in around the same time, everyone is in the same position and new friendships are often made. This community effect can then, in turn, also result in improvements to local amenities including schools, shops and leisure facilities.

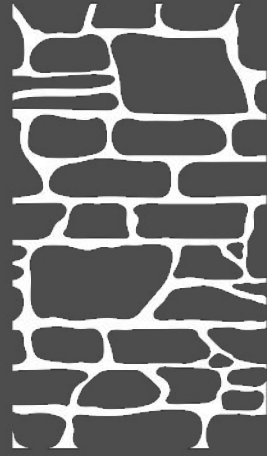
At Sanderson Young we aim to curate a selection of high quality, unique developments throughout the region, advising our developer clients from the earliest planning stages of a scheme with layouts, house types, design and specifications so that we ensure what is being built is exactly what our clients want. Details are important to us, as they are to the developers we forge relationships with.

As such, we are proud to showcase some upcoming developments we have been working on for quite some time and what we believe constitute some of the best new build residential property in the region.

Our New Homes Hub, positioned on Gosforth High Street, is the best place to start your search for a new home. Visit our friendly team who can talk to you about what a new home can offer you, as well as showcasing our current developments available or coming soon to the North East.

Amy Brice MRICS
Regional Residential Surveyor

Sanderson Young’s New Homes Hub
1-3 Hawthorn Road, Gosforth
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CountyLife Homes have an enviable reputation for high quality, executive homes of distinction throughout the North East and Hillhead will provide a stylish mix of 3, 4 & 5 bedroom semi-detached and detached homes for a range of budgets.

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To register your interest please contact our New Homes Hub on:



0191 213 0033

www.sandersonyoung.co.uk





STABLE

PARK SQUARE



Four luxury detached homes within a gated parkland in Whickham.



For more information please contact Sanderson Young's New Homes Hub on 0191 213 0033 | newhomes@sandersonyoung.co.uk



How to be a better man

The Better Man Project is a men's movement started by coach and therapist Phil Airson and Dr. Richard Harkness, to help men save their marriage, connect with their family and enjoy the life they have built.

To put it simply "Fix your marriage, find yourself". Today's world demands unchallenged toughness from men, where your worth as a man is measured by how much pain you can suffer and how silent you can be about it. We want to ask you, who are you having real conversations with?

We're talking about level 3 conversations, not level 1 which you have with a stranger or 2 with family or mates down the pub, we mean the kind where you share your fears and mistakes, your relationship struggles and your dreams for the future. Who are you talking to about being a man when your relationship is on the line?

Research in 2023 revealed that three-quarters of all suicides in the UK are men and it is the leading cause of death for males under 45.

Three-quarters of unattended funerals in the UK (where not even family attends) are men and over 80% of men report not having anyone in their life who regularly asks how they are.

We have been conditioned to believe 'real men' don't talk, they endure. It leads to stubborn standoffs with our friends and family, a "well they don't organise anything or reach out to me so I won't to them" mentality. Where does it lead? See the stats above.

I clearly remember the day I lost my best friend to suicide at 18. He was a bright-eyed, loving lad brimming with humour and creativity. However, when his family moved away and started separating, he didn't have anywhere to talk and didn't know how to talk. When they told me he'd died I had no one to talk to and didn't know how.

In the world of business leadership, we noticed a disturbing pattern. Successful men were throwing themselves into their work, they were becoming their business and losing themselves. They made financial success but behind closed doors, their relationships were crumbling. They hardly knew their children yet they clung to the idea if they endured and just provided then they got to go home and be loved and respected. It doesn't work like that. On paper, their life looks great but they don't feel it, the guilt of that turns them to sedation through drink, drugs, affairs or more work. The family falls apart.

Since becoming fathers, we saw the importance of the phrase "What you don't take on, you pass on" and committed to creating a course and a space for guys to finally tackle what is holding

them back from passionate loving relationships with their families and enjoying their lives.

The sad truth is, if you don't tackle these things your little ones are watching how you deal with the problems and it is why so many follow in their parent's footsteps.

I encourage you not to wait until the doomsday event, too many men have joined our project only when they get home to a note on the kitchen table saying their partner is leaving them. They saw all the warning signs telling them of a waterfall ahead but they just stayed in the boat and now they're falling.

There is another way, we have created a course that gives you simple actionable steps to start reconnecting with your partner, discovering passion and intimacy, being a superhero to your kids and most importantly connecting with yourself so you can be proud of the man you see in the mirror.

I'll be honest what we do isn't for everyone, it is for the committed man, the man who wants to be a leader in their lives as well as business. You need an open mind to create change.

It is time to break free from the shackles of silence and step into owning your authentic self. It is time to save your relationship and rediscover the love and connection that truly makes life worth living.

I hope we get to talk soon.

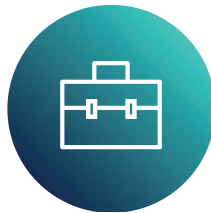
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James Carss

The Recruiter

In the first of a new series of articles, Graham Courtney spoke to James Carss, Managing Director at NRG.

Square pegs, square holes – no hammer required!

No matter what shape your requirement, NRG Recruitment will find a perfect fit.

When it comes to recruiting, you can't beat experience.

Take NRG Recruitment in Newcastle for example. They started life in 1976 as Geordie Job Finders. Since then, the company has steadily grown and is now recognised as one of the leading recruitment agencies in the country.

The majority of their recruitment is located here in the North East, placing talent into some of the most sought-after roles in Tech, Digital Marketing, HR&D, Accountancy & Finance and Business Support. Northern Recruitment Group, more commonly known as NRG, also has an Executive Search and Selection team who work with clients to deliver Senior Leadership, Board, Non-Executive Director and Chair appointments.

They recognise that exceptional employees are the driving force behind every successful organisation, and work hard to place great people in great businesses, ensuring a technical, cultural and behavioural fit every time.

Which is where experience really counts because NRG will quickly recognise what you're looking for and, crucially, they know how to find it.

Take Managing Director James Carss for example. He worked closely with the company's founder Lorna Moran before moving abroad to work in Hong Kong and Canada for the next 15 years...all of them in recruitment.

"It was a fascinating time for me because I saw how the recruitment process operates in different countries but also realised that a lot of those processes would apply to the UK," said James. "I always kept in touch with Lorna and she eventually persuaded me to return to Newcastle and rejoin the company as a director which, by then, was now known as NRG. I became the MD in 2021, at the mid-point of COVID. Needless to say that overnight the recruitment landscape changed dramatically...and that change is continuing thanks to new work practices and the rise of new industries, especially those in the digital field. But one thing hasn't changed, and that is NRG's rich heritage in the recruitment industry and an unrivalled reputation for our in-depth market insight and solution-focused capabilities UK-wide."

It's interesting to see how NRG has developed to become more focussed on working to find recruits at executive and board level. This was always a strong area for NRG so they've built upon that success and now work extensively filling roles at mid to senior level including CEO, CFO and MD.

"The fields of IT and Digital are a particularly strong area for us at NRG," adds James. "The North East has become a hub for start-up IT businesses, digital marketing, computer game design and development, and our recruitment expertise reflects that while continuing to be strong in recruitment for traditional roles like finance and HR. We're also seeing what we call boomerang recruitment. This is when we bring talent back to the North East. I suppose that I'm a classic example having been born and bred in the North East, worked abroad and in London for 15 years, but came home in 2016."

Oh...and talking of home...NRG has a new home. They've recently moved from their offices in the centre of Newcastle to the Quorum Business Park in Longbenton. It gives more space to their 70 staff, the majority of whom have now returned to full time office work rather than working from home. Recruitment is a people business and NRG have shown that when people mix in an office, ideas and contacts spread quickly...especially when you have an experienced team who can help.

It's also worth pointing out that while NRG specialises in finding talent to fill particular roles...in other words, if a company is looking to appoint someone, all they need to do is contact NRG and let them do the searching for you...but In 2017 NRG launched the volume recruitment side of the business as a separate brand called greenbean.

Greenbean operates as an in-house recruitment agency for those firms looking to fill multiple roles on a regular basis.

NRG still represents the client but on smaller, often very specialised recruitment requirements.

So, do you need help with your recruitment?

The best idea is to speak to James and the team at NRG. They've got the experience to quickly set wheels in motion. They may even have someone on their books who can step into the role you're looking for at short notice.

NRG...finding the perfect fit for your recruitment requirements.

Call 0191 232 1222 or email contactus@nrgplc.com

You can also pop into their offices at Neon, Quorum Business Park, NE12 8BU



DT LPG Technology’s growth plans cooking on gas with five-figure North East fund investment

A specialist County Durham engineering contractor is to double its turnover by expanding across the UK and Europe after securing a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

DT LPG Technology specialises in the installation, repair, testing and maintenance of telemetry and monitoring systems used in the liquified petroleum gas (LPG) sector, and is already the biggest telemetry installation specialist in the LPG industry.

The Stanley-headquartered firm has worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in a £50,000 investment which will give it the resources to continue to grow and develop the business into other industries that require telemetry systems.

It is expecting to add at least five new recruits to its existing team of fifteen engineers in the first instance and is looking to increase its presence within the UK, Ireland and mainland Europe.

It is also now looking to expand the volume of preventative management and maintenance work that it carries out on clients’ telemetry systems.



equiwatt reaches £2m funding milestone

equiwatt, the North East-based energy management company, has secured an additional £300,000 investment to support the continued roll-out of its technology platform that helps consumers shift energy, lower their carbon footprint and save money during their peak time events.

The funding has been secured from the North East Venture Fund (NEVF), supported by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Mercia Ventures. This boost in support comes ahead of equiwatt taking part in the National Grid’s Demand Flexibility Service (DFS) as an approved and certified provider/partner of National Grid Electricity System Operator (ESO) Ltd, for the second time, this winter.

The funding, which will create four new jobs, is the third round from the NEVF and Mercia, which first invested in the company at its inception in 2020 and brings the total raised by equiwatt to more than £2m, which includes around £800,000 in grants.

RGCF continues to grow with its latest Corporate Finance appointment

RG Corporate Finance (RGCF) has announced the appointment of Euan Mulholland as a Corporate Finance Executive.

Having graduated from Darlington’s Carmel College in the summer of 2019, Euan subsequently joined global advisory firm PwC as an Associate, later advancing to Senior Associate, which is where he qualified as a ICAEW Chartered Accountant.

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

This has resulted in RGCF advising on a number of significant transactions, including advising on the sale of RHII to Mitie Plc, the sale of Hamond Chemicals to Euston Capital, MAPD Groups acquisition of law firm, THW, the sale of Calibrate to RSK, to name only a few.

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





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Efficiently managing your VAT liabilities to improve cashflow



For some businesses VAT and indirect taxes are an ever-increasing burden. The associated rules and procedures are regularly evolving, making the tax progressively more complex.

At a rate of 20%, VAT is a significant business outlay and can have a big impact on cashflow. However, businesses can take a number of actions to ensure their VAT position is optimised and subsequently improve cashflow.

Some of these actions are explored below by Azets, the UK top 10 accountancy firm.

VAT registration

Any UK business with an annual turnover of more than £85,000 is required to register for VAT. However, in some cases it may be preferable to register sooner. Being VAT registered can provide:

- A perceived reputational benefit from being a VAT registered organisation.
- The advantage of being able to claim back the VAT incurred on expenses from HMRC. In some cases this could be before the purchase invoice needs to be paid.
- The ability to apply for the Cash Accounting Scheme and other margin schemes. These schemes allow businesses to account for VAT at the point of payment rather than invoice date. They remove any cashflow disadvantage created by late payments. To be eligible, a business must have a VAT taxable turnover of £1.35 million or less.

Manage your VAT liabilities efficiently

VAT returns

To accelerate VAT repayments from HMRC, it may be worth changing from quarterly submissions to monthly returns. It's important that the business has the necessary resource in place to be able to comply with the increased number of returns.

VAT accounting schemes

HMRC offer a number of accounting schemes that are designed to help smaller businesses pay less

VAT or pay it later. These include the standard VAT accounting scheme, Cash Accounting Scheme (as mentioned above), Annual Accounting Scheme and Flat Rate Scheme.

While standard VAT accounting is the most common method, the Flat Rate Scheme is often chosen by small businesses as it is less cumbersome from an administration perspective.

Sector specific opportunities

Businesses in the hotel, construction, financial and retail sectors can benefit from VAT opportunities that apply to their activities. Retrospective reclaims can be made for a period of up to four years. The opportunities include the VAT treatment of cancellation charges, construction services, fund management fees, vouchers and delivery charges.

Bad debt relief claims

If payments for supplies of goods or services aren't received after six months businesses can claim back the VAT declared and paid on sales from HMRC. Specific conditions need to be met but this can be a good way of recouping some important funds.

It's important to note that the VAT recovered on unpaid purchases is also repayable to HMRC under the same rules.

Annual adjustments

Businesses that generate income that is exempt from VAT (those in the financial, insurance, healthcare, property sectors, to name a few) or have activities that are classified as being non-business (provided for free) are required to perform VAT partial exemption and non-business calculations to confirm the value of VAT they can claim back from HMRC.

They are also required to perform annual adjustment calculations to 'average' their recovery over each 12 month period. This can result in additional repayments or payments of VAT from or to HMRC. It also provides an opportunity to reflect on the overall VAT position and to make refinements that can result in savings or efficiencies.

Adjustments need to be included on VAT returns for the June/July/August VAT periods - depending on when VAT returns are submitted to HMRC. Adjustments can also affect expenditure that is subject to the capital goods scheme, and once again additional repayments or payments of VAT may be due from or to HMRC.

Avoiding late payment penalties

It's a fairly obvious point, but it is still a regular occurrence for businesses to fall into the late VAT payment category. A new points-based regime was introduced in January 2023, which was largely welcomed as it is seen as a fairer penalty scheme. A £200 financial penalty still exists for repeat offenders when the specified number of points are accrued.

The following points are worth considering as a way of avoiding or reducing a late payment penalty:

- Introducing a direct debit arrangement with HMRC which allows them to collect VAT at a designated time.
- As penalties are charged according to the VAT owed at the end of days 15 and 30 making part payments could be beneficial - if the full payment cannot be made.

If you are experiencing payment issues, our Banking & Finance specialists can assist with a funding service to allow you to cover the cost of your taxes for up to 12 months. Through this tax funding plan, there is the ability to spread the tax liability, preserve cashflow, prevent HMRC late payment charges and ultimately ensure peace of mind.

Calls for reinstatement of OTS

The Office of Tax Simplification (OTS) was abolished as part of September 2022's mini-Budget, but there have been repeated calls for this to be reconsidered.

VAT, like all aspects of tax, can be complicated, and an independent body could play an important part in helping tackle the paperwork burden businesses are facing. Despite some headway being made by Government in the likes of customs procedures, an organisation dedicated to simplifying tax could help make progress in this area with a greater chance of success.

We are here to help

If you have any questions on managing your VAT liabilities or need to discuss your particular circumstances, please get in touch with a member of our specialist VAT team or contact us at hello@azets.co.uk

Information correct at time of publishing, but may be subject to change in future. 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.



Chris Moir of
RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

Is there value in making a voluntary tax disclosure to HMRC?

By Chris Moir, Associate Director and Head of Personal Tax at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd

It is well-known that HMRC have ramped up the number of tax investigations being launched in recent years.

However, what seems lesser known, and is perhaps more surprising, is that the number of voluntary tax disclosures also continues to rise.

HMRC are not shy in letting people know that they have the means and resources to pull data from a vast amount of sources including Companies House, banks and letting agencies whilst cross-checking self-assessment tax returns.

Agreements in place to exchange information with overseas tax jurisdictions, as well as a sustained effort to increase public awareness of high-profile tax compliance issues and tax evasion cases, have all contributed to HMRC's continuing drive to narrow the 'tax gap' which arises partly from taxpayer error or non-disclosure.

But whilst the threat of HMRC catching up with those individuals who do not have their tax affairs up to date exists, there is always the option to make a voluntary disclosure of outstanding liabilities to HMRC.

A voluntary disclosure, unprompted by HMRC, serves as an opportunity for individuals to rectify an incorrect or overdue tax declaration and put their affairs in order.

But what is the value of making a voluntary disclosure?

If you decide to disclose all of your incorrect or undisclosed tax issues voluntarily, it will put you in a better position with HMRC from the off. Unless you have a 'reasonable excuse' for the error or non-disclosure, then HMRC will charge a tax-geared penalty in addition to the tax due, as well as interest. Such penalties are reduced when a disclosure is made voluntarily and you are fully compliant throughout the process.

HMRC may not dig as deeply into your case as they would have had they opened the investigation themselves and at the very least it will bring you peace of mind knowing that your tax matters are up to date.

So where do I start?

A voluntary disclosure can be made via HMRC's Digital Disclosure Service, which is an online service that allows individuals to complete their disclosure from start to finish, in many cases without even the need to speak to someone at HMRC. Where a disclosure relates to non-UK income and gains, the Worldwide Disclosure Facility (also online) must be used.

Whether the disclosure relates to UK or non-UK income or gains, the processes are similar and involve the following:

- Notifying HMRC that you want to make a disclosure.
- Receiving confirmation and a registration number from HMRC.
- Telling HMRC what went wrong and why the mistakes or omissions were made.
- Calculating how much tax, interest and penalties are due.
- Letting HMRC check the disclosure.
- Reaching a formal agreement.

As there are many factors to consider, if you are in position where you feel you need to make a disclosure you should speak to your professional advisors as soon as possible. Tax investigations are often complex, timely and expensive. An expert will help to determine the best course of action and guide you through the process.

For further information or advice on managing HMRC investigations, making a disclosure or all other aspects of personal taxation, please contact Chris Moir at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors via chris.moir@r-m-t.co.uk or on 0191 256 9500.



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In conversation with...



Dan Cooper

Dan Cooper

Partner, Rycroft Glenton

What were your career ambitions growing up?

Very different to what they are now! Growing up my absolute focus was on building a basketball career. Having played from the age of 12, both locally and nationally, to being linked with the “original” Newcastle Eagles Academy, I felt that I lost my passion for the game and decided to become an accountant!

I didn’t realise I was inspired by business or that there was any form of entrepreneur in me, however, on commencing my accountancy studies (AAT and ACA), I quickly realised that the hunger for the business and finance worlds was indeed in me.

Tell us about your current role?

I am one of thirteen Partners and Head of Outsourced | FD at Rycroft Glenton (RG), offering strategic advice to business owners. Starting Outsourced | FD (as an idea), my focus and mission was to introduce a finance and advisory based service to SMEs, supporting them in various roles, on an outsourced basis. My core aim is to support businesses on their own journey and help them achieve their goals, while in turn I am achieving mine.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Becoming a Partner in RG certainly is up there, but it must be Outsourced | FD being recognised as one of RGs core services and becoming its 7th Service Line. Looking back and reflecting on the

journey over the last five years (we celebrated our 5th year in April of this year), it is extremely rewarding to see how we are now servicing so many clients, how we have grown the team from zero to nine and how we are now building a presence nationally.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

The role of the “accountant” I feel has significantly changed into that of a “business advisor”, (part of the reason *Outsourced | FD* was launched). Outsourcing is becoming more and more favoured, not only finance but all areas of business, such as marketing/PR support. These are all roles that require specialists and generally for SMEs are not full-time roles.

Technology has also been a significant factor in driving the changes our industry has seen. Business can utilise the power of technology and AI to drive processes and delivery output, enabling them to drive the business forward – it is a key focus area in our service delivery to ensure clients receive accurate and real-time data for strategic decision making.

What are you currently working on?

I am currently focusing on the future of *Outsourced | FD* and preparing a strategic plan for the next two years to ensure we achieve the same success and growth we have over the last five years. This will focus on our core areas of delivery, expansion of the team and further enhancements through technology.

Tell us about the team you work with?

In short, they are GREAT! Having increased the headcount from four to nine in the last 12 months, the connection and collaboration across the

team is exceptional. We would not be able service our clients without them and their passion and commitment for what we do allows us to deliver an outstanding service to our clients - it is just a real pleasure to work with them every day.

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

Although not direct advice given to me, but more of a mindset to always have in you:

Michael Jordan's Secret To Success: “I’ve missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games...I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed.” Not that I have failed this many times!

Kobe Bryant's Mamba Mentality: “A constant quest to become the best version of one’s self”.

What has been your biggest challenge?

I would probably say, recruitment. The candidate market over the last couple of years has been the toughest I have seen it in all my years of working.

How do you unwind outside of work?

It has to be family time, with our two Golden Retrievers, Boe and Maggie and also being a foodie, working our way round Michelin Star restaurants (without the dogs!).

Favourite Book and Boxset?

I have never really been a book person, although I am currently listening to *Happy Sexy Millionaire*, by Steven Bartlett. I am also a regular listener to his *Diary of a CEO*, Podcast. Favourite boxset – it has to be *Suits* – fourth time round, it is still just as good!

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“

*...the calibre
of these
companies is
growing year
on year...*

Andrew Marsh

Hints, Tips, Commendations and Celebrations

Having just completed the judging of three categories for the Great British Entrepreneur Awards, Andrew Marsh has compiled some of his thoughts on the impressions that the entries made on him.

Having been an award winner himself, and a judge for over five years, Andrew uses his experience as a NED, entrepreneur, trustee, chair, Vistage chair, business mentor and coach to evaluate what success looks like.

He said: "Each year I am asked to judge different categories and this year it was Scale Up Entrepreneur, Start Up Entrepreneur and Service Industries Entrepreneur Awards for North East, Yorkshire and Humberside in the GBEA's. The first thing that struck me was how the calibre of these companies is growing year on year. Those who made the shortlist totally deserve to be there but there are some that should be there and aren't.

"First it only seems right to celebrate some of those that did get shortlisted from our own region.

"Scale Up Entrepreneur of the Year, sponsored by BDB Pitmans, sees six really strong contenders, including Dr Emma Black from Cascade Cash Management, Simon Moyle from Vivup and Mark Pepper from Carlton Forest Group. These, and the other finalists, all demonstrated succinctly in their application how they are driving their organisations effort to be recognised as scaling by focusing on the future in a clear, strategic way.

"The Service Industries Entrepreneur category also saw some impressive entries with six shortlists making the grade due to the quality of services they provided. With names like Louise Kennedy of Oculus HR and Helen Shinner from 1st for EPA in the mix, it will be an interesting final for our region. There was a real demonstration on linking what they do to the challenges their customers are facing to drive real value.

"Lisa Eaton of Fabric, Sarah Yorke of Stylebook Directory; and Lucy Malarkey and Karen Faulkner of Positive About Inclusion CIC are three of the six shortlisted for Start-up Entrepreneur. What struck me about this category is that as well as being very impressive start ups, they also have great purpose. And demonstrating that purpose as a passion, as a driver for success, is a great way to grow.

"It is, of course, worth remembering that although these companies are shortlisted for our region, the GBEA awards are on a national basis, and so they move forwards to represent us on that national stage – good luck all!

"In judging the awards, it got me thinking why people enter and why some of those that do, stand out from the rest. So why enter awards?

For me there are three core reasons. Firstly, it's a celebration of the journey you have just been on. As I say to my Vistage Groups, smell the roses while you can! We are always looking ahead and we sometimes need to just celebrate the journey so far. Secondly, being on a regional and national stage, in this way, does help your brand without doubt. Customers, Suppliers and Employees all want to work with other successful leaders and businesses. Thirdly, getting peer recognition for you and your teams' efforts will re-invigorate energies for the next stage of the journey. It can be a hard slog and getting that external validation for what you are doing is right is so motivating.

Having said that there are a lot of awards out there, so pick wisely. They do take time and energy. "Awards can be costly by the time you buy the event tickets, host a table, travel to the presentation night etc, so the ends have to be justified by the means. A cabinet of awards mean nothing when your company is failing financially.

"So back to our finalists, what did they do well, that grabbed my attention as a judge? Their entries were clear, concise, passionate, showing the personal impact and growth, but most of all, they answered the questions properly. Sounds simple right? Year on year I see amazing applications from companies, but their entries aren't as stand out as others as they try and put too much in, complicated for a judge to use, show off too much (it is a balance) so it real? and they fail to give the evidence that's needed. I have seen some recently using AI – that's whole different story!

"With all that in mind, I'd like to close by wishing every luck at the GBEA's and leave you with my best five tips on how to impress a judge.

- Ensure to always answer the specific question, clearly and within word count.
- Be aware of the criteria and provide specific information requested.
- Avoid cliqued responses and ensure you demonstrate/evidence your statements.
- Be transparent and honest. Include fails as well as successes – resilience is always admired.
- Pitch to awards that will impact your business positively.

"Taking these tips should help with future entries but of you have any questions or need any points clarifying, do get in touch with me. I'd also like to hear any of your tips which have proved winning ideas for you!"

The GBEAs have been Supporting & Championing Entrepreneurs For Over A Decade. Francesca James, GBEA founder said: "As well as being the Grammys of Entrepreneurship, according to former winner Stephen Bartlett, The Great British Entrepreneur Awards has also now become a community of amazing entrepreneurs and their business across all industries, at all stages, representing every corner of Great Britain.

Andrew can be contacted on andrew@marshbusinesstransformation.co.uk



Record number of trainees take up roles with Armstrong Watson

Fifty one trainees and graduates have taken up their new roles at Armstrong Watson as the firm continues its commitment to investing in young people.

Among the new starters are 17 AAT students and two ATT students who will be working towards their apprenticeship qualifications in accounting and tax compliance. There are also 28 ACA graduates who will work towards becoming Chartered Accountants. In addition, the firm has recruited two ACCA students in Restructuring and Insolvency as well as two payroll apprentices.

Based at the firm's offices across the north of England and Scotland, the trainees and graduates will receive hands-on experience throughout their studies as they work towards their qualifications.

Richard Andrew, Partner and Head of Accounting, said: "We continue to invest in our training programme every year and develop talented accountants of the future. I'm so proud of the training, support and development our students receive from our dedicated training manager Karen Blaylock and really believe our programme, and the experience our trainees receive, is unrivalled in the sector."

CEO and Managing Partner Paul Dickson said: "Our people are our business as without them we would be unable to provide solutions for our clients. Our training programme provides us with an incredible pool of talent, many of which go on to have successful careers within the business."

Armstrong Watson is now on the lookout for its 2024 intake of ACA trainee Chartered Accountants, with positions available at six of the firm's offices across the north of England and Scotland. To apply visit: www.armstrongwatson.co.uk/careers/graduates-under-graduates.

In addition, the firm's programme for school leavers seeking high-end apprenticeships in accounting will be opening soon across all locations.



Accountancy staff smash three peaks challenge and raise over £1k for charity

Employees from Jesmond and Durham-based Robson Laidler Accountants have conquered the Yorkshire Three Peaks challenge whilst raising over £1000 for its Community Fund, which supports charitable projects across the North East.

A total of 10 staff plus six clients embarked upon the formidable challenge (on 2nd September), taking on the three highest peaks in the Yorkshire Dales National Park; Pen-y-ghent, Whernside and Ingleborough, a 24-mile, 5000ft elevation route, which they all completed within a 12-hour period.

Director Martin Wardle who completed the challenge said: "Despite training for months ahead of the day itself The Yorkshire Three Peaks was both physically and mentally demanding, yet our team embraced everything that was thrown at them - from hiking in 24 degrees heat to blisters and sore knees and everyone completed it, which I am so proud of.

"It was a great way to build camaraderie amongst team members and for our staff to connect with our clients; as what better way to get to know one other than a 12-hour walk up three mountains!

"We are now contemplating our next challenge to raise even more money for our Community Fund. We are proud to be an accredited B Corp, which means our business is on a continual journey to be a force for good. The Robson Laidler Community Fund ensures we're looking after community commitments long-term. During this challenge we managed to raise a total of £1045."



Lucy Elliott joins WilliamsAli Corporate Finance

Fast-growing WilliamsAli Corporate Finance has added one of the best-known names in the region's corporate finance sector to its team.

Lucy Elliott joins WilliamsAli as Associate Director to reinforce its continuing reputation as a leading provider of specialist dealmaking expertise in the region's M&A landscape.

As one of the region's most highly regarded corporate finance specialists Lucy has nearly 20 years of experience in providing lead advisory work across a broad range of sectors. She has been involved in a vast number of high-profile, complex deals during her career.

She moves to the award-winning, corporate finance specialists at a time of strong progress for the firm, which was founded by Abu Ali and Phil Williams in 2019, and continues its commitment to senior-level recruitment and a growing client base.



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David Hughes



Peter Neal

Attracting the right talent

Peter Neal of The Experience Bank Group is bringing a fixed fee solution to charities in the North East region that are looking for new leadership talent. He believes it is crucial to have the right people appointed in the right way in positions of strategy and decision making, such as CEOs and board members.

Here he talks about how charities can assist that process by making themselves appealing to attract the right talent.

“The first key to attracting the right talent at a leadership level is knowing what you need from them. If you can demonstrate confidence that you are clear in your skills matrix and a specific role entails, what you want in a person and why, you are more likely to attract someone who can fill that criteria.

“I always recommend to charitable clients that they adopt a transparent approach, and demonstrate that they are welcoming to diversity and passionate about promoting inclusion. Make yourself appealing to all cultures, younger ages and show respect for the knowledge of older generations. That will open a bigger pool of candidates and attract people with good ethics, as did you know that even though more than half of current trustees believe greater diversity on charity boards will enhance effectiveness research still shows that an uncomfortably large percentage are still recruited by friends or acquaintances, failing to ensure diversity in voluntary sector leadership. This way the only fish that available to you are

those already in your pond.

“This fact should encourage you to have a good recruitment process, demonstrate your ability to cast a wide net and use a reputable recruiter who the right level of candidates will trust the judgement of. This will attract a stronger level of candidate who can see you firstly value your principles and secondly, that the future of the organisation is truly important to you.

“Whilst as a charity it is important all the time, particularly in the run up to any high-level recruitment campaign it is essential to have good communications and strong marketing, as well as making sure your website is up to date and representative and your social media is current and populated. If this is an area you need a trustee to support in, make it clear in your job description.

“It is also important in that ‘about us’ section in your job description, or certainly in initial conversations, that you be open about challenges and what you need help with, and why. That is the only way you know you will be bringing someone in who can offer solutions and understand what they are going to have to do from the offset.

“Have a strong recruitment information pack including articles, governance and up to day financials. Ensure you have thought through and your recruiter understands all of these things, and has got under your skin to fully envision what this role is about. The most successful high level recruitment campaigns provide a clear example of how to fill the role properly, allow candidates time to think and put questions forward and most key to the success of the appointment, they arrange meetings with key people across the organisation including existing trustees and other SLT members.

“As part of that it is wise to lay open your charity culture – be open about conflicts, personnel issue or contractual issues that are not ideal and that a new high level person is going to want to address. That is the only way that the can get an honest picture of what they are going to take on, and a leader worth having will want to know all of that. Imagine if they ask you questions at interview that you aren’t prepared for? You could lose the one person who can turn things around for you!

“Finally, ensure you have a clear induction process, which is laid out and promised from the start of any conversations. That reassurance that the process will be professional could be the key to snaring that trustee or CEO you are so keen to join you!”

Peter is available for a coffee and chat to get the initial ball rolling, by contacting him on peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk - if you want to talk about how your charity could be performing better from the top, then get in touch!

To AI or not to AI?

Barely a day goes by without seeing, hearing or reading about AI. Alex and Andrew from the Waterstons Innovation Team give an insight into how generative AI can help – and hinder – your organisation.

Generative AI is a tool that can generate huge amounts of text and images based on a prompt you give it. If you ask it a question, it will try to give a sensible answer; if you ask it to draw a picture, it will try its best to create something.

Like all AI tools, it is fed enormous quantities of data in a process called training, the goal of which is for it to learn to use data to complete a task. In

the case of generative AI, the goal is to be able to make new things based on the data it has already seen.

For example, if you ask: 'please give me an oil painting of the Statue of Liberty holding a banana' it would attempt to create something from everything it has already 'seen' during training. And it doesn't do too bad a job...

An oil pastel style image of the Statue of Liberty holding a banana created using DALL-E 2

This is all very well and good, but what can you practically achieve with it? How can this help your business? A machine that can randomly create data isn't actually that useful unless you make it specific to you – assuming you don't need images of famous landmarks holding fruit.

Recently, data has been used to automate things associated with numbers - replacing Excel spreadsheets, building reports, and crunching numbers - but now we can think about automating tasks involving words and pictures.

There are various areas where real value could be gained, and real efficiencies to eke out, through the use of generative AI:

- **Drafting documentation:** It is very good at generating large amounts of text, quickly.
- **Handling text:** Summarising long Word files, taking parts from multiple files and merging them together, and understanding where files differ among many, many other activities.
- **Knowledge bases:** AI models can be trained on your huge piles of data to give a more user-friendly way of accessing it.
- **Making more of what you have:** Using image-generating tools to make new versions of the products you already make – e.g. architects generating new ideas for buildings; production companies generating new 3D models of sets.
- **Advertising:** AI models have seen every viral tweet and ad campaign whether it went viral or not - combined with your catalogue of product images, can you use it to write viral content for you?

All sounds great – but where are the hindrances we hear you ask? If this tool you make becomes publicly facing, it will represent your company; if it's for internal processes it will interfere with decision-making - an AI model will never be 100% accurate, so are you happy to accept the errors as well as all the other issues you might encounter?



Alex Waterston



Andrew Blance

- **Data security and privacy:** AI models you use are typically run and trained by a company like OpenAI or Microsoft so when you send them your data, do you know what will happen to it? When you query the public version of ChatGPT in the future, your data may already be inside it, effectively making your data and IP publicly available.
- **Bias and discrimination:** AI models can only know things they are trained on so will echo what is in it. A lot of these models have been trained on the internet, even the gruesome bits.
- **Creativity and originality:** We don't believe that any AI model out there can match human creativity and originality; AI models are parrots – only able to show you something it has seen before.
- **What is the truth?** Trained to predict the next word to type or create an image that might look like the prompt you've given it, AI has no understanding of the truth. If you play with any of these tools it won't be long until it's generated a human with 6 fingers or told you a 'fact' that is demonstrably untrue.
- **What does it know?** A generic version of ChatGPT will not know anything about the internal workings of your organisation so how useful even is it?

Even though there are lots of worrying things to consider when using generative AI, we are still very excited about it. We are realistic and pragmatic, but also believe that these tools can be used to build something that can change your business.

In the last year, AI tools have become cheaper and easier to use. Models which used to only be accessible in research labs are now available to the public. The technology is being democratised, with powerful generative AI models available open source. This means you can host them yourself and train them with your own data, all without worrying that you will leak your data to the public.

Are you ready to use AI safely and securely? We'd love to chat to you!

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Maven chairs technology roundtable with business founders and industry leaders

In the first part of this four-part series, we explore artificial intelligence (AI) and the opportunities and risks within the software market.



The North East of England has emerged as a hotbed of world class innovation, driven by a vibrant and supportive business ecosystem and global reach. In Newcastle alone, tech firms brought in a combined turnover of £2bn in 2022 across 3,500 creative and digital businesses.

While it comes as no surprise that London outpaces the region in terms of tech investment, key locations such as Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Durham, Sunderland, and Northumberland have become magnets for attracting businesses, supporting innovation, and fostering homegrown talent.

Investments made through the Maven VCTs, North East Development Capital Fund and Finance Durham Fund, combined with our active portfolio management and access to our extensive UK network of contacts, have helped many ambitious tech-focused companies scale contributing to the growth of this dynamic sector in the North East.

Maven's support across the region goes far beyond just the deployment of capital and we actively engage with the local tech community and collaborate with industry stakeholders.



Recently we hosted a technology roundtable, chaired by Senior Investment Manager, David Nixon, with a number of local tech founders, sector experts and advisors including Chris Wilson and Rob Cooper, Corporate Finance Partners at UNW; Alex Mouat, Head of Investor Relations and Strategic Partnerships at Sunderland Software City; Pete Daykin, Founder of Wordnerds, an innovative customer feedback analysis tool; Kevin Beales Founder of MySalesCoach, Refract and the Test Factory, Gilbert Corrales, Founder of Leaf Grow, an end-to-end performance marketing services platform; Zara Anita Paul, CEO of Choppity.com, an AI video editor for turning long videos into social media clips; Nigel Wright of Nigel Wright Consultancy; Paul Lancaster, Senior Consultant and founder of Newcastle Start-up week; and Chris Hughes, Corporate Partner at Mincoffs.

The discussion centred around four of the hottest topics circulating in the technology community today and enabled guests to share insights into their contribution to the growth and development of the North East's tech ecosystem.

In the first part of this four-part series, we explore artificial intelligence (AI) and the opportunities and risks within the software market. In the UK, the AI Market is expected to grow from £17bn to £803bn in the next 12 years and today 68% of all large/enterprise companies have adopted at least one AI technology with Data Analysis & Management, NLP and Machine Learning most common across companies.

Pete Daykin: "With any new technology there's always a perceived downside, but the risks with AI are often overblown. In natural language processing we can start using words and numbers predictively, and it's a really exciting prospect with lots of opportunity. Whilst there is limited but existing risk as there is with most things, for those of us operating in this space we're enjoying the prospect of pushing boundaries and exploring how we can better utilise AI in our everyday life."

Gilbert Corrales: "We're building and using AI in tandem and people are trying and testing ideas in a number of disruptive spaces. Inevitably there will be a generational gap between those who use this technology and those who do not. The key to this is embracing AI is rather than fearing it, learning to understand it without placing taboos on it, because in the next 10 years every business will be in some way powered by AI."

Interestingly, the UK has twice the number of AI jobs than any other country in Europe and already contributes £3.7bn of GVA (Gross Added Value) to the economy. So, whilst this is clearly an area of huge opportunity, it's also one we have to manage with the risks in mind. Statistics show that 42% of the UK population have concerns over job losses.

Zara Anita Paul: "One of the best things about AI is that companies with very little funding can build products and services very quickly. You no longer need to hire a team. This is also where the fear and negativity comes in. But AI is just a tool, blaming it absolves the individuals who use it negatively from responsibility, and stigmatises its use for everyone, even those who couldn't afford to work without it."



While some would argue that to fully leverage the value contained in data, the power of AI is essential, some are concerned at decision making without human intervention and 37% of the UK population have ethical concerns about data usage.

Chris Wilson: "Most of the UK's businesses are unaware of the prospects surrounding AI, a lot of people operating in the tech space are making strides but the opportunity is large and growing for almost all sectors. With the thriving university ecosystem in the North East, the region is well placed to take advantage of the number of innovative and disruptive university spinouts paving the way for leaps in machine learning. AI presents the potential to improve efficiency across all industries and we're at a very exciting stage in this development."

Alex Mouat: "We have observed a growing trend across the region where an increasing number of businesses are engaging with the field of AI, and are keen to monitor this activity going forward, seeing how it ramps up over the coming months. The opportunity is huge. At Sunderland Software City, we've partnered with the Hartree National Centre for Digital Innovation to assist businesses in their adoption of advanced digital technologies. There are more and more companies approaching us, looking to understand how they can incorporate AI and machine learning into their operations."

David, Nixon: "It's clear that while the risks and concerns in this growing industry are valid, the opportunity and scope available to businesses who want to harness the power of AI is huge and growing. The local tech community is positioning the region as a thriving hub of technological advancement, catalysing on growth, creating job opportunities, and contributing to the North East's emergence as a national technology leader."

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



UNW strengthens its senior tax team with new partner appointment



UNW's Senior Personal Tax Team including Alastair Murray (fourth from left)

In response to continued demand for its specialist tax services, Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has added to its pool of experienced tax practitioners with the appointment of Alastair Murray as Tax Partner.

With more than two decades of experience, predominantly looking after the personal tax affairs of business owners, Alastair's arrival further enhances the firm's senior capability and its reputation as a trusted advisor to entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Alastair joins what is already one of the largest specialist tax teams in the region, that includes private client, employment taxes and VAT specialists in addition to a corporate tax team

that has a client base across a wide range of sectors and business types.

Speaking of his motivations for joining UNW, Alastair said: "I have been a long-time admirer of the firm. It has a strong reputation in the marketplace – one that it has worked hard to build.

Everywhere you look at UNW there are people with vast technical knowledge and experience,

and that collective expertise is unmatched in the region when viewing the proposition that we are able to offer our clients.

"One important factor in my decision to join the business, which has been confirmed in my first couple of months here, is UNW's commitment to hiring and developing talent.

There's a distinctive culture of training and development throughout the firm, where highly experienced people work alongside trainees with an emphasis on passing on their skills and experience."

Steve Lant, Tax Partner at UNW said: "Alastair is a superb addition to the firm, and I was delighted when he agreed to join us. We are continuing to grow, and he has an impressive track record of helping and adding value to clients."

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Amy Henshaw and Daniel Ferry

It all adds up as Torgersens invests for the future

A long-term commitment by Torgersens Chartered Accountants to the support and development of young members of its team, has paid dividends as Daniel Ferry qualifies as a chartered accountant and Amy Henshaw gains part-qualified status.

Daniel and Amy are based at the firm's new Sunderland office, at Avalon House by the River Wear, which is looking to make three key additional appointments to its team.

23-year-old, Daniel, from Castletown, joined the growing accountancy firm, with offices in Sunderland, Jarrow and Gosforth, at 16, as a Business Services Trainee, rising to Business Services Executive and now, on qualifying, he is promoted to Assistant Audit and Accounts Manager.

Daniel, who went to Castle View school, Sunderland, works on a wide range of clients including charities, SMEs, partnerships and housing cooperatives.

Amy, 24, who is from Sunderland, studied sports nutrition at Sheffield Hallam university. She worked part-time in an admin role for

Torgersens whilst studying for her degree. Amy joined the firm full time as a Business Services Trainee in 2022. She has achieved part-qualified status and is studying for three further exams in the next six months.

Daniel and Amy's success comes at a time of growth for the firm, which employs over 30 staff across its three offices and which recently relocated its Sunderland office to a spacious, open plan site at Avalon House.

Daniel, said: "As a very young person joining the firm, I did not know how my career would progress but it has been a wonderful journey with positive milestones throughout. Coming straight from school meant I had to adapt to the office structure and procedures but throughout the seven years I have been encouraged and supported every step of the way by the partners and staff."

Amy, said: "Congratulations to Daniel on gaining chartered accountant status. It takes a lot of hard work but by achieving part-qualified status I know that I am a big step nearer to following Daniel and to progressing my career to the next level."

Alison Henshaw, partner, Torgersens, said: "Naturally, the desire and commitment to undertake what has been a substantial learning and professional development programme, has to come from within the individual and Daniel and Amy have demonstrated the attitude and resilience needed to push forward. We had no hesitation investing in their futures and we are all immensely proud they have done so well.

"This is an exciting time for the firm with the move to fantastic, new premises, in Sunderland and with three high quality jobs immediately on offer at this office. We are building a strong, cohesive team across our three offices with staff that support and encourage each other. This is a great time to join the firm and we are looking forward to greeting new team members in the very near future."

The jobs on offer at the Sunderland office are; an Audit and Accounts Senior, an Assistant Audit and Accounts Manager and a Personal Tax Senior. For further information on the roles available go to www.torgersens.com/careers/jobs



"WHAT IF WE DON'T CHANGE AT ALL...
AND SOMETHING MAGICAL JUST HAPPENS?"

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Whitepaper reveals North East based law firm has largest share of regional residential purchase transactions

North East-based law firm, Sweeney Miller Law, had the highest market share for residential purchase transactions in the North East in 2022, according to data published by legal software solution platform Access Legal.

The Conveyancing Data Trends and Analysis whitepaper uses HM Registry data to plot the UK's conveyancing market data each year, and the latest report shows comparisons between 2021/22.

As part of the report, the data summarised the top 20 most active conveyancers in each region ranked by market share; Sweeney Miller Law, based in Newcastle and Sunderland, was highlighted as the leading firm for the North East of England with a market share of just over 3%. The whitepaper also highlighted that while, across the UK, purchase transactions had slowed down, and average prices reduced, the North East as a region had been impacted the least, and the market is proving resilient.

Surbhi Vedhara, Managing Director at Sweeney Miller Law commented: "It is great to see the hard work of our excellent residential conveyancing department paying off in these latest figures. Despite the volume of transactions we handle, we are committed to providing the same high-quality service to each and every client, whether they are first-time buyers just getting on the property ladder or residential developers growing their portfolio. It was also encouraging to see the North East as a whole performing so well in comparison to the wider UK; we have a really great residential ecosystem in the region so it's great to see that being recognised."

With offices in Gosforth and Sunderland, Sweeney Miller Law provides residential conveyancing advice to clients across the region and nationwide, including buying and selling, buy-to-let, auctions, mortgages and remortgages, enfranchisement, and shared ownership.



Move to new Lumen Headquarters drives job creation at Hay & Kilner

A move into new, state-of-the-art headquarters has helped leading North East law firm Hay & Kilner add more than two dozen people to its expert teams over the last 12 months.

The independent practice took over the whole of the fifth floor of The Lumen Building in the Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter last September, bringing its whole city team together in one place and providing room for new recruits to join.

Since then, it has seen 25 new recruits join the firm, with new roles being created right across its different personal and commercial specialisms.

And it has now invested in creating a dozen further work spaces within the 14,600 sq ft Lumen office in anticipation of accommodating further new joiners in the future as the business grows.

Hay & Kilner operates a hybrid workplace model, with staff splitting their week between their homes and the Lumen office, but it provides a dedicated desk for every member of the team to ensure they know they have their own space available whenever they need it.

Expanding Northern law firm appoints two new directors

An award winning Legal 500 law firm has promoted two long-standing members of its team to its Board of Directors.

EMG Solicitors, which has offices across the North, in Durham, Newcastle, Darlington, Penrith, and Manchester, has recently appointed Head of the Court of Protection Health and Welfare team, Eilish Ferry-Kennington and Gemma Holmes, of the Family Law team, as directors.

Their successful appointment follows an intense in-house six month training programme and they now both take their seats alongside the company's other eight directors.



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“

...Step back and see the bigger picture...

Solicitor of the Month

Susan Howe

Partner and head of the dispute resolution team at Muckle LLP

What were your career ambitions growing up?

No one is ever 12 years old and wanting to be a litigation expert. I actually wanted to be a journalist, a Kate Adie overseas correspondent type reporting from war zones. I lost interest when my father quite reasonably pointed out that I wouldn't get that sort of assignment straight away and would have to do my time reporting minor local affairs.

As a child, I used to watch a drama series called *Crown Court* and then, when I was a bit older, an American programme called *The Paper Chase*. I think that hooked me into a career in law. It was not a world I had any contacts in or insight into, but it seemed interesting and exciting and it turned out to be something I was good at.

Tell us about your current role and what do you most enjoy?

I'm competitive, so I like to win, but I'm also very commercial and I want to fix the problems that get in the way of my clients' business goals. We specialise in high-value, multi-party, cross-jurisdictional work that normally gets done in London. I like the strategy of litigation, the intellectual challenge of hard law and understanding a dispute's different nuances to drive towards success.

What is your proudest business achievement?

I've been lucky enough to be involved in some high-value and legally significant litigation over the years. I'm very proud that one of my reported cases is still quoted as part of the definition of a bank or financial institution in a loan agreement.

I'm also very proud of my public inquiry work. I was one of the lead partners on the team appointed to gather evidence for the Bloody Sunday Inquiry. This meant I got to meet and hear the stories of a wide range of people, including civilians, soldiers, police and politicians. We could really immerse ourselves in the history and politics of the time, and it led to other fascinating work including the Harold Shipman Inquiry. It was an absolute privilege to be part of a bit of history and to make a very small contribution to something important and of historical value.

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

How we practice law has changed immensely even over the time I've been qualified and the thing that gives me the most pleasure is the diversity in our workforce. When I joined the Magic Circle firm where I trained and practised, I was an outlier as a northerner, a woman and from a background that simply wasn't the norm. I love that those perceived limitations are disappearing.

The major change in the last decade is the enablement of so many legal functions through technology, something we embrace and invest in here at Muckle. AI will never replace the human interaction required to get a good commercial outcome in a legal dispute, but it certainly makes case management a lot easier.

What are you currently working on?

I could tell you but then I'd have to kill you...

Tell us about the team you work with.

Despite our size (170 people and counting!), we still have a fantastic "people-first" culture at Muckle which I'm very proud of.

I lead a brilliant team of individuals who are great fun to work with and just happen to be exceptionally good commercial lawyers. I've tried to create a team with a perfect combination of curated skills and talents, including attitude and litigation instinct (the things you can't train). I am convinced that this team is the best dispute resolution team in the north and can easily compete with any disputes team nationally.

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

Step back and see the bigger picture because there's always something you haven't considered.

Where do you see yourself in ten years time?

On a beach.

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

David Bowie, Shirley Williams, Simone de Beauvoir and Angela Hartnett so she can cook.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I'm a working mother, I never unwind.

Favourite book and boxset?

Book - too hard a question and different on different days, but my favourite probably lies somewhere between *Jude the Obscure*, *Madame Bovary* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Boxset - most recently *Succession*; I'm still processing that ending...

www.muckle-llp.com

Who invented the lightbulb? Intellectual Property (IP) and the importance of protecting your bright ideas



Ever had a ‘lightbulb moment’? A flash of inspiration that led to a great idea? How would you feel if someone else got all the credit for that idea or, worse still, made their fortune from it?

That’s probably how Sunderland-born Joseph Swan felt back in 1879. Never heard of him? His ‘lightbulb moment’ was actually the lightbulb. He created the first successful incandescent filament electric lamp around the same time another scientist was developing a similar invention. That scientist – Thomas Edison.

They actually teamed up together to form the Edison and Swan Electric Light Company. However, their working relationship was fraught with infringement cases on both sides of the Atlantic, which eventually led to Edison buying out Swan - and the rest is history. At the time of his death, Edison’s net worth, adjusted for inflation, was around \$170 million. And our very own Mackem inventor? He wasn’t poor by any stretch of the imagination, but his name is never

the answer to the quiz question ‘who invented the lightbulb?’.

Legacy, innovation and profit – when it comes to your intellectual property, they’re still just as important considerations today as they were in 1879.

So, how do you make sure you’re an Edison and not a Swan?

Don’t be in the dark

Do you know what IP you have in your business? Intellectual Property (IP) is an umbrella term that can include anything from your logo to an invention or a product name, and they’re protected by law through trademarks, patents and copyrights.

As a business, you could have a lot of IP. But because it isn’t tangible (in the sense that it’s not a physical entity like your premises or stock), it can be hard to keep track.

The first step is to understand your IP assets. Business is built on ideas, and if you don’t know the full extent of what you own, it can make it easier for someone else to copy and exploit it.

Get switched on

Knowing what you have is one thing, but being switched on to how you can harness the power of your ideas is where you can really see results. Your IP could turn out to be your most valuable

asset, and the commercialisation of those assets can be key to your business growth. This can range from using them to sell goods and services to licencing them or assigning them to a third party for profit. Also, if there comes a time when you want to sell your business, your IP is an asset that may be taken into account when valuing your company.

Avoid shocks

There’s also the danger that you could be exploiting someone else’s IP. Whether accidental or not, using someone else’s IP without permission can be costly, both in monetary terms and damage to your reputation. So, it’s vitally important that when you’re developing a new idea, you research thoroughly to check it is unique.

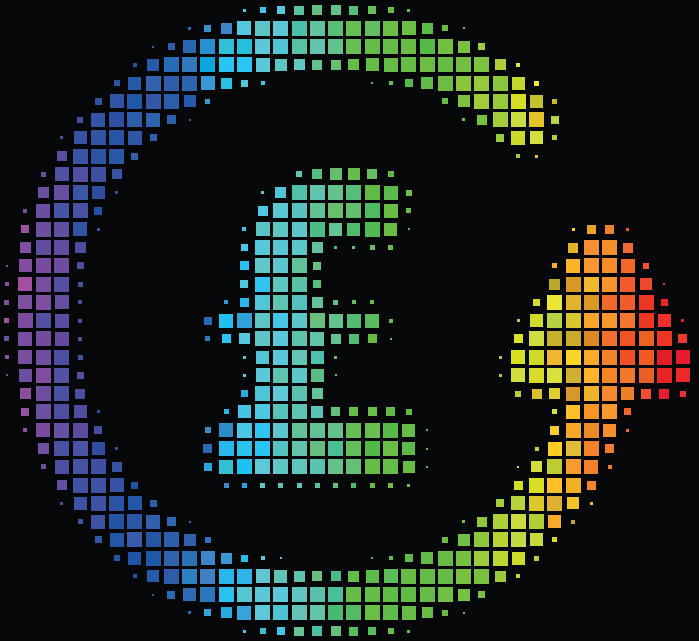
Light at the end of the tunnel

We know this can all sound daunting.

Muckle LLP offers an IP health check, designed to help you uncover your intellectual property’s potential and vulnerabilities. This gives you not only peace of mind but information and advice you can use to build your IP strategy for future growth.

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Emily Cannell

Matrimonial vs non-matrimonial assets

Emily Cannell, partner and head of family at Mincoffs Solicitors, advises divorcing couples to consider how different kinds of assets may be divided in court.

Many people do not realise that during a divorce, the family courts in England and Wales can distinguish between ‘matrimonial’ and ‘non-matrimonial’ assets.

This can add a layer of complexity to financial proceedings, because they may be treated differently when the financial pot is divided.

What is the difference between matrimonial and non-matrimonial assets?

‘Matrimonial assets’ are financial assets that spouses have obtained and built up during a marriage, which can, and should, be divided between them on divorce. This can include the family home, savings and investments, pensions and business interests, to name a few. It does not necessarily matter who accumulated the wealth – the general position is that the assets gained during the marriage also belong to your spouse and so they shall be entitled to a share.

‘Non-matrimonial assets’, on the other hand, are assets which have not been acquired from matrimonial endeavour. Instead, they may have been obtained before the marriage or after separation, or may have been acquired unilaterally, such as inheritance or gifts from a spouse. The exception to this is the family home which is, in principle, often shared equally between the parties regardless of whether it was purchased by one spouse before the marriage.

It is important to bear in mind that often, non-matrimonial assets should remain separate from matrimonial wealth to preserve their ‘non-matrimonial’ status. Any assets which have been mingled or entangled with joint assets may be more likely to be considered as matrimonial, regardless of their source.

Whilst the starting point for matrimonial assets is they should be shared, non-matrimonial assets are unlikely to be divided on divorce, unless one spouse can validate a claim based on ‘need’.

In what circumstances may non-matrimonial assets be taken into account?

The first step when considering finances is the exchange of ‘full and frank’ disclosure of financial information, to include both matrimonial and non-matrimonial assets. Once the assets and their values have been determined, parties can assess whether a fair financial outcome can be achieved in the first instance, out of the matrimonial assets alone.

It becomes more complicated when there is not enough in the matrimonial pot to meet both spouse’s needs. Where there is a shortfall, the court has a wide discretion to invade non-matrimonial assets in order to meet those needs. It is not routinely the case that non-matrimonial assets would be shared equally in such circumstances – rather, the spouse in a weaker financial position would be awarded a proportion based on their need.

Therefore, whilst it is often the case that non-matrimonial assets are excluded from settlements, this is not guaranteed. Each case will be considered on its own facts and assessed based on fairness and need.

How to protect non-matrimonial assets

Drawing up a nuptial agreement may be an effective way to try and protect non-matrimonial assets in the event of a divorce. A nuptial agreement is a formal agreement between spouses that sets out the division of assets if the relationship later comes to an end. Such agreements can be signed before marriage (pre-nuptial agreement) or after marriage (post-nuptial agreements). Although not strictly legally binding in English courts, often they will carry significant weight, provided certain criteria is met. The terms of a nuptial agreement can include provisions specifically relating to non-matrimonial assets, to determine how they should be divided if spouses later separate.

The division of assets on divorce can be complex. The general principle is that matrimonial assets will be shared, whereas non-matrimonial assets will not be. However, this isn’t set in stone. If one party’s needs cannot be met from their share of matrimonial assets alone, the court can, and will, invade non-matrimonial assets.

While it is impossible to prepare for every outcome, seeking specialist advice early on can help you to understand how your assets might be treated by a court on divorce and avoid any surprises down the line.

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

What steps should employers take to support an employee experiencing menopause symptoms?

Nathan May-O'Brien is a Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Nathan considers a recent Employment Tribunal decision on the issue of menopause and disability discrimination.



Nathan May-O'Brien

Menopause related Employment Tribunal claims are increasing. Research by Menopause Expert Group in 2022 found 23 cases cited Menopause in 2021 compared to 16 in 2020.

Menopause is not a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, but some litigants plead their menopause symptoms amount to a disability (which is a protected characteristic). A recent Tribunal case serves as a reminder to employers of the risk of such claims succeeding.

Menopause symptoms and performance

Mrs Lynskey had worked for Direct Line Insurance Services Limited since 2016 as a tele-sales consultant. In 2019, she began to suffer with menopause symptoms including mood swings which began to impact her work performance. Mrs Lynskey was diagnosed with a hormone imbalance, depression and low mood in 2020 and was prescribed antidepressants. She made her manager aware of these issues.

In her 2020 annual review, Mrs Lynskey was graded as "need for improvement" due to her difficulties at work, including customer complaints that she was rude and due to a need for support. This grading resulted in her not receiving a pay rise.

Disciplinary action was taken in 2021 due to continued performance problems. Mrs Lynskey raised the fact that these were linked to her menopause symptoms, but this mitigation was not accepted. She started sickness absence in July 2021 due to stress at home. This resulted in a referral to occupational health and a report detailing that she was likely to be disabled. Whilst on sick leave, Direct Line withdrew her discretionary sick pay despite her not having exceeded her maximum entitlement and on the basis it felt she was not doing enough to return to work.

Mrs Lynskey resigned in May 2022 claiming, amongst other claims, that her treatment amounted to disability discrimination.

What did the Tribunal hold?

Direct Line conceded before the hearing that it knew, or ought to have known, that Mrs Lynskey's symptoms amounted to a disability in June 2020. The Tribunal awarded aggravated damages of £2,500 on the basis that Direct Line should have conceded this sooner as the impact of her symptoms on day-to-day activities was not opaque but were evident at work and regularly communicated by Mrs Lynskey.

The Tribunal upheld her claims for unfavourable treatment arising from a disability and the failure to make reasonable adjustments. In respect of her performance rating, her employer had not accounted for the limitations caused by her menopause symptoms. The Tribunal also found that these limitations were not accounted for when she was issued with a disciplinary warning. The Tribunal also found that the removal of sick pay had no "reasonable

and proper cause" in that medical evidence suggested an incapacity for work for some weeks and no evidence suggested she was failing to take steps to return to work. These instances amounted to unfavourable treatment due to her disability.

The Tribunal also found while steps had been taken to assist Mrs Lynskey, more adjustments could have been made such as reducing her targets or removing her involvement with difficult customers.

What can employers learn from this case?

Direct Line has been ordered to pay almost £65,000 in compensation despite having taken steps to try to assist Mrs Lynskey including additional training and referring her to occupational health. The Tribunal held that occupational health should have been involved earlier when it became apparent her work was impacted by her menopause symptoms.

Not every menopause case will amount to a disability, but this case highlights that steps need to be taken to adjust performance management and disciplinary proceedings to account for employees suffering with menopause symptoms, which may even extend to electing not to follow such procedures.

Case reference: Lynskey v Direct Line Insurance Services Ltd ET/1802204/2022 and ET/1802386/2022

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Commercial lease renewals: Speak now or forever hold your lease!

Whether you're a landlord or tenant, negotiating the best deal when renewing your commercial lease should be at the top of your priority list. Sweeney Miller Law's Managing Partner, Surbhi Vedhara, gives her top tips for removing stress and getting the most from the lease renewal process.

Commercial leases set out the terms by which a landlord and tenant agree to respectively let and occupy a commercial property, including the rent, length of the agreement and any specific conditions such as break clauses and rent reviews. When the lease period ends, a process of renewing the lease should be initiated ensuring that the most favourable terms are negotiated at that point.

Understanding how to negotiate the best terms for your situation, whichever side of the agreement you are on, is a significant opportunity that shouldn't be wasted.

Understanding the Landlord & Tenant Act

Most commercial leases fall under the protection of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954 ("the Act"), under which the tenancy can be renewed on the expiry of the contract, to avoid tenants being evicted with little to no notice. For leases protected by the Act, at the end of the contractual term, tenants are given the automatic right to be granted a lease renewal on the same terms as the existing lease – apart from any necessary market adjustments – this is known as 'security of tenure'.

Leases protected under the Act will automatically renew under the existing terms unless the landlord can successfully refuse renewal by relying on certain statutory grounds such as that the tenant is in breach of their obligations (such as non-payment of rent), or they wish to live in or operate their own business from the premises.

Savvy landlords may want to take away this security of tenure from their tenants so that the tenants do not have an automatic right of renewal. This would put the landlord in a better bargaining position when it comes to renewing the lease. However, this needs to be carefully negotiated before the start of the tenancy.

The renewal process

If the market is stable and the existing lease conditions are agreeable, a lease protected by the Act can continue with no formal renewal under Section 24 of the Act; however, both landlords and tenants can trigger a formal renewal by serving a notice:

- Landlords can serve tenants with a Section 25 Notice
- Tenants can serve landlords with a Section 26 Notice

If the landlord is happy to continue with the existing tenant, a Section 25 Notice will outline the terms of the new lease including any changes in rent, break clauses, and new lease start date and duration.

A Section 26 Notice will outline much the same proposal but with the tenant's requests, such as rent reductions in line with market conditions – something to seriously consider given the current economic climate. This might also be considered if the tenant is yet to hear from the landlord as the lease termination date approaches.

These new terms are not set in stone and are rather suggestions that the other party is not obliged to accept; however, agreeing terms at this stage will hopefully avoid expensive legal action.

Time is of the essence

Lease renewal negotiations and drawing up new terms can take a lot of time, so if either the landlord or tenant is interested in doing so, it is best to start the process sooner rather than later.

The renewal process should be initiated between 6 and 12 months before the expiry date to allow both sides to negotiate and, if this fails, start looking for alternative arrangements such as new premises or a new tenant.

The longer you allow for your lease renewal strategy, the more breathing space you have for negotiations, any necessary property inspections, lease amendments, and the final document.

Ask the experts

Expert help at the start of the lease renewal process is invaluable and key to securing the best terms for the future.

While negotiations can take place informally directly between parties, getting early advice from an experienced commercial property law team removes the guesswork from the process and ensures that the right provisions are in place for the next lease term. As expert advisors, we can liaise with all parties involved, including any valuation or property experts, such as chartered surveyors, ensuring the negotiations go smoothly and cost effectively.

Commenting on lease renewals, Surbhi said: "At Sweeney Miller Law, our Commercial Property team regularly helps both commercial landlords and tenants as lease renewals come up. We can advise on whether the existing lease falls under the Act, draft and serve Section 25 and 26 Notices, and advise on any legal action should the renewal be contested. Our Commercial Dispute Resolution team is also best placed to robustly assist with any litigation issues that arise when renewals become contested.

Each lease is different and we aim to ensure that our clients get the best possible outcome during the negotiations based on their circumstances and existing lease conditions. The team works with large established commercial clients, through to fledgling businesses that may have never dealt with a renewal before."

If you are a landlord or tenant coming towards the end of your commercial lease term and want advice from a team of experienced and pragmatic commercial property lawyers, get in touch today, call 0345 900 5401, email enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk or visit sweeneymiller.co.uk

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Surbhi Vedhara



L-R: Robert Gibson, Claire Fenwick and Sharon Boyd of Samuel Phillips Law and Paul McEldon North East BIC

North East law firm launches Sunderland office

One of the North East's longest established law firms has opened a dedicated Sunderland office as it looks to expand its presence in the region.

Samuel Phillips Law, which celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2019, has opened a new office at the North East BIC.

Headquartered in Newcastle since its inception in 1919, the new office coincides with the firm's ambition to establish itself as 'one of the region's leading solicitors'.

Sharon Boyd, Group Chief Executive at Samuel Phillips Law, said: "It has been an ambition of mine for a long time to launch a service offering in Sunderland.

"I myself worked for several years as a Business Adviser at North East BIC as part of Business Link and then with Sunderland based RTC North for many years, and over that time built strong relationships with businesses in Sunderland and the south of the region. I've always wanted to build something within the community and contribute to the local economy in the city. It's imperative that we base ourselves in Sunderland and create opportunities and jobs there too".

"As a hub for business growth in the region, the BIC is the perfect place for us, so we're delighted to take up such a prominent position on the site".

"The facilities at the BIC are perfect for us and we have been made extremely welcome by BIC CEO Paul McEldon and his team."

Claire Fenwick, Group Marketing Manager, added: "This is such an exciting time with the current developments that are underway or in the pipeline in the city.

"Because of the BIC's great location and the firm's regional footprint, it seemed like the ideal time for Samuel Phillips Law to establish

a presence in Sunderland. I am very passionate about the city having been born here and am a lifelong supporter of SAFC."

Paul McEldon OBE, Chief Executive at the BIC, said: "Samuel Phillips has been part of the fabric of the region's business community for over a century, so we're thrilled that they will now also be joining our close-knit community here at the BIC. Their range of legal services align really well with the current and future needs of many of our tenants, not to mention the start-up businesses in the area."

"Our flexible workspace was specifically designed to help the region's businesses grow at a sustainable pace, by allowing them to easily up and downsize their operations as and when required, making it perfect for firms such as Samuel Phillips with ambitions to grow and scale here in the North East."

Samuel Phillips Law offers services for businesses in employment law, commercial property, litigation and commercial contracts as well as personal services including residential conveyancing, wills, probate and trusts and family law.

To find out more about the North East BIC, visit www.ne-bic.co.uk



Mark Adams

Finding opportunities in adversity

By Mark Adams, Partner and Head of the Corporate Team at Hay & Kilner

For a substantial proportion of North East business owners, things might seem pretty tough at the moment.

A number of well documented factors that are well beyond our control, from spiralling energy, material and labour costs, through to the after-effects of Covid and increasing interest rates, have combined over recent years to make staying in business, let alone securing growth, extremely challenging for many national and regional business owners.

Virtually no sector seems to be immune to the current economic climate, margins are being squeezed, corporate insolvencies are on the

rise and, according to some, there's no real sign that things are going to get significantly better soon.

But, while this is all undoubtedly and painfully true for many, there are still lots of things happening within the regional economy which are giving cause for optimism, especially when they're allied to the North East's enduring resilience, robustness and 'can do' attitude.

From our own point of view, we still have a lot of good quality active transactions which we're currently working on, and several others in the pipeline, and whilst rising interest rates have increased the cost of borrowing for many, we're not experiencing a slowdown in the deals market as yet.

We've completed a number of significant employee buy-outs in the region, with management teams putting faith in themselves to carry on the work of those business owners who are looking to retire or do something different.

There are also lots of interesting things happening in the North East technology sector, with Newcastle in particular becoming a recognised UK "hotspot" that's attracting high-profile tech businesses to the region, including Italian defence specialist Leonardo, Japanese digital consultancy Monstarlab and US cyber security firm Arctic Wolf.

I do think the years of people talking about the growing technology sector in the North East have now crystallised into something tangible and that the region is now reaping the rewards in terms of investment and jobs.

The recently launched FinPact initiative is also looking to invest in our region's financial services technology sector, and we'll no doubt all be watching with great interest to see how this evolves throughout the rest of the year and beyond.

There's clearly no magic bullet for curing some of our macro-economic troubles, but while we all work towards putting things right, the words of one particular client I recently spoke with spring to mind, who said "in the words of Albert Einstein, Mark...remember, in the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity - it's up to us to find it and seize it!"

And it's this which I think could well be the best motto by which the North East business community operates.

For further information and advice on any aspect of corporate or commercial law, please contact Mark Adams at Hay & Kilner on 0191 232 8345 or mark.adams@hay-kilner.co.uk



Bean bag firm sits comfortably with Northumberland charity

A Cramlington based soft furniture manufacturer and eCommerce retailer has partnered with Leading Link, a youth development charity, to provide free beanbags for distribution to various organisations who had requested them to create safe, enjoyable spaces for children and young people in Northumberland.

Based in Bedlington but working all across Northumberland, Leading Link is at the forefront of coordinating the county's Holiday Activity Provision during school breaks on behalf of Northumberland County Council. Their extensive network of partners is dedicated to enhancing the lives of the county's young people and their families. One of their business collaborations is with Cramlington based The Bazaar Group, home of the No.1 soft seating retailer, BeanBagBazaar.

HR Director, Helen Svensson of Bazaar Group, expressed enthusiasm for the collaboration: "As a business rooted in Northumberland, we are committed to giving back to the communities we operate in and supporting organisations that drive positive impact."

CEO of Leading Link, Lyn Horton shared her excitement about the collaboration: "The beanbags will be used to ensure that the children and young people of Northumberland have great safe and fun spaces to meet. However, Bazaar's contribution goes way beyond the physical bean bags; it signifies a shared commitment to the well-being of our youth."

Award-winning photographer Michael Rickwood empowers visually impaired people through photography lessons

Professional photographer Michael Rickwood is focusing on breaking down barriers and developing a passion for photography among the visually impaired community in Northumberland. Through a remarkable initiative led by Joanne Money, Activities Coordinator at Morpeth's Vision Northumberland, Michael is providing photography lessons that enable participants to explore the world of visual artistry despite their visual impairments.

The unique photography club comprises individuals who are visually impaired but share an unwavering interest in photography. The club's primary goal is to rekindle their passion for photography and empower them to express their creativity through this visual medium.

The club meets in Project Space in Blyth's Keel Row Shopping Centre, but they frequently venture out to different locations to capture diverse subjects. In the coming weeks, they have plans to visit Alnwick Gardens for a unique photo shoot. Another favourite location is the small village of Bothal.



Mayor of Blyth Town Council reflects on a summer full of free children's events

As the summer holidays come to an end, Mayor Warren Taylor and his colleagues at Blyth Town Council are taking a moment to reflect on a fantastic series of free children's events that have captivated the community throughout the season.

Despite the unpredictable summer weather, the unique Circus School event stood out as a resounding success. Originally planned as an outdoor extravaganza, quick thinking led to a seamless transition indoors, where children eagerly delved into the world of juggling, unicycle riding, clowning, and tightrope walking.

Budding architects and builders had their moment to shine in the annual Sandcastle Competition. Families flocked to the beach, armed with buckets and spades, to showcase their creative castle-building prowess. Prizes for the top three sandcastle creations were generously provided by Ciccarelli's. The RNLI joined hands in support of the event, while attendees revelled in the melodious tunes of the Blyth Shanty Singers. Additional highlights included thrilling Shuggy Boat rides and delightful face painting for the children.

Mayor of Blyth Town Council, Warren Taylor said: "We would like to express our deepest appreciation to everyone who attended these events, making them a resounding success. Your participation and support are the cornerstones of our vibrant community, and we look forward to continuing to provide exciting, family-friendly activities for all residents."



Wallsend based Michael Rickwood, the award-winning landscape photographer behind this initiative, described the picturesque village of Bothal in Northumberland as an ideal setting for their creative endeavours. The serene churchyard offers a beautiful backdrop for outdoor photography, while the church's interior provides opportunities for indoor shots.

"Through this photography club, supported by Joanne and I, visually impaired individuals are finding renewed inspiration and creativity, proving that passion and artistry have no bounds," he said.

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Kathryn Rodgers - Newcastle

Founded in 2018, face2faceHR grew out of a desire to help small to medium-sized businesses gain access to HR advice and support at a fraction of the cost of employing a full-time member of staff.

Our intent was to provide personalised, client-focused HR solutions easing the pressures of staff management, leaving clients free to grow their business, with confidence and reassurance their HR operations are legal, appropriate and effective.

Kathryn thrives on really getting to know her clients and shaping her support to suit them. No red tape or corporate politics means she can get the right results for clients, taking the fear out of HR and employment law for small businesses.

As well as finding solutions for clients, Kathryn is also really good at fixing things around the house – give her a power drill or some Polyfilla and she’s happy! Kathryn also volunteers as a helpline advisor for Pregnant Then Screwed, has run the Great North Run twice, and has stage-dived at a Skunk Anansie concert!



Kathryn Rodgers

To find out more about how Kathryn can support your business, call 07946 330025 or email kathryn.rodgers@face2faceHR.com



A Beacon of Hope in hard times

The People's Kitchen's "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" Campaign Aims to Brighten Christmas for Newcastle's Vulnerable People.

As 2023 brings with it rising costs and increased demands on The People's Kitchen's services, the charity has launched its annual "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign, rallying the North East community to spread warmth and festive cheer this Christmas season.

What began as a humble initiative nearly four

decades ago, offering soup to Newcastle's homeless population, has evolved into a vital lifeline. Today, The People's Kitchen serves approximately 250 meals daily, with no exception even on Christmas Day. This crucial work is entirely reliant on the unwavering generosity of the public, local businesses, and communities, who provide both food and financial support. The organisation receives no government funding and is entirely run by dedicated unpaid volunteers.

For many, The People's Kitchen is more than just a place to enjoy a sustaining meal; it is a sanctuary offering unconditional friendship within a non-judgmental and caring environment. Furthermore, the charity plays a pivotal role in directing individuals to essential welfare, medical, and housing services.

The heart of this year's "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign beats with a simple yet profound message: a small donation can make a substantial difference to someone's life this Christmas. By contributing just five pounds,

caring members of the compassionate North East community can provide a hot Christmas dinner to those who are less fortunate. Additionally, these donations will go a long way in sustaining the provision of meals throughout the chilly winter months.

Maggie Pavlou, a dedicated Trustee of The People's Kitchen, shared her thoughts on the campaign, saying, "We find ourselves serving more meals than ever before, and with the escalating cost of living, we need your support to ensure that we can continue helping those individuals who are in dire need of assistance. Recognising that life is challenging for many this year, we are immensely grateful for any contribution you can provide, as it will undoubtedly have a significant impact on someone less fortunate this Christmas."

To make a difference and spread the spirit of giving, please visit www.justgiving.com/campaign/peopleskitchen-faffaf2023

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Charity of the Month

Project Bind

Bind CIC was created to tackle food waste in the North East. Bind aims to deliver practical, positive, and permanent change for the UK's food waste challenge.

Through a series of flagship projects, including Magic Hat, Newcastle's only café using surplus ingredients to craft delicious daily menus, Bind aims to keep learning and proving it can tackle food waste in any arena.

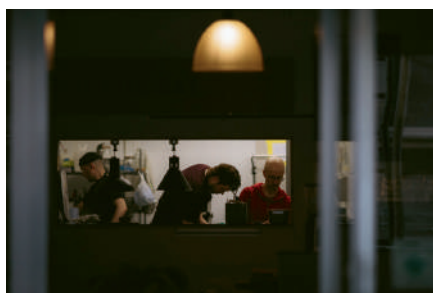
Why was the charity founded?

Bind was founded by Duncan Fairbrother and Jess Miller in 2015 who both came from years in the hospitality sector, witnessing first-hand the levels of waste that existed from procurement to plate.

We believe through a series of projects that we have developed over the past 8 years, including Magic Hat café, Foodicate food waste app, and EatSmart; a project designed for primary school pupils to learn about the UK food waste challenge, we can engage and educate on the topic of food waste in a meaningful and realistic way.

Which areas do you cover?

Although Bind was founded in Newcastle, we now work across the whole of the North East. We live in a place that struggles with a host of political



and social challenges and we recognise for us to create the connections that effect change, we must have an approach to all our work that isn't exclusive and too heavy.

What type of events do you have?

There are lots of ways to support the organisation, but the easiest way is to join us for a delicious meal at Magic Hat. The menu changes daily as ingredients, collected and donated from eateries and food stores across the Northeast, are harnessed to create vibrant and nutritious dishes by our chef and volunteer kitchen team. Each daily menu includes 6-8 dishes that are priced on a sliding scale according to how plentiful the ingredients are and the skill needed to produce the dish.

What is your mission?

As a team, we believe that zero food waste is within our reach. We want to reconnect people with food and believe that better decisions around food can affect everyone you know (and everyone you don't). Bind recognises that we don't have to shout too much about why we shouldn't waste food, we just have to remind people about its potential and what is possible when we approach it differently! Through our projects and spaces, we aim to engage across sectors and communities and begin those conversations about sustainable food practices that lead to positive change.

What have been your proudest moments so far?

Our proudest moments come from building an amazing team of staff and volunteers who we couldn't do this without. The voluntary program we have running through all our projects



gives an opportunity to not only contribute to bettering food systems, but to connect with new people, gain language or cheffing skills and increase confidence. We have shown by enabling volunteers to gain qualifications, and experience, they find work and often in the environmental and hospitality sectors. We currently have over 200 volunteers who work throughout our projects and represent the richness and diversity of our city.

What are you currently working on?

We've just launched our new menu and dynamic payment structure at Magic Hat. Since we have no control over our supply, inevitably there are only limited amounts of some options, whilst others are plentiful. Equally, some dishes involve high levels of skill and lots of time to perfect, whereas others stay very close to the ingredients' pure form, that is how we determine a dish's price. We also are widening the reach of our Eat Smart project, which is designed for primary school pupils to learn about the UK food waste challenge and start tackling it, starting right in their school. The project is pupil lead and currently in 26 schools across the region, it, saves a school 6000+ meals from being wasted worth over £13,000, each year – and every year.

How do people get involved?

Come and see us and enjoy some food that is way too good to be wasted! The Magic Hat is open from Thursday to Sunday between 10 am and 4 p.m. for brunch, lunch right in Newcastle City Centre.

Find out more at www.projectbind.com and www.themagichatcafe.co.uk



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Innovation Sensation

I always thought that I was gifted with magical powers. One of my earliest memories was sat on our doorstep crushing stones to make magical potions, like those featured in Asterix and Obelix – a comic strip I used to enjoy growing up. Never realising that my magical powers or interest was actually innovation, and my deep desire in fixing things or making them better.

Nor that all of my career, a lot of my education and in fact broader life, would all be innovation focused, always being ahead of the curve.

The day my late father took me to Rumbelows – an old electrical store from black and white days on Northumberland Street – and we became one of the first families within the North East to own a VHS video recorder, certainly was a highlight. Don't think other than recording the three tv channels there was much other function but certainly furthered my innovation foundation, and formed the basis of video on demand modern-day Netflix.

Thinking back at the various innovative experiences from the BBC Computer in school and Darren becoming my new best friend, who just so happened to own a spectrum 64 computer and a Tomytronic 3D, to walking around with a Nokia brick phone thinking I was the bees' knees. Shouting down the microphone as the call quality was always so poor, reminiscent of Dom Jolly, alongside having to hold the phone at times with two hands due to the size of it. Certainly, wasn't something that easily fitted into my pocket, but transformed how we called one another, having previously waited in a queue at the top of our street to use the payphone with my handful of 5ps and 10ps.

Roll forward to my first long term job in the North East, working for United Artists and



Ammar Mirza CBE

helping launch residential dial up internet. I recall taking home my laptop pre-internet and websites to either dial into work or using a chatroom, with the terrible screeching of bits and bytes down the phone line. Then eventually going on to see the roll-out of first fibre high speed broadband across the UK.

The mid-1990s through to the early 2000s were arguably the most exciting, as not only did you need to understand the principles behind technology, but could also see how fast the changes were happening. Moving from DOS systems to Microsoft Windows 3.1 to NT with Solitaire and Paint coming as standard, through to seeing the shift from tapes, floppy drives to CDROMS.

The world was going to end at the strike of midnight on the 31st December 1999, with all the planes falling out of the sky and all computers failing. But other than the hangover from the start of the century, nothing really major occurred. Having led on some of the most innovative industry led projects within the UK it wasn't until I left my role at Telewest, now Virgin Media, did I realise that I had been innovating all along. All from our region right here in the North of England.

I am incredibly proud of all that has happened and continues to happen within our North East. The North East has not only been a beneficiary

of innovation but has also played a significant role in fostering it. From the automotive industry's innovations to advancements in healthcare and renewable energy, our region has been a hotbed of talent and creativity. We've witnessed groundbreaking innovations like electric vehicles, biotech breakthroughs, and sustainable energy solutions, contributing to the world's progress.

The North East's innovation journey continues, with emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and clean energy at the forefront and I am delighted that I am playing a part through Yohlar a platform to help more and better innovation.

In the words of Steve Jobs, "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower." Let's choose to lead, to innovate, and to shape the future of our beloved North East and beyond. The journey continues, and the best is yet to come. Are you ready to be a part of it?

Join me in truly feeling the innovation sensation!

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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Stephen Patterson

One city, One vision, One purpose, One Newcastle

By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive, NE1 Ltd

Newcastle is on the cusp of something special. Talking to businesses in the city centre there is a general feeling of positivity and tremendous optimism for the future.

This confidence has been fuelled in part by the multi-million-pound investment that is happening across the city in both the public and private sectors. With new buildings springing up before our eyes and cranes still visible on the horizon, there are clear signs that there's even more development to come and Newcastle is destined for future economic growth.

At the heart of all this, nestled in the city centre, is St. James' Park, standing as a beacon of Newcastle's success and future prosperity. With the football club now in the Champions League, the club and the city are gearing up to welcome visiting supporters from Paris Saint-Germain for the first European home match of the season at the start of October.

With the eyes of Europe upon us, we need to make sure that the city and its public realm keep pace with this transformational change and investment and play to its strengths.

Our iconic city centre assets, including the Quayside, are housed between huge transformational projects, the East Pilgrim Street redevelopment in the North and Gateshead's new international conference and events centre in the South. To make sure this and other areas of the city keep pace with this change and don't get left behind, we must protect and invest to ensure that they continue to make a positive impact on people's experience of, and in, the city.

Having attracted investment and convinced people to come to the region to live, work, study and visit, the experience needs to be second to none when they are here.

It is crucial that Newcastle raises its game to ensure that the city centre experience exceeds expectations.

NE1 is making this one of the top priorities in our five-year business plan.

NE1 is currently in the throes of a BID ballot to hopefully secure a further five-year term. Voting papers and a copy of NE1's new Business Plan have been delivered to c.1,400 business members with voting having opened on 22nd September and closing on 19th October, 28 days later.

The next two months are pivotal for Newcastle as we ballot our members on the future of the city and NE1. This will be our 4th BID ballot. Over this time the focus and emphasis of our activities has changed.

In the early years, our ambition and efforts were focused on securing strategic investment for the city. Although still hugely important, our early successes have dictated a sharp refocusing of our efforts. With public and private investment in motion and a largely

optimistic outlook from business, the question from all quarters is, what's the plan to secure future success for the city? What should the day-to-day street environment look like in a modern, European regional capital city, like Newcastle?

Our mantra is that there is no point winning the battle but losing the war. We have managed to secure major and ongoing investment in the city, and to bring people to live and work here, we now need to up our game, and ramp up and improve the experience for people when they are here.

The optimism for the future and what it holds is tempered by the reality of the challenges facing Newcastle and other cities, particularly in the public realm. As a city, our focus needs to be on getting the basics right and tackling issues in the on-street environment to avoid any negative impacts on our customers, visitors, staff and residents.

This 'getting the basics right' has been the cornerstone of NE1's work since its launch in 2009 and it remains one of the most valued elements of our programme. We want to redouble our efforts in this area because we need the city centre to be clean, well looked after and loved, and for it to feel safe. We need the city and our partners to prioritise this.

Together with Newcastle City Council and Northumbria Police we need to work together and map out a clear picture of what success looks like, what a fantastic city centre should look like, and then work together relentlessly to deliver this.

We can't and won't accept the status quo. This city is going places, and the scale of our ambition to get the basics right has to match the investment. It is non-negotiable.

Attracting and promoting major events and providing a stronger voice for business are two additional strands of NE1's Business Plan that work hand-in-hand with getting the basics right. The full details of our ambitious new projects are set out in our Proposal, including plans for significant investment in the retail core and the Quayside as well as place-based interventions in the unique districts of the city centre. Full details of our Proposal can be viewed online at www.NewcastleNE1Ltd.com/ballot

Ballot schedule

c 1,400 NE1 business members receive their voting papers and the NE1 Proposal.

Voting opens on Friday, 22nd September and closes 28 days later at 5 pm on 19th October 2023.

If successful, NE1's new BID term starts on 1st April 2024 and runs until 31st March 2029.



Nevil Tynemouth

Will technology help your client journey and client experience?

I was fortunate enough to deliver a few thoughts to tech focused SME legal group recently and I thought I would share a few thoughts, ideas, and perspectives with you.

Firstly, I must confess I love technology and how it benefits us as consumers, clients and as businesses.

Secondly, I like to have a real pragmatic view of technology to see what might work and what doesn't (I hope this article reflects that balanced view).

At the start of our discussions, it was encouraging to hear what professional services are doing in the tech space and what is on their radar. I have heard recent examples of legal firms looking at AI for document management,

digital document storage, technology to support agile working and one particular firm who have invested the majority of their IT teams time in looking at technology futures.

On the flip side, I read a report that mentioned 78% of legal firms have a CRM system (Client Relationship Management tool, effectively a database that tracks client interaction, data and insight). That's a positive, and yet, when I speak to legal (and other professional service) firms the overwhelming response is, yes, we have a CRM but no one uses it to its full capacity, or in any significant way. A key piece of learning is technology will only help your team if:

- They understand why it helps clients, why it helps both them and the firm they work for.
- They have some influence on what the tool does, how it works and how easy it is to use (this is a stage that is so often missed out).
- Are supported, coached, and managed to use the system individually and collectively.

Without these three simple things in place (and they all need to be in place) technology becomes "another task we don't have time for" rather than an enabler that helps us serve and support our clients more efficiently. There is nothing complex in the three things above, but many firms try and skip any of these to "save time and resources". Far better to take a view that each of these three stages is a key investment in the project.

I write, speak and have a team that delivers workshops on the "real client journey" around creating the best client experience possible. I have been working hard researching best practice and looking at tools that might help bring this to life. Here is how to use technology in your client journey.

- Firstly, understand what great looks like from a client perspective (with or without technology).
- Then understand where the gaps are in your current journey and see how technology might support you with your gaps.
- Lastly have a backup plan. What happens if Sam or Alex doesn't like a digital document signing process, but wants to sign the original paperwork and drop it off at your office?

My main worry (and I have seen this) is when technology is applied to the client journey without this thought. In essence what some firms have is a terrible client journey and experience, then they add technology that makes this terrible experience much more efficient. You end up with a faster, poorer experience.

Surely now is the time to really step back, understand what your clients really want from you. Ask your team where the pain points are, look at best practice, interview your clients and take a real-world, client centric view of your client journey. Only then are you in a great position to look at technology to enhance your clients experience with you as a firm.

One last thought (and I shared this in the discussion I mentioned), when we launched BlackBerry, everyone told us that "no one wants email on a phone". You sometimes need to test people's (yours, your teams, your suppliers and your clients) understanding and insights and help them see the benefit of technology in your client journey.

To find out how you and your firm can develop your client journey and experience, speak to Nevil: nevil@newresults.co.uk, connect with him on LinkedIn or visit our website www.newresults.co.uk



Mike Clark, Development Director of Tynexe Commercial Ltd and Dysart Developments (front/right), with Phill Bell, Managing Director of ART Health Solutions (back/left), whose company has become the latest to relocate to AirView Park.

Art Health Solutions bolsters scale-up plans with move to Airview Park

With reports confirming that the North of Tyne's digital tech sector is growing four times faster than the region's wider economy, employee wellbeing and performance software company, ART Health Solutions, has become the latest organisation to move to AirView Park to bolster ambitious scale-up plans.

The firm is riding a wave of success helping national and international blue-chip companies boost workplace performance metrics by using data-driven evidence, workforce insights and specialist app technology to improve operations. This includes reducing staff turnover, lowering absenteeism and therefore minimising costs associated with employee downtime.

More recently, ART Health Solutions has also received a £1million venture capital investment to develop new app technology including employee wellbeing software that enables individual 'human performance' to be better understood and embraced, allowing for bespoke strategies to be delivered by employers as a positive measure.

And, with most companies now placing staff wellbeing at the very heart of operations, ART's relocation to larger, modern HQ premises at AirView Park, next to Newcastle International Airport, is being seen as the step change for further expansion.

CEO, Phill Bell, explained, "This is a new chapter in ART's continued growth and evolution, and we're very much looking ahead with great confidence and optimism. What we have achieved in such a short space of time is fantastic

and testament to the team, but we are now developing a lot of new opportunities in line with a changing economic landscape, new advances in technology, and future employer requirements, so it was definitely the right time to make the move and put ourselves in the best possible position to push ahead.

"Whilst our work supports many large global brands, we're very much front and centre of the North East's growing tech scene which has rapidly made a name for itself over recent years as a key location for innovation and fast emerging companies.

"AirView Park therefore allows us to remain doing so, and we now have a building that is very much in line with our own vision, encourages collaboration and best practice, embraces staff wellbeing, and 100% represents who we are as a business.

"A major factor for us was finding and creating the right working environment for staff, which we are also hoping to increase from ten to approximately 25 employees over the next year. From the parkland setting and sustainability benefits, to the flow of the office space and nearby transport links, everything just came together in one location, so we're delighted to be part of the development."

The North East's tech sector brings substantial economic benefits to the region with the local digital economy expected to create 1,300 new tech businesses over the next five years. It is also expected to increase tech company revenues by £425m and support 10,000 new employees entering into the workforce.

Mike Clark, Development Director of Tynexe Commercial, developers of AirView Park, added, "This is a fantastic addition to AirView Park and we very much welcome the team on board as new tenants of phase two. The tech sector is thriving here in Newcastle currently, and the city has certainly made its mark as one of the most attractive UK locations for start-ups and scale-ups from the industry.

"If we can keep capitalising on this to help attract other smart, innovative SMEs like ART Health Solutions to the area and the North East, AirView Park could possibly become an out-of-town 'tech cluster site' for inward investment whilst at the same time, complimenting Newcastle city centre's tech scene. It's an exciting proposition."

ART Health Solutions was formed by Phill Bell and colleague, Paul Smith, in 2018 after years of working with top athletes in elite sports science. Using their combined knowledge and expertise in fitness and cognitive performance, they developed the business to combine consultancy with a SaaS model, whilst applying the same scientific principles and techniques to corporate clients.

The company is currently in the final stages of developing its 'One Wellbeing' app which is due to launch in October.

AirView Park is a 175,000 sq ft commercial development providing modern, high quality office space for sale or rent. For more details regarding units available (phase two), please call commercial agents Naylor's Gavin Black on 0191 466 1349, or to discuss bespoke build opportunities and future phases, please contact Tynexe Commercial Ltd's Development Director, Mike Clark, via Mike Clark | LinkedIn

My Weekend

Keith Newman

Owner, Highlights PR

From his floating office in Royal Quays Marina, North Shields, Keith helps businesses and organisations get the maximum amount of media coverage.

Here we find out what Keith gets up to on a typical weekend.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

All the time!

PR isn't a nine to five job, and I wouldn't have it any other way. It's hard to anticipate when I might get a call from a client or from a media contact needing urgent information. I also have a stall at Tynemouth Market most Saturdays selling books, collectables, and records so that takes up a lot of time. I do enjoy it as it's a chance to talk to people and help them if they are looking for something unusual.

Are most weekends the same?

No, there's always something different to do and my workload is constantly changing so there is a lot of variety. I also love to take my clients out onto the river for a Sunday afternoon cruise. The Tyne is steeped in history, and I have learned a lot about the old shipyards and buildings that once lined the river.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

I rarely switch off and know that the nature of my job needs my constant attention. I'm very lucky that I don't really consider working in PR as a job. I think it's fun and I love meeting new people and getting to know their business so that I can help them.

The way I try to switch off is through my love of music. I'm a volunteer at community radio station Radio Northumberland and produce a number of shows ranging from new wave to 80's to general business and leisure. I also like to attend as many gigs as possible with my friends.



Keith Newman

What do you do at a weekend which you can't fit in through the week?

I do a lot of voluntary work and I tend to catch up on paperwork etc. I'm a trustee at the young people's charity, Leading Link, and I'm also the national PR officer for the Maritime Volunteer Service. It's important to keep up to date with what's happening and that's not always possible during the week.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I should do more exercise and I rarely lie in.

Big night out or a night in the house?

I love entertaining friends at home with one of my home cooked chilli's, but I also like to dress up now and again for a good night out. I'm usually home by eleven as late nights are a thing of the past.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I'm a Newcastle United season ticket holder and get to the match as often as work will allow. I'm also a sponsor for the Under 7's team at Willington Quay Saints so I check their progress on line if I can't get to see a match.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

The very best fish and chips in the North East are at Harbour View Fish and Chip Restaurant in

Seaton Sluice. Gorgeous Icelandic Cod cooked to perfection. I try to get there on a Saturday after a busy day at Tynemouth Market. A great way to chill out after an early start and busy day.

I also enjoy Sunday lunch at South Causey Inn near Stanley. Big portions and they are dog friendly too so Millie can come along too. For a real treat, I love the Hard Rock Café.

How important is the weekend to you?

Sunday is the only real day I get to spend with my family. We will do something nice like going for Sunday Lunch or jump in the car for a drive. It's also the day I plan my week ahead and check how the diary is looking for the working week ahead.

What's the best thing about weekends?

A bit less pressure than through the week but also more time to eat out and enjoy myself.

Of a weekend, you'll usually find me most happy..?

Playing music and pottering on the boat.

To find out more about Highlights PR see www.highlightspr.co.uk
keith@highlightspr.co.uk
 07814 397951

Championing the menopause in the workplace



Louise Kennedy

October is Menopause Awareness Month and in recent years the hot topic has climbed the ladder of priorities to hit agendas across an array of businesses and industries.

It is clearly evident that there is a growing movement to support women through the menopause at work with the news recently announced from the CIPD.

The CIPD will collaborate with Helen Tomlinson, the UK Government's first Menopause Employment Champion, to champion 'menopause friendly' workplaces, bringing additional backing to the individuals and companies who have lobbied to get the menopause and awareness of its impact in the workplace dynamic on the agenda.

Oculus HR provides innovative and flexible HR solutions to SMEs regionally and nationally through their dedicated and holistic approach and have seen a shift in movement, and attitudes change towards the menopause across businesses.

Louise Kennedy, Managing Director at Oculus HR said: "We've seen an increase from employers requesting advice and guidance

around the topic of the menopause in the workplace. Awareness around the menopause needs to be consistent across businesses and we still hear reports that highly experienced and skilled women are leaving jobs due to the lack of support systems in place and given the current skills shortage this is set to have a damaging impact on businesses around the globe.

I was happy to see the recent announcement from the CIPD on a national level, we are definitely moving in the right direction. At times all that can be needed is slight tweaks to existing wellbeing and health and safety policies and procedures to support women go through this natural stage of life."

Louise added: "Everyone experiences the menopause differently. Some people notice little impact on their daily life. But, for others, the symptoms can be severe, affecting them both physically and mentally, and can include anxiety, loss of confidence, problems sleeping and 'brain fog'.

These symptoms can have a negative impact on their performance and attendance at work. It's important that businesses look for ways to support employees and create an environment in which discussion on the subject is open and honest."

The menopause usually occurs sometime between 45 and 55 years of age, but it can happen earlier or later. As an award-winning HR Specialist, Speaker and Podcaster, Founder

Louise Kennedy is on a mission to bring insight to key talking points and trends across the industry. The popular Real World HR podcast is a great platform for these discussions, and Louise was joined by Menopause Educator Miss Menopause aka Sharon MacArthur to discuss the topic.

Sharon is keen to stress that 'the menopause is there to be managed, not just to be endured.' The podcast brought to light some astounding findings and although the menopause affects 100% of women it's estimated that only 3% of companies have the topic of the menopause incorporated into their people plan.

Louise added: "Sharon is doing some amazing work in educating businesses around the topic of the menopause, I was thrilled she agreed to join me on the podcast for the down to earth and insightful chat. The menopause has an impact across all industries and at every level.

The main takeaway was to not overthink it and to not reinvent the wheel so to speak. It's vital that businesses normalise discussing the impact the menopause can have on employees and ensure there are measures in place to support them. This may be around absence, identifying any reasonable adjustments in the workplace, training and general health and safety."

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

The illusion of protection

In a regulated world with apparently strong laws and a representative democracy, it is easy to feel complacent about just how our services and their oversight systems operate. Dr David Cliff explores the fact that many people do not find that they are well protected when they have need of support.

Imagine it, you have a domestic burglary, and you phone the police. In certain parts of the country, you now receive a crime number which facilitates your insurance claim with a self-declaration that will result in an act of fraud on your part if you have misrepresented that claim. Society and insurers are therefore almost 100% protected from you committing fraud because there is a clear evidence trail. Conversely, the thief that actually steals your goods and violates your home has a putative likelihood of apprehension and conviction in only 3 to 9% of cases, depending on which part of the country you are in. We believe we have the police and other public services that can protect us. The reality is when push comes to shove, the lived experience of receiving that support often falls increasingly short of the mark.

This underpins the concern of many people around our public services and their inadequacy, their underinvestment, their excessive application of “woke” approaches that may be modernising, transformational and contemporary, but take many organisations away from the delivery of their core function. Namely to serve an organised society, and its citizens who collectively contribute to public service by direct payments through taxation and other hypothecated means.

Take the Health Service. We have recently seen targets that have become so impossible to meet, there has been a rationalisation of them. The bureaucracy that ensues results in an experience by patients of increasing disappointment, rather than the services being held to account to deliver within an agreed timeframe. As there is no particular redress that’s tangible for most patients if they’ve got to wait seven hours in A & E or two hours for an ambulance. Equally, the accountability of governments that have failed progressively to deal with the fundamental systemic logjams within the NHS, that of poor work planning and, the trans-decade fudge that has been social care, suggest that we have a system that is not particularly well held to account by the ballot box.

Consider Ofcom and the years it has taken to even begin to address the inflationary hikes on mobile phone contracts. Then, there is the inability of the energy regulator to actually meaningfully regulate prices, supply sources, supply dependency factors, and oh yes, the profiteering by energy providers who provide energy on what has now become known as the ‘rocket and feather’ approach to pricing.

Yes, it’s easy to see that we live under an illusion of protections that don’t exist. Swimmers are finding that in the rivers, despite some improvements, we remain the ‘dirty man’ of Europe in a relative sense, whilst government ministers espouse the fact that our water quality is subject to massive investment and progressive improvement. So why are water shareholders doing so well whilst the companies that pay them these dividends amass such huge debt that ultimately will need to be picked up by the public who are left to swim in a solution of human waste and agricultural chemicals?

You can’t run a society with values reduced to rules that self-interested people have ‘get rounds’ or create the illusion of protection without outcomes that are actually meaningful, beneficial, tangible and part of the lived experience of the recipient.

It’s therefore small wonder that so many people are finding so many of our public systems wanting. When they have a need, it is often unmet.

The private sector is also culpable. Alongside the illusion of protection in both private and public sectors, we have the illusion of good customer service wherein customers’ individuality is just not that important to these large organisations and an algorithm will do. People are greeted with anthropomorphised AI, are cut off and are told almost 24/7 there are high call volumes. The truth is providing greater call handling capacity that involves real people affects the bottom line and profits are maximised when you oblige customers to patiently fill the gap by them waiting unacceptably long times for a response.

In all of this, we have a small business community that seeks to try and thrive and grow often despite the might of competing large organisations, both public and private. So many of these small businesses continue with a personal approach to customers and are usually far more connected to the people they serve than larger organisations ever will be.

Yes, public service and big business could do a lot to learn from small business. The world is about people with identities and rights, both legal and moral, not systems, digitisation, automation, and virtue signalling protections that ultimately have very few teeth. But if board bonuses, shareholders’ dividends and the politicians being happy how the public purse has been balanced are the central considerations - what really matters?

Oh, he’s having another rant you may say. But let’s be clear, we have a mental health crisis which isn’t going to be corrected by meditation apps and counselling services when people’s fundamental empowerment, their value as individual citizens and their true value as customers and employees to organisations is not celebrated in board rooms, county halls and Whitehall. Let’s remember we’re all in this life together and truly humane ethics within organisations are about how they serve the smallest voices in the system well.

gedanken.co.uk



“

*...the world is
about people,
not systems...*



Recruitment; not just a numbers game

The recruitment industry is often so focused on bums on seats that it forgets that at the heart of each hire is a real person. We should never lose sight of the very real human impact offering roles can have on people's lives says Sam Spoons, managing director and founder of talent acquisition firm Talentheads.

What is a successful recruitment strategy? Is it one where roles are never unfilled for long and vacancies are immediately snapped up? Or where the probation period allows us off the hook if that person isn't right?

For too long, the answer has been yes, consolidated by the fact that a lot of what we hear about recruitment is led by the hiring side: staff shortages, a hugely competitive market, the difficulty of finding the right person for the job.

And while all of these are valid viewpoints, I look at it differently. For me, recruiting successfully can quite literally change lives – and we may have slightly lost sight of that.

While a job helps pay the bills, for many people it's so much more than that; it's an identity, something to be proud of, or that gives them purpose in life.

Taking the pandemic as an example...thousands of people were furloughed (albeit temporarily) while thousands more lost their jobs.

A study by the Mental Health Foundation found that unemployment has a range of negative effects, including poverty or a drop in standards of living, stress associated with financial

insecurity, shame and the loss of vital social networks.

It also found that unemployment is associated with symptoms of distress, depression, anxiety, psychosomatic symptoms and a drop in wellbeing and self-esteem.

So it's clear that recruitment, done well, has a huge impact not only on people's finances, but their overall health and purpose too.

Or take the young person who's taking their first steps on the career ladder after education. A job that fits gives them a chance to grow, to see the world and gain new skills; in short, it allows them to fulfil their potential.

Yet these examples, and many others, only really work when recruitment is done well.

At Talentheads, we firmly believe that we all need to see the bigger picture, both employers and employees, when it comes to making sure we invest in long-term opportunities - with long term impact.

It's not just about filling a gap; recruiting holistically, as we do, means that we look at everything – skills, yes, but also values, life

experience, career stage, culture and purpose fit – to get the right match.

Not only does this ensure a happier, more productive work environment for all concerned, it increases the chances of retention successes reducing the churn and limiting the amount we need to recruit in the first place.

However, something we also see too often is that recruitment is not given the focus and support it deserves and needs, instead being carried out by managers, office staff and marketing teams who often lack training and confidence – so no wonder it's frequently unsuccessful.

That's why we also recently launched a range of training sessions on all things recruitment and retention, to upskill those people who find that hiring people has, perhaps unexpectedly, become part of their day job.

Our practical workshops, which started in August and will be held in Newcastle throughout the rest of the year, equip recruiters, hiring managers and anyone involved in the hiring process with the skills, knowledge and confidence to navigate the challenges it brings.

Topics we'll be covering include planning your recruitment strategy for long-term growth and retention, sourcing the right candidates and best practice for shortlisting. Each session will be hosted by a member of our very own Talentheads team and will answer all the questions guests have on their particular topic, along with practical skills to put into practice in a real-life setting.

For more information, call the Learning Team on 0191 300 8688, email hello@talentheads.co.uk, visit www.talentheads.co.uk or register at www.eventbrite.com/ 69131364663

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Pandemic-created consultancy continues to grow and thrive

Supporting organisations with their Learning, Talent and Organisational Development needs.



People Spark Solutions launched in June 2020 and gained its first loyal client within 24 hours of operating. The rest is history, a different type of consultancy was born and aimed at supporting organisations with a more personalised approach.

MD Scott Smith identified a gap for a consultancy to be more human, something that proved very useful when the business launched.

Scott said: “It was over three years ago that I decided to set up my own company,” says Scott. “Granted, at the time I thought that perhaps it wasn’t exactly the best time to take the plunge because we were in the middle of the Covid pandemic and working practices had been thrown out of the window. However, in hindsight, it worked to my advantage because most people had been forced to change how they ran their organisations”

People Spark Solutions is doing exceptionally well and has a raft of clients across the UK plus a team of people working with Scott.

“I’m fortunate in that we get a lot of repeat business which, I suppose, is the best recommendation...companies keep coming back to us for further help, support, and guidance. It’s tricky trying to think of a typical client, as this could range from large corporate organisations to organisations scaling up where they don’t have the support in-house.

We meet them and build relationships to help them with team facilitation, leadership development, coaching, psychometrics, and support for wider people-related projects.

We work with tech firms, corporate businesses, housing organisations, transport and logistics firms, local authorities, utility companies, and many more and because my colleagues and I come from a corporate background, we talk the same language as all of the businesses. We’ve worked with similar...or in some cases identical...companies and organisations, and can hit the ground running when it comes to helping them.

We’re also used working on a 1-2-1 basis with senior leaders and business owners and at times offer a sounding board for business challenges. We can help them recognise where they need help and possibly how to empower current leaders to take charge of business decisions. We show business leaders how to lead because it’s surprising how many have never been shown how to. We explain how to manage people and how to get the best from them.”

It’s very easy to assume that you know everything when you’re running a company or organisation. But be honest... do you really?

People need to develop. This is especially difficult when a firm operates on a 100 per cent working from home set-up. How do you build relationships and maintain links?

Scott and the team at People Spark Solutions offer over 50 years collective experience into helping organisations achieve their goals and objectives efficiently through their people.

And as you’ll soon be discovering in further news from People Spark Solutions, they’ll be spreading their wings beyond the UK. They already work with several international firms who have a base in this country, so...no surprise...they’re now going to be working in the home nation of those firms. Exciting times. It also shows how quickly People Spark Solutions has grown in the space of just three years.

The best idea is to speak to Scott and the team at People Spark Solutions and discover how they can help you with your people objectives.





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Bryony Gibson

How to cope with a mid-career crisis?

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares advice and strategies to help navigate a mid-life career crisis.

When it comes to career development, the first thing that springs to mind is the pursuit of promotion and progression. We're immersed in a culture fueled by the desire to advance, elevate our status, and take on more responsibility. Yet, establishing a successful career is only one chapter in our work story.

Recent research has revealed that most people - including those with the most enviable careers - find themselves unhappy at work in their mid-40s. This mid-career crisis occurs when we start to sense a disconnection and misalignment with our chosen path.

Reflected in dwindling enthusiasm or an unsettling inability to focus with the same vigour as before, one common cause is spending too much of your time putting out fires and avoiding bad outcomes, rather than pursuing projects with

positive and invigorating value.

Naturally, when people are disenchanted, they begin to question their choices. A loss of passion and purpose drains their energy, giving way to introspection, apathy, and a growing curiosity about what might be.

Unhappy, they face the dilemma of 'cope or quit', but the most pivotal step is recognising these signs. A mid-career crisis may feel like you are beyond the point of return, but it is a chapter you can rewrite. It is possible to rediscover your sense of fulfilment and purpose.

Make Time to Feel Good

A negative workplace can harm your mental health. My advice is to create room for other pleasures in your life, for example, reviving an old hobby or taking up a new one. If you love travelling, take a short break and come back refreshed. If you dream of playing the guitar, while it may not seem as important as your job, it can help you to relax, feel a sense of accomplishment, and discover new ways to be happy.

Don't Forget to Talk

A problem is better shared so talk to those you trust and seek guidance where you can. Having a mentor who has been through it before can help you navigate your way forward. If you feel comfortable, you can also approach your management or HR to share your concerns or express your enthusiasm to work on new projects or teams. Whoever you choose, use their guidance to help you make a concrete plan of action. Setting yourself new goals will also help, but if you feel like making a career change is your only choice, don't be scared to leap.

Identify the Root Cause

Understanding what is at the crux of your crisis will guide your steps. With this clarity, you can chart a course to overcome the problems. Consider the following areas and how they make you feel:

- **Your position:** Have you outgrown it? How do you feel about your daily tasks? How much responsibility and authority do you have? Is it time to assess whether you need a more challenging environment?
- **Your colleagues:** Sometimes, it's not the work. Do strained relationships or personality clashes create any problems? If so, it may be time to consider new companions for the next leg of your journey; ones who resonate with your values and aspirations.
- **The industry:** The seemingly relentless churn of the same industry over many years can lead to disenchantment. If your skills are adaptable, consider exploring a new industry that excites you and holds more profound meaning.
- **The company:** Has the passion for your company faded? When you feel the alignment has gone, it may be time to seek a new North Star; one where your passions and principles are met.

An unspoken reality for many people, a mid-career crisis can be hard to identify. The important thing is to keep a balanced perspective and not forget that missing out in some way is unavoidable in life. If you work through these strategies and they are not enough to reunite you with your career, then it may be time to make a change, as midlife is not too late.

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

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You will be responsible for supporting the Manager with leading, motivating and coaching the team as they work through their studies, which as an ACA/ACCA qualified Auditor you will be able to relate to.

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Clients are based locally working with small businesses and those up to £50million turnover offering a great breadth of experience to gain working with different issues for each business.

Along with an attractive salary, pension is above standard enrolment levels and there is an annual bonus based on performance. Free onsite car parking also makes the commute to work much easier. **Quote Ref: 2192**

SENIOR ACCOUNTANT

Billingham, £35-50,000pa

The firm offer a suite of services which range from accountancy, tax and financial planning providing the client with all their needs. As Senior Accountant you will focus on the completion of accounts for mainly LLP clients and will include all corporate and personal tax matters, with client contact varying significantly based on individual client demand. You will provide guidance and support to those still training with scope to become more involved in staff management if you wish.

With this being a small firm you will enjoy a 360 encompassing role with all aspects of accounting and tax, managing relations with a variety of ultra-high net worth clients whilst always providing outstanding service. Supporting the Practice Manager in the reviewing and signing off of accounts.

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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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Annabel Graham

Culture starts with us

As leaders, we can get caught up in delivering the strategy and placing huge importance on our goals and action plans. And it absolutely is a priority. But let's take a step back a minute and think about something equally important—our culture.

Culture is "the way we do things around here." It's all about beliefs, values, and behaviours. Those little conventions that build up over time and shape how our businesses work. It sets the tone for our teams and organisations, and it affects everyone.

Hack Future Lab took the pulse of 100 business leaders globally in 2023. An overwhelming 84% agreed that culture is critical for business success and 60% agreed that culture is more important than strategy or the business model.

How then do we influence or shift culture? Well as leaders we can take inspiration from parenting. Just as our parents modelled behaviours to influence us, so we as leaders must model the desired culture to influence our teams. Behaviours play a significant role in shaping culture, as people learn by observing and modelling those around them. As leaders we need to assess our own behaviours and ensure they align with the culture we are trying to create. However this is not just about having nice-

sounding values or processes on paper or the wall of the office. If we say one thing but don't demonstrate it with our own actions, it sends a message that how we behave doesn't matter. We must embody the behaviours and values we want to see in our teams, as this demonstrates what is ok and not ok, leading to a more consistent and aligned culture.

We can also use storytelling to help reinforce our culture. Sharing stories that provide examples of desired behaviours can help team members understand how they should act and behave. These stories become the foundation of the culture and shape people's actions.

We don't always need to be overly prescriptive though when setting cultural norms. Remember we are working with adults, so allowing people to recognise and apply desired behaviours can be more effective than dictating rules. We just need to course correct as and where needed.

If then you are looking to adjust or develop your culture, think about the following:

- What is working well that should be kept and built on?
- What is not working and what are the behaviours that contribute to those issues?
- Do I recognise these behaviours in myself? Am I doing things that mean my people are behaving in this way?
- Where am I focusing? What am I not listening to or assuming about the business? What other questions do I need to ask?
- Who can I speak to who will give me really honest feedback on how I am behaving and on what they see in the business?
- Reviewing all of this, what do I need to do and how do I need to behave differently to get the outcomes I want?
- What conversations should I have with my people or my peers to ensure that we're all on the same page?
- How and from whom will I get feedback to make sure I'm on track with this, and that it is making a difference?

Notice all my questions say 'I' not 'we'. Until I hold up the mirror to myself as a leader, I can't impact change on others. Because, in the end, to really make a difference to a business culture, cultural change starts with us.

If you feel coaching would benefit you or your team contact Annabel via LinkedIn, annabel@successfultraining.co.uk, or visit www.successfultraining.co.uk

Award winning ‘Skeleton’ staff plan growth in Hartlepool

Angela Davies and Dionne Watson used their expertise in crime scene investigation to create an award-winning business. Now they have ambitious plans to expand following a move into new offices in Hartlepool.

CSI Training & Events provides training and unique corporate events to organisations from police forces, fire services and health trusts to schools, universities and companies in many sectors.

The move into UKSE’s Innovation Centre on the Queens Meadow Business Park has given the company the space it needs. The team also includes non-executive Directors Brian Rankin and Angela Whitworth who bring their own knowledge in CSI, quality assurance, training and disaster response to the business. Team members Ed and George, the articulated skeletons, now have more room to rattle around in too.

Angela and Dionne met at Teesside University then both served as crime scene investigators with Northumbria Police. They started their business in 2012 in an incubation unit and based it at home during the Covid lockdown but badly needed more space.

Their corporate events appeal to companies working in many sectors including recruitment, finance and retail. Teams of six up to 100 staff members enjoy a day of CSI with events encouraging leadership, problem solving and team building skills. They are proving a new attraction to rival paintballing and sports days.

“Adults relish the challenges of CSI and are usually just as keen to dress-up in the crime scene suits and powder for fingerprints as the children,” said Dionne.

Education is a particularly strong growth area for the company and the events appear to be stimulating real interest in the STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) subjects.

“Becoming part of a crime scene is really fun and something different for pupils,” said Angela. “Seeing such enthusiasm and interest is really rewarding.”

CSI also provides online training through a forensic awareness app called Crime Scene Assistant and an online shop sells themed merchandise from pen holders and crime scene tapes to lanyards.



The colleagues also act as disaster consultants and have travelled to Ethiopia, South America and Europe to use their expertise at air disaster scenes. With Angela living in Redcar and Dionne in Hebburn, Hartlepool is the ideal mid-way spot for their office.

“The Innovation Centre gives us everything we need,” said Angela. “The UKSE team is on hand, we have easy-access storage space, free parking and meeting rooms on site. And Ed and George absolutely love it here!” she added.

Joan Cook, Workspace Manager for UKSE, the Tata Steel business-support subsidiary, said: “We have around 50 tenants here and are delighted that CSI Training and Events chose to join them. There’s a real variety of businesses here but this is the first time I’ve visited an office and been greeted by a skeleton. It does bring a whole new meaning to the phrase ‘skeleton staff.’”

CSI Training and Events is at www.csitrainingandevents.com
Details of UKSE’s support for businesses on 01642 777 777 and www.ukse.co.uk



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Leaders set to learn from Sunderland at city's Expo

A stellar line-up of experts is set to descend on Sunderland to explore how people will live, work and play in cities in the future.

Hosted at City Hall, and the start of Expo Sunderland - a programme of events that will showcase the transforming Riverside Sunderland quarter - the two-day invite-only showcase, Delivering Future Cities Forum, will see luminaries in fields comprising built environment, technology and education share insight on how cities will adapt and develop to respond to the changing needs of the people who use them.

Hosted by BBC Home Affairs Editor Mark Easton, the event will take place on October 17 and 18. More than 150 guests will hear from expert speakers including Ed Whiting, Director, Levelling Up - DLUHC, Peter Freeman, Chair - Homes England and Alan Lewis, Director Local Authority - Microsoft.

The Forum will provide a 360-degree view of regeneration, exploring the different facets of a city that contribute to creating a equitable, thriving and sustainable destination. The event is expected to attract business leaders from across the UK, keen to hear how Sunderland and its local, regional and national partners are approaching this very challenge.

Patrick Melia, chief executive of Sunderland

City Council, said: "We are delighted to be welcoming an exemplary line-up of contributors to this Forum, which will provide a rich and compelling exploration of how cities can and should function and the opportunities that will create for people to live, work and play in new and different ways.

"The event will bring together leaders who champion innovation, drive growth, challenge and share best practice in building the cities of our future and positions Sunderland as the exemplar it is - a place that is increasingly recognised nationally as leading the way when it comes to regeneration thanks to exceptional partnerships and collaborative working."

The event is based around a number of themes including sustainable communities, smart cities, healthy homes and lifestyles and upskilling future talent, and will provide insight, inspiration and showcase best practice in strategic place-based regeneration, as well as demonstrating how effective partnerships across the regeneration ecosystem allow places and industry to thrive.

Councillor Kevin Johnston, dynamic city cabinet member, said the event will kick off a programme of events next year that will bring thousands of people into Riverside Sunderland to see - first hand - how the area is transforming and to answer the big question: how will we live in the homes and cities of the future?

He said: "Sunderland is undergoing seismic change - and this is creating a future city we can be proud of. This event is an opportunity to reflect on what we're doing here and share that best practice with others, as well as to listen and learn from others."

Expo Sunderland - which will centre around the city's transforming Riverside Sunderland - provides a window on a changing world, showcasing how we will live, work and play in a more sustainable way, thanks to transformational tech and new innovation. Using the new community that is taking shape at Riverside as a backdrop, Expo will feature a large number of public events, as well as conferences and seminars that will see businesspeople,



Patrick Melia

politicians and influencers descend on the city to see how the area will function, as the UK's first carbon-neutral urban quarter.

The wider Expo programme comprises of a series of events and showcases from October 2023 - July 2025, including:

- A programme of inspiring events and exhibitions, focused on Living Well and the Future of Work, open to the public as they rediscover a transformed Riverside Sunderland
- A Future City Conference and innovation and tech showcases that will explore opportunities for businesses to support the drive towards a more sustainable future
- A programme of events for the public and built environment professionals that will focus on future homes, gardens and interiors
- A week-long Riverside Festival in July 2025, the culmination of Expo, with a vibrant programme of events and activities that showcase Sunderland's new city scene.

To stay up to date with the Expo programme as it takes shape, visit www.exposunderland.com or follow @ExpoSunderland on X (Twitter), Facebook, LinkedIn or Instagram.

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Durham University appoints TGA to develop decarbonisation plans

TGA Consulting Engineers (TGA), an expert provider of consulting engineering services, has been appointed by Durham University to develop heat decarbonisation plans for five sites following a successful bid for Low Carbon Skills Funding (LCSF).



Durham University is one of six public sector bodies in the North East to have been selected to receive funding from the LCSF.

Due to its reputation for leading edge expertise in the sector and its performance on a raft of earlier projects for the university, TGA was invited to support the university's bid for LCSF funding by Tom Bray, Senior Energy Manager in Durham University's energy and sustainability team.

With approval for its funding bid obtained in early July, the university then briefed TGA to complete its study in time for the next Salix funding round bids, which are being submitted in September.

The buildings within the Durham University campus that form part of TGA's brief include the theology and history departments, both located on North Bailey, multiple buildings at Hatfield College, Bede Chapel and Southend House where TGA's remit is to assess the impact of potential future building improvement works on energy use calculations. TGA also has a separate appointment at Bede Chapel to replace the boiler plant.

Commenting on the firm's appointment, Dr David Warwick, TGA's technical director and head of the building performance team, explains why it is more challenging to work in historic buildings.

He said: "TGA combines the ability to undertake thermal modelling and associated analysis with that of designing and integrating the appropriate technologies into existing buildings. This process is particularly challenging in historic buildings because it is more difficult to improve the performance of the building envelope to the degree required to make certain technologies viable as well as trying to do so without damaging the historic building fabric or detracting from its aesthetic qualities.

"This is, however, one of our key strengths as a practice and we can demonstrate a strong track record of delivering such projects.

"On this occasion, we are working with Durham University to identify what needs to be done, which involves the preparation of concept level designs together with heat decarbonisation plans that the university will use to support its bids and further redevelopment or refurbishment works."

Commenting on TGA's appointment, Mr Bray, said: "TGA have strong capabilities in respect of energy and building performance and in the context of Durham University, they are very well acquainted with our estate.

"We have 350 buildings here and as a result of TGA's work we will know what to do in the future and how to tackle other areas of the estate where we need to become more energy efficient. This is very much a conceptual study and will help facilitate decarbonisation of the sites in the future - a key stage in our journey to carbon zero."

The Salix Funding stream opens and closes periodically – typically every six months in autumn and spring - the work will be completed to support applications in September 2023 and April 2024. There is stiff competition for funding from all public sector bodies across the UK.

Other professional firms working on the project include Purcell, a cross-disciplinary practice fielding the world's largest team of heritage experts working in the built environment and the Newcastle office of project management and cost consultancy practice, Thornton Firkin.

tgace.co.uk

“

...TGA have strong capabilities in respect of energy and building performance...



Tom Bray, Senior Energy Manager at Durham University and David Warwick, TGA's Technical Director at Hatfield College

County Durham's JPS has new expansion plans after hitting targets



JPS Managing Director Steven Johnson with Maurice Johnson (Associate Director) and Niall Douglas (Procurement Officer).

Picture: Chris Booth

A County Durham based procurement specialist is targeting a £2m turnover within the next two years having once feared the global pandemic could actually bring an end to the company he owns.

Johnson Procurement Solutions, based in Newton Aycliffe, recovered from a tough period at the height of Covid to achieve a record turnover last year. JPS are now looking to expand its workforce.

Steven Johnson, the managing director who set the company up in late 2016, is now more confident than ever that JPS can keep growing and has ambitious seven-figure targets for 2025.

Having started out helping small to medium businesses seven years ago, JPS now works with blue chip organisations such as Worley, Centrica, Johnson Matthey and PX Group providing flexible interim procurement and commercial support.

Steven said: "We want to grow the business and within the next five years we want to have a £5m turnover. We recorded our best financial results last year, those increased by 45 per cent and we want to do that again.

"We have shown huge resilience and because of Covid we went from having a large number of small clients to just four or five large clients. This is due to the strategic change I implemented to target the larger companies with a global footprint.

"Our focus is now on project procurement, large scale, and we went from working with £50m

turnover SMEs to targeting organisations who have a turnover of £3-10bn.

"It's an exciting journey and while there are only five members of dedicated staff here at the moment we are looking to double that by 2025."

Steven is born and bred in Darlington. The 49-year-old former procurement director has worked with Laing O'Rourke, AMEC, Ericsson, Tolent Construction and was part of the Orange team that set up the first 3G network in Sweden.

JPS is actively looking to recruit a quantity surveyor and project procurement manager following expansion and they are looking to secure a new headquarters having outgrown their office at Flexspace, Incubation Centre, on Aycliffe Business Park.

Steven, who proudly partners with Tees Valley companies too, said: "I'm looking to recruit new people this year, procurement and commercial.

"We are looking at CVs at the moment due to expansion to help us achieve our 2025 vision. We want that increased turnover.

"There is a massive gap in the industry for our skillset. We know that companies engage with our services because they require our skill level and knowledge to take the company forward.

"We want to bring in the young and the bright,

develop and shape them and work together with clients. We provide our clients a full support network behind them."

JPS is a member of NEPIC and its company logo is based around a wolf because, Steven says, not only will JPS hunt as a pack for its clients, the pack will always support each other as a family too.

JPS' key services provide large project procurement, category management, commercial services, bid and estimating support. They also provide strategic projects across industries such as oil and gas, energy, including renewables, the chemical sector and construction.

Steven said: "We provide our services with confident, capable, people. My team will come to me with any questions rather than the client, that is the support mechanism. We have a vastly experienced team of people in the areas we support.

"People want the work delivered on time applying best practice, and they need capable people around them - and we supply that - with my additional support.

"I always wanted to do something where I could provide best practice procurement and commercial services to companies. We follow the consultancy model and are not a body shop. Operating as a niche business, but have the appetite to grow."

For further information check out www.jps-procurementsolutions.com



JPS

Johnson Procurement Solutions Ltd

Proactive Procurement

www.jps-procurementsolutions.com

enquiries@jps-procurementsolutions.com

01325 329876

Office Address:

Incubation Centre
Durham Way South
Newton Aycliffe
DL5 6XP





Rob Lynas

How ‘active’ is active travel?

Active travel, and active design, are subjects that have been around for a few years, but their influence on the way we deliver our schemes has grown significantly recently.

The key driver behind this movement is to increase activity, improve physical and mental wellbeing and ultimately reduce the burden on the NHS; but there are other benefits including reduction in carbon usage, increased air quality, improved connectivity between communities, and generally creating a nicer place to live.

As a Chartered Civil Engineer, I am acutely aware of the influence that I, and my colleagues, have in creating the infrastructure for the environment that we all live in. This is a privileged position, but also one that carries a massive responsibility. We have all seen the obvious results of bad design; dark underpasses and enclosed spaces that create security and safety issues; poor road layouts that lead to accidents; and the inclusion of materials in buildings that are not fit for purpose.

For the last 70 years or so, we have been responding to the growth in car ownership and their use by providing infrastructure that meets

the needs of the increasing number of cars. But not only have we been making it easier to move around by car, we have, inadvertently, been making it more difficult to walk or cycle to the places we want to go to.

Across the country, 60% of car journeys are less than five miles, and in urban areas 40% are less than two miles. I am just as guilty of jumping in the car to “nip to the shops” as anybody. I drive to work everyday and sit behind a desk for 8 hours before going to the gym to get some exercise. What if I could safely cycle to where I wanted to go, secure my bike somewhere dry, and be able to get showered and changed before work? I could probably save myself the cost of the gym, get some fresh air, and take some time to clear my mind too.

The introduction of new Active Design standards and making Active Travel England into a statutory consultee in the planning process is the first step in a major change to the way we travel around and to our villages, towns, and cities. But it isn't all about design, there needs to be a change in culture to make it work. I have seen it work in other countries, but where it does work, not only is the infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians better, there is more respect between travellers too.

Lynas Engineers is an engineering design consultancy that focuses on the design of schemes that provide transport infrastructure, so this is a major issue for us, and one which we are embracing. Incorporating facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled users is a primary consideration for the majority of our projects. Whether cycleways and footways in new residential sites; providing safe and accessible crossing points on existing junctions; or working with local authorities to develop active travel routes within the existing highway corridor – it is at the heart of how we work.

But these schemes cannot be built in isolation.

There needs to be a wider consideration of connectivity between communities and to amenities; there is no advantage in providing a brand new residential estate with lots of space for cyclists and pedestrians if they then need to share busy road space with HGVs and cars to be able to get to the nearest shops, school or train station. Perhaps this is where Active Travel England can influence the planning process and ensure that wider benefits are realised, but it is up to local authorities to ensure that developer funding is actually spent on delivering these improvements.

The announcement of £200 million in funding for active travel schemes earlier this year is very welcome, but it needs to be spent in the right places and on the right schemes. We are obviously constrained by space, especially in built-up areas, but if we want to provide effective, usable infrastructure we need to consider the right solution for the right location. We've all seen the photos of a 3m long cycle lane that ends at a brick wall - these examples do nothing to improve the opinion that we don't take cycling seriously in the UK.

We have started to see active travel funding being better spent in the northeast – with some interesting and expansive schemes being developed. Whilst the team at Lynas Engineers are excited to be developing some with local authorities – there is still work to be done in changing the shift towards full and proper integration in other areas too. Whilst the desire may be there to improve active travel, until walking or cycling is seen as a logical, viable, and desirable alternative to using private vehicles, there is still work to be done.

Rob Lynas
lynasengineers.com

Malhotra Group announces annual results

Leading North East care, leisure and property business, Malhotra Group plc, has unveiled its annual results for the year ended 31 March 2023.

And despite the many challenges caused by the current economic pandemic, the company's latest accounts make positive reading – with an increase in turnover to £47.1m – a 14 per cent increase on the previous year.

It is the combination of the diverse range of business areas the company is involved with – from hotels and bars to property and care – and its continued investment which has put Malhotra Group plc in such a strong position.

Its care arm – Prestwick Care – is enjoying a period of growth with an increase in occupancy rates, helped by three of its homes rated Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission and the remainder rated as Good.

Work continues on the conversion of the former Rex Hotel at Whitley Bay, into the 83-bedroom Bay View House care home which will open in the summer of 2024.

Leisure outlets continue to enjoy investment. Leila Lilys at Grey Street has benefited from the creation of a private dining area in the basement, while a number of other projects are underway – notably the creation of a 21-apartment aparthotel with bar and restaurant facilities at the corner of Newcastle's Mosley and Pilgrim Streets.

Following the publication of the Malhotra Group plc annual results its Chairman, Meenu Malhotra, said he was “proud” of its performance and that of colleagues during the year.



Meenu Malhotra

“Two of the sectors in which we operate were hardest hit by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns; care and hospitality,” he said.

“The fact we have been able to build on our strong position this year to move forward, is down to several factors; our highly experienced management team, the diversity of our assets, and our continued investment in quality across all of our business segments.”

Bunty Malhotra, Chief Executive of Malhotra Group plc added “Our staff have been outstanding and worked relentlessly during the last year so that our residents and customers could be provided with a high-quality service. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks for their enormous efforts and dedication.”

Turnover increased by 10% to £2.2m (2022: £2.0m) and operating profit for the year remained static at £1.3m (2022: £1.3m).

Following the publication of the Malhotra Group plc annual results its Chairman, Meenu Malhotra, said he was “proud” of its performance and that of our colleagues during the year.

“Two of the sectors in which we operate were hardest hit by the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns; care and hospitality,” he said.

“And that we have been able to build on our strong position this year to move forward, is down to several factors; our highly experienced

management team, the diversity of our assets, and our continued investment in quality across all of our business segments.”

He added: “We would like to thank all our staff for their magnificent contribution during the year.”

Bunty Malhotra, Chief Executive of Malhotra Group plc commented “Our staff have been outstanding and worked relentlessly during the last year so that our residents and customers could be provided with a high-quality service. We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks for their enormous efforts and dedication.”

Commenting on the year ahead, Mr Malhotra said “Looking forward into our next financial year we recognise that there remain significant challenges for us to navigate, namely: the continued cost of living crisis, higher energy costs, increased interest rates, higher levels of inflation and a lack of supply of staff in the care sector.

The headwinds we are facing will undoubtedly continue to impact our group, but our resilience, strong balance sheet and ability to generate cash across our divisions mean we are able to navigate these challenges but are not immune to them.

malhotragroup.co.uk

Embarking on epic adventures with Alexander Adventures

When it comes to the pursuit of excitement and the thrill of exploration, Alexander Adventures stands as an unrivalled beacon of adventure in the UK and across the globe.

Their mission is simple yet profound: To provide a platform for unforgettable journeys filled with fun and awe-inspiring escapades.

In the realm of adventure, they are your steadfast companions, always on the lookout for fresh and exhilarating destinations to uncover. What sets them apart is the enduring relationships they've forged with their esteemed guests throughout the years, as well as their unwavering commitment to meticulous planning and execution, ensuring that everyone's adventure unfolds seamlessly.

At Alexander Adventures, they pride themselves on cultivating a friendly and stress-free environment, designed expressly for those who seek the extraordinary without the encumbrance of hassle. For those yearning for the experience of a lifetime, look no further; Alexander Adventures beckons you to embark on a journey of a lifetime.

In our first look into the captivating world of Alexander Adventures, we delve into the remarkable story of Joe Alexander, the visionary founder and CEO of the company.

Joe's odyssey of outdoor prowess began at a remarkably young age, with his triumphant completion of the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge at just 10 years old. His zest for adventure only intensified as he joined the Army Cadets at the age of 12, setting the stage for a life dedicated to exploration. By the time he turned 19, Joe was conquering major rivers in the Himalayas, solidifying his reputation as an intrepid adventurer.

Transitioning his personal aspirations into a thriving professional career, Joe has guided fellow explorers to the farthest reaches of the world, covering more than 70% of our planet's surface. Through Alexander Adventures, he has orchestrated expeditions spanning all seven continents, showcasing his mastery in a diverse array of disciplines,



including mountaineering, mountain biking, trekking, scuba diving, kayaking, canoeing, and paddleboarding.

What truly sets Joe apart is his unwavering commitment to pushing the boundaries of human exploration. His list of accomplishments includes documented first ascents and descents across the globe, testaments to his unyielding spirit and relentless pursuit of adventure.

So, whether you're a seasoned thrill-seeker or a newcomer to the world of adventure, Alexander Adventures invites you to join them on an extraordinary journey. Together, you'll discover uncharted territories, forge lasting memories, and revel in the exhilaration of life's grandest adventures.

For more information on Alexander Adventures call 0191 903 9936 or enquire on their website www.alexanderadventures.co.uk

Free services for businesses from Gosforth Chiropractic

As a local chiropractic clinic, we wanted to reach out to discuss the benefits of chiropractic care for your staff. At Gosforth Family Chiropractic, we believe that a healthy workforce is a productive one, and we want to help you achieve that goal.

We currently have two offers that we believe would be of interest to you and your staff:

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.



If you're interested in learning more about what we can offer, please don't hesitate to contact us or visit us at The Grainger Suite, Dobson House, Regent Street, Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE3 3PF.

Call - 07359 18 85 67 • Email - care@gosforthfamilychiropractic.com



Ranj Gill & Gursh Kahlon

New Co-Chairman appointments at East Durham Business Network

The East Durham Business Network is thrilled to introduce its new co-chairmen, Ranjeet Gill and Gursh Kahlon, who will lead the group's initiatives. They step into their roles, succeeding the outgoing chairman, Paul Wellstead, who recently relocated to the Lake District after two years of dedicated leadership.

Ranj and Gursh bring a wealth of experience to the table, having co-founded Clearwater Developments, a prominent commercial and residential property company over a decade ago and recently Clearwater Utilities.

Their impressive track record includes spearheading numerous regeneration projects, both commercial and residential, in Seaham and Sunderland. Notably, their recent endeavours encompass the Lighthouse View building at Lighthouse View Business Park and the acquisition of Spectrum 5 on Spectrum Business Park.

Leanne Fawcett, the vice chairman of the East Durham Business Network, expressed her delight at welcoming Ranj and Gursh as the new chairmen. She commended their dedication to the East Durham area and their suitability for the role.

Ranj Gill emphasised their commitment to supporting the East Durham area's growth, while Gursh Kahlon conveyed their honour at being entrusted with the chairmanship and their eagerness to continue the network's progress.

With a shared passion for the local community and a vision for its continued development, Ranj and Gursh are poised to lead the network into an exciting new phase of expansion, building upon the foundation laid by Paul, Guy, and Leanne, over the past two years.

For further information on Clearwater Developments, Clearwater Utilities or East Durham Business Network, contact JAM Marketing on 0191 917 0819.



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Christmas at the Cathedral Show will again support Sir Bobby Robson's Cancer Foundation



The Sir Bobby Robson Foundation, part of Newcastle Hospitals Charity, is thrilled to announce its 11th annual yuletide entertainment show, Christmas at the Cathedral, will take place on Thursday, 14th December.

This year's show promises to be a night of unforgettable entertainment, with a mix of celebrities and local stars performing songs, readings, and comedy sketches, all infused with a heart-warming Christmas theme.

The line-up of performers remains a closely guarded secret, adding an element of surprise and anticipation to the show. In previous years, the event has seen renowned stars like Tim Healy, Melanie Hill, Billy Mitchell, Chelsea and Jill Halfpenny, Charlie Hardwick, Catherine Dryden, Denise Welch, Jimmy Nail, Paul Smith, Rachel Unthank, Steffen Peddie, Stephen Tomkinson, The Caffreys, The Futureheads, and Lorraine Crosby take the stage.

The talented team behind the show joined Lady Elsie Robson at the Sir Bobby Robson Cancer Trials Research Centre at the Northern Centre for Cancer Care, Freeman Hospital, to find out more about the vital work the event is helping to fund.

Thanks to the support of attendees and sponsors, including this year's main sponsor Orbis Support Ltd from North Shields, the Christmas at the Cathedral show has become a cherished tradition for the community. State-of-the-art lighting and sound systems will transform Newcastle Cathedral into an atmospheric theatrical venue, and large TV screens will ensure that every moment of the entertainment is enjoyed by all.

Lady Elsie expressed her excitement, stating: "This is such a special event for us every year. They keep the line up secret from all the audience, including me, and I love being surprised by the talented performers who take to the stage. I think that's a huge part of its charm. The cathedral is a beautiful venue and it's a wonderful mix of music, fun and Christmas tradition that I'm greatly looking forward to."

Make this Christmas season one to remember by joining us for Christmas at the Cathedral on 14th December. Doors open at 6:30 pm, and the show starts at 7:00 pm. Tickets are available from the Theatre Royal box office on 0844 811 2121.



Jane Dennison

Show your support for the Dragonfly Ball

The Dragonfly Ball on Saturday 21st October at Newcastle's Biscuit Factory is the charity's signature fundraising event raising vital funds to enable us to reach more young cancer patients across the UK.

“

Our guests will be treated to an exclusive drinks reception within the art gallery followed by a three-course seasonal menu, live auction, an evening of entertainment and plenty of opportunities to win some fantastic prizes.

I do hope you can join us, tickets are £65 each and available via our website www.dragonflycancertrust.org/event/ball

Jane Dennison, CEO Dragonfly Cancer Trust

Running for Hope

Great North Run 2023 Raises £7,337 for The Three Tumours Charity!

In a world often overshadowed by challenges and uncertainties, it is heartwarming to witness the incredible power of collective compassion and determination. The 2023 Great North Run, a hallmark event in the realm of long-distance running, brought together 11 remarkable individuals who demonstrated the true spirit of giving.

These dedicated runners raised an astounding £7,337.00 in sponsorship funds to support The Three Tumours charity. This achievement is not merely a testament to their physical endurance but, more importantly, a testament to their unwavering commitment to making a positive impact on the charity they support.

The statistics surrounding brain tumours in the UK are alarming. Brain tumours continue to be a silent but devastating killer, claiming more lives among children and adults under the age of 40 than any other cancer. The rise in brain tumour deaths, now representing 2.6% of all cancer-related fatalities, highlights the urgency of the situation. These tumours tragically take more lives among children than leukaemia, more men under 45 than prostate cancer, and more women under 35 than breast cancer.

In the United Kingdom alone, 16,000 people are diagnosed with brain tumours annually. The grim reality is that less than 20% of brain tumour patients survive beyond five years after their diagnosis. These statistics stand in stark contrast to the survival rates of other cancers, such as breast cancer and leukaemia, where survival rates exceed 50%.

The success of this year's Great North Run and the remarkable £7,337.00 raised underscore the enduring spirit of generosity that resides within our communities. It demonstrates that when individuals come together with a shared purpose, they can create a ripple effect of change that touches the lives of many. The funds collected will provide critical support and symbolises the unwavering commitment to the cause of eradicating brain tumours and improving the lives of those affected.



Tony Gale



Ray Thompson

Chairperson for the charity, Claire Downs said: "As we celebrate the achievements of these 11 dedicated runners, let us also remember the countless others who continue to battle brain tumours and their families who stand by their side. Together, we can make a difference. Together, we can raise hope. Together, we can work towards a future where brain tumours no longer claim precious lives, and where the statistics of survival become more promising."

Claire concluded: "The Great North Run 2023 has shown us that when we run with our hearts, we run for hope. We run for a cure."

For help and support for The Three Tumours, contact Claire Downs - 07930 326 905.



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Brandon's can-do attitude is rewarded



Managing director at Asbestos Audit, Ben Pickard and Brandon Williams, trainee surveyor.

Peterlee-based, Asbestos Audit, has announced the appointment of Brandon Williams as trainee surveyor.

Brandon, 26, from Washington, was a CAD technician at the company for two years before taking up his new role.

The move highlights the company's commitment to training and retaining its staff and Brandon has already achieved a BHOS P402, one of two surveying qualifications recognised within the asbestos industry. Asbestos Audit operates across the UK, providing UKAS accredited asbestos surveys, inspections, removal and testing. The company also has a rapidly growing demolition division, that includes salvage and soft strip out.

Brandon, said: "I joined the company two years ago as a CAD technician and I am really pleased to now progress as a trainee surveyor and work under the supervision of Ryan Moorhead, technical and quality manager.

"As well as learning the theory, I am picking up great experience working on live projects, shadowing a member of the team and learning

how surveys are conducted. I have also assisted clients with asbestos-related issues.

"I am also learning from the management team, who take clients through every step of the survey process, ensuring they are compliant with the current Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. I want to develop my knowledge and expertise and to progress from a trainee to a qualified surveyor as quickly as I can."

Ben Pickard, managing director at Asbestos Audit, said: "Brandon's promotion is well deserved and just reward for his can-do attitude. He is ambitious and committed and we are delighted to invest in his future.

"Creating a strong company culture where we recruit the best people is crucial. We have built a great reputation within our field, resulting in us being 5-star rated in the locations across the UK where we have bases. This is achieved by hiring the very best people.

"2023 is proving to be a strong year for us and we have seen growth across numerous divisions of the business. As a result, we have invested heavily to increase our share of the market.

"As we head towards 2024, we foresee further growth and we will be making some big announcements in the coming months."

www.asbestosaudit.co

Addressing whistleblowing concerns in the NHS

By Chancelle Blakey, Business Development Manager, Safecall

The NHS continues to grapple with concerns surrounding its whistleblowing systems and cultural health.

This has been highlighted repeatedly in the media in the last couple of months with coverage of the Lucy Letby trial, within which there were shown to be multiple failures in their internal reporting processes.

This demonstrates the need for an independent reporting line for employees across the organisation. NHS employees must have the opportunity to speak with an entirely impartial party who can process their concern and pass on the information to the appropriate team for further investigation.

Whistleblowers within the NHS have often faced challenges, making them hesitant to report wrongdoing due to fears of retaliation and detrimental treatment. Despite these obstacles, there has been a significant increase in NHS whistleblowers coming forward, highlighting the urgent need for reform in the whistleblowing process.

In fact, a record 25,000 plus NHS whistleblowers came forward last year. Of these cases, as has been reported by Freedom to Speak Up Guardians office, the most common reports were of inappropriate behaviours and attitudes (30%), followed by worker safety and wellbeing (27%) and bullying and harassment (22%).

Reports indicate that NHS employees are lacking confidence in the current speak-up system, with many feeling labelled as troublemakers when they raise concerns. This detrimental culture not only deters individuals from speaking up but also hinders the NHS's ability to identify and address wrongdoing, potentially endangering both patients and employees. And that's before you take into consideration the damage to the NHS's reputation.



Chancelle Blakey

For optimal trust and confidence in a speak up system, employees must feel that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

Unfortunately, this most recent case is the most extreme example of that not happening, with Dr Stephen Brearey stating that if hospital executives had acted on concerns about nurse Lucy Letby earlier, lives may have been saved.

To address these pressing issues, steps need to be taken to: improve employee confidence; identify and combat wrongdoing; and protect those who come forward to report concerns.

One crucial measure is to review and audit the NHS's whistleblowing policy, processes, and operations to understand the reasons for the breakdown of trust. Identifying and holding accountable those responsible for retaliating against whistleblowers is essential to foster a culture of transparency and accountability.

Providing whistleblowing training to both employees and managers is another critical step to improve the speak-up culture.

The current Freedom to Speak Up (FTSU) Guardian scheme, while a positive step towards improving whistleblowing culture, appears to lack confidence among NHS employees with many remaining hesitant to report serious concerns through an internal system due to doubts about confidentiality and impartiality.

To build trust, the NHS can consider offering an alternative means of disclosure, such as a dedicated, outsourced whistleblowing hotline provider, ensuring true anonymity and independence in the reporting process. Here at Safecall, we already work alongside several NHS

Trusts helping make their processes more robust and transparent. Employees are much more confident speaking to, and reporting through, a third party.

It is vital that the investigation procedure is handled in a fair and balanced fashion, and not conducted to undermine the whistleblowers' concerns. To instil confidence in the reporting process, investigations should be conducted in an independent and confidential manner. Outsourcing the investigation process or ensuring that internal investigators undergo proper training and possess the necessary experience can help safeguard employees' wellbeing and protect the NHS's reputation.

The NHS must strive to offer confidentiality, impartiality, and independence when receiving and investigating concerns. These efforts should be continuous and consistent to create effective and sustainable change within the organisation.

In conclusion, addressing whistleblowing concerns in the NHS is crucial for promoting a culture of transparency and accountability. By taking proactive steps, such as reviewing policies, providing comprehensive training, and ensuring independent investigations, the NHS can create an environment where employees feel confident and protected when speaking up against wrongdoing.

Fostering a culture that values whistleblowers and their contributions will not only strengthen the NHS internally but also enhance its reputation and commitment to patient care.

www.safecall.co.uk/en



Leighton named one of the UK's Best Workplaces in Tech™

Leading software development business Leighton has been recognised as one of the UK's Best Workplaces in Tech™ (2023) by Great Place to Work®, the global authority on workplace culture.

Leighton is ranked among the top companies for the UK's Best Workplaces in Tech for small and medium sized tech businesses.

Founded in Sunderland in 1992, Leighton has grown from a small start-up

operation to the north's leading Amazon Web Services (AWS) software development business and boasts a portfolio of customers including British Airways, IAG, Atom Bank and EQUANS.

James Bunting, CEO of Leighton said: "Being recognised as one of the UK's Best Workplaces in Tech is a testament to our unwavering commitment to our colleagues' growth and well-being. We are dedicated to fostering a people-first culture that empowers our team members and encourages them to thrive."

Great Place to Work® recognises employers who create an outstanding colleague experience, and earlier this year Leighton earned the Great Place to Work Certification™. The UK's Best Workplaces in Tech list acknowledges companies at the forefront of hybrid and flexible working, employee development, and innovation.

Leighton specialises in building high-performing teams and developing successful software applications that accelerate its customers' digital capabilities. Leighton stands out for its unique company culture that prioritises colleague well-being, work-life balance and inclusivity.

In a recent colleague engagement survey, Leighton achieved exceptional scores, including 97% for being a "great place to work," 96% for engagement, 99% for community, and 97% for camaraderie. These scores reflect the high levels of colleague satisfaction, engagement, and sense of belonging within the organisation.

This recognition alongside its Great Place to Work Certification™ will fuel Leighton's vision of becoming the North's leading AWS software developer and further enable the company to expand its team and meet its ambitious growth plans.



Apexon Opens New UK Tech Hub in Sunderland

Apexon, a digital-first technology services company, has opened a new state-of-art facility in Sunderland, UK, to help it meet the growing demand for its digital products and services in the UK.

Apexon, which specialises in delivering technology services that accelerate business transformation, will base its UK headquarters in the city centre's rapidly transforming Riverside Sunderland area.

The timing follows a recent announcement from the UK government demonstrating near-record levels of funding in the UK tech sector, which is home to the greatest number of high-growth companies in Europe.

The new 5,700 sq ft facility located at The Beam supports Apexon's plan to continue investing in the UK and Europe over the coming years as it looks to provide its clients with greater access to its world-renowned digital experts.

The move will also see Apexon join Ocado, the world's largest online grocer and software engineering company, asset55 at the business hub, as well as North East Screen, the region's TV and film screen body.



razorblue welcomes new Operations Director during continued phase of phenomenal growth

A leading managed service provider which works with over 500 companies across the UK has appointed a new Operations Director, tasked with steering the company on its continued growth course.

North East headquartered razorblue, which boasts seven offices and almost 200 staff has welcomed Neil Warren, an industry expert with over 25 years' experience to its board, tasked with overseeing fundamental day-to-day operations as well as long term strategy.

Neil said: "I've been following the business for a number of years and I've enjoyed watching razorblue's success. The previous Operations Director, David was moving to pastures new, and I was thrilled to accept and carry on David's brilliant work.

"Coming into this role, the experience I'm going to offer will be valuable to the business due to the roles I have held previously. I want the teams I manage to think like a customer, put themselves in their shoes so we can build on our already established culture and service offering and grow further, serving customers across the UK."

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1. Security Assurance for Clients:

One of the primary reasons MSPs pursue ISO 27001 certification is to assure their clients of their commitment to information security. When businesses outsource their IT needs to an MSP, they are entrusting them with sensitive data. ISO 27001 certification provides clients with the confidence that their data will be handled and protected in compliance with industry-leading standards.

2. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:

MSPs operate in an environment fraught with data protection regulations, such as GDPR, HIPAA, and CCPA. These regulations impose stringent requirements on the handling and security of personal and sensitive information. ISO 27001 provides a structured framework that helps MSPs ensure compliance with these laws, minimising the risk of costly fines and legal consequences.

3. Risk Mitigation:

The ISO 27001 standard guides MSPs in identifying, assessing, and mitigating information security risks. By proactively addressing vulnerabilities and threats, MSPs can significantly reduce the likelihood of security breaches and data leaks. This protects both the MSP and its clients.

4. Competitive Edge:

In a crowded market, ISO 27001 certification sets MSPs apart from their competitors. It serves as tangible proof of a commitment to security and adherence to best practices.

5. Operational Efficiency:

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Insights from Leighton's on:tech event: event-driven architecture for scalability, flexibility & reliability

Featuring: Dave Kibble (DWP), Rob Smith (Atom Bank) & James Drew (Growth Capital Ventures)

Leighton's recent on:tech event explored examples of organisations that have successfully implemented event-driven architecture (EDA) to improve the scalability, flexibility and reliability of business applications.



Steve Morland, Specialist Tech Lead at Leighton moderated the conversation whilst Dave Kibble, Lead Integration Domain Architect for DWP, Rob Smith, Principal Solutions Architect at Atom Bank and James Drew, CTO of Growth Capital Ventures, formed the panel to discuss the challenges faced, lessons learned and benefits of using EDA.

First things first, what is EDA?

A design pattern used in software and system architecture, EDA focuses on the flow of information and actions in a system, driven by events. Events are significant occurrences or notifications that can trigger parts of a system to respond or take action. Events can

be generated by user interactions, changes in data, or external factors. Systems can react to events as they occur, promoting flexibility, scalability, and decoupling of system components, making it easier to build complex and responsive software systems.

Why would businesses want to adopt EDA?

As Rob explained: “EDA is a great answer to that point of crippling complexity that a lot of companies get to with their systems. They either get to a point where it’s difficult to scale or it’s difficult to add features and functionality to their systems. The result is usually things failing, things slowing down or customer experience getting poor.”

“Another great benefit of the event model is where you need to distribute information widely, where you may have multiple actors needing to take some action on an event” for example, multiple departments or business units, added Dave.

From James’ perspective, the decision to adopt EDA is based on flexibility: “I tend to work in the start-up and scale-up space, so our decision to adopt EDA is about the ability to react to change in a dynamic way, and not be stuck with some of the decisions we’ve made early.”

Monoliths versus microservices: when is the right time to adopt EDA?

A monolith refers to a ‘traditional’ software application or system that is built as a single, tightly integrated unit, whereas microservices architecture decomposes a system into smaller,

independent services. Microservices and EDA are complementary architectural patterns that can work together to build scalable, flexible systems. So, when is the right time for a business to adopt EDA?

“Starting out with a monolith, even though it's not sexy, is probably in most cases, the right place to start” says James. “The structure of your organisation will directly impact the structure of the software you build” he added.

“In a much larger organisation, you're able to use separate systems and communicate between them using events, but when you're a start-up with a small team of developers you may not have that luxury” said James.

Rob added: “We know when we need to move to a bigger building or take on more customer service people to deal with an increased number of customers, right? It's an easy conversation to have. But it's difficult to make that judgement of when you need to fundamentally change the architecture to support customers.”

How do you get your business bought into EDA and make it successful?

Ensuring technical and operational teams are joined up when it comes to the architectural approach is important. As Dave explains: “You need to get the business to understand and buy into what you're trying to do and the process you're trying to improve.”

“Getting the business to think outside of a linear business process is important. You need to help the business identify what the key steps are in any process and how EDA can help” he added.

Rob expanded: “I think getting your subject matter experts bought in and involved is key. These are the people who know best what constitutes an event, the people who are working close to customers and who are getting feedback from them. They'll know which events are notable, not only for the customer, but also for the business”.

“Be clear about what problem you're trying to solve. Don't think of it as a technology shift, it is more a conceptual shift of how your business is going to work. Figure out what problem you're going to solve and how that will improve your business” added Dave.

Businesses can leverage EDA to overcome complexities that hinder growth, enhance scalability, improve customer experiences, or adapt dynamically to change. To succeed, businesses must ensure technical and operational teams are aligned, embrace a conceptual shift towards event-driven thinking, and pinpoint the specific problems EDA can solve.



Are you an IT or tech leader interested in attending the next on:tech event? Register your interest at ontech@leighton.com



Record year sees HTG continue to invest in South Tyneside



Kevin Howell, founder and CEO of HTG and Louise Roughley, director of people experience

Staff at a South Tyneside technology firm named one of The Sunday Times' Best Places to Work are celebrating a record year.

Howell Technology Group (HTG) has seen revenue grow by 60% and its headcount increase by 30% over the past 12 months following a string of new client wins.

The growth follows a significant investment by the company last year to double the size of its South Tyneside head office at Hebburn's Monkton Business Park South.

The investment paved the way for the company to increase its headcount and increase its range of services, resulting in increased business from both existing and new clients.

Kevin Howell, Founder and CEO, said: "It's been a fantastic year for everyone involved with HTG. "The opening of the new office has seen us welcome 13 new members of staff who have really helped us improve our offering and diversify, as well as creating the space required to continue growing as we look to the future."

Kevin founded the cloud computing specialist in 2005. Originally trading as Howell Computing, the firm rebranded to Howell Technology Group in 2015 to 'better reflect the range of services it now offers.'

Today, the company's 33 employees span offices in South Tyneside, London, Belfast and Edinburgh and work with clients the length and breadth of the UK, from small businesses to major corporates.

He added: "As someone born and raised in the North East, I've always been passionate about the region and creating opportunities for local people, so it's fantastic to still see the company continuing to invest in the region 18 years on.

"Be it working with local schools, recruiting locally or opening the region's first Microsoft Centre of Excellence, our commitment to the region remains unwavered and this will remain the case for years to come, as we continue to create jobs this year and expanding our presence in the region."

In addition to investing in growth, the company has also made a conscious effort to invest in introducing new employee benefits, leading to HTG receiving two major national accolades.

This includes being named among The Sunday Times Best Places to Work list for 2023 and becoming one of 61 organisations to take part in Mind's seventh annual Workplace Wellbeing Index, securing a Gold Award.

Louise Roughley, Director of People Experience at HTG, said: "We were absolutely thrilled to be recognised by MIND and The Sunday Times as an exemplar employer.

"As a business, we have made a real conscious effort over recent years to make HTG a great place to work, however this is just the start.

"Over the coming months and years, we will continue to work with our team to help ensure we remain an employer of choice and ensure our people really feel valued within their roles.

"Afterall, if we are to maintain a thriving, mentally healthy culture at HTG, then it is going to take continuous effort from everyone, but we are unwavering in our long-term commitment to improving the wellbeing of our team and making HTG a real employer of choice."

Cllr Margaret Meling, Lead Member for Economic Growth and Transport on South Tyneside Council, said: "HTG is a real South Tyneside success story, so it is fantastic to see the company continuing to invest here and create jobs for local people.

"We are also delighted that they have become one of more than 200 organisations to sign up to the South Tyneside Pledge which aims to boost local economic activity, reduce health inequalities, cut carbon emissions, and enhance civic pride for the benefit of the whole borough.

"They are a real example to follow for anyone looking to set up and grow a business and we are incredibly proud that they call South Tyneside home."

For more information on HTG, visit: htg.co.uk

For more information on South Tyneside as a place to do business, visit: investsouthtyneside.com

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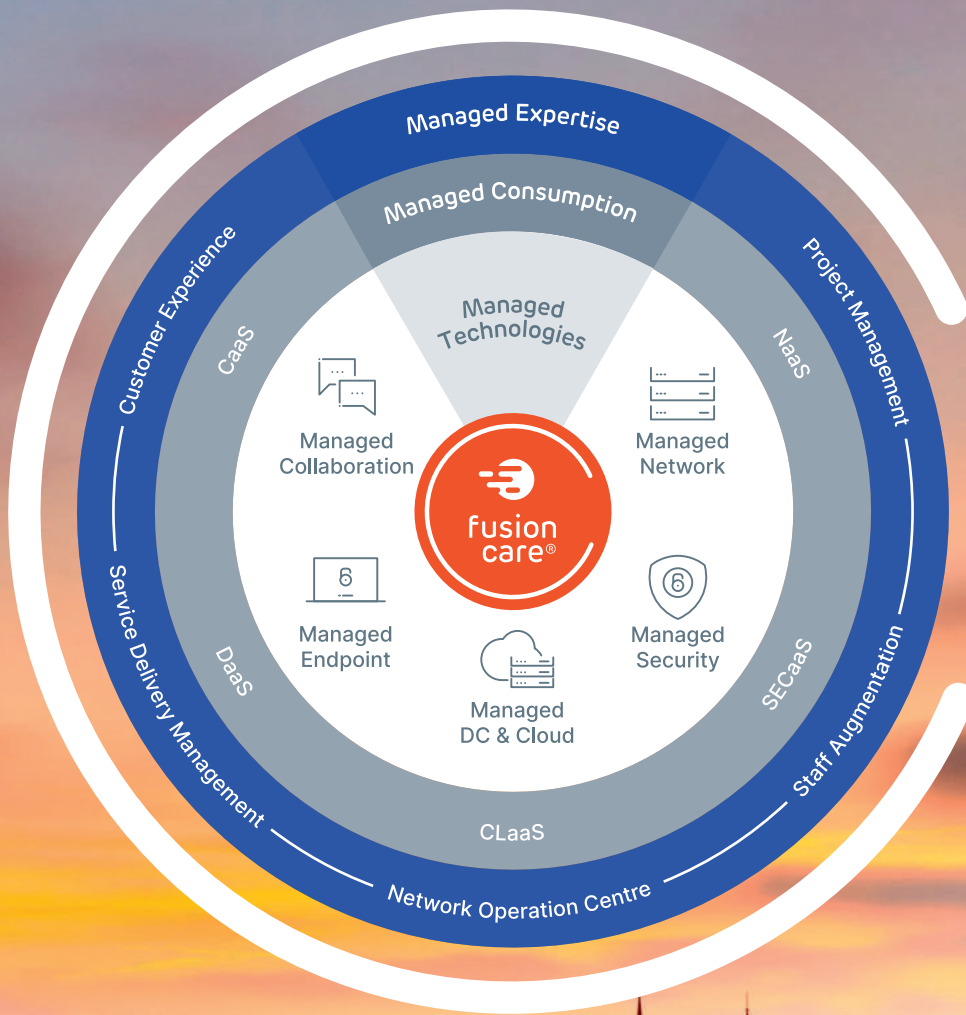
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shineVision is on the ball

A North East digital compliance company is helping a local football team shine by supporting the under 14's team.



Newcastle based shineVision has sponsored the West Denton Junior Football Under 14 Eagles. The company's logo proudly appears on the front of the striking yellow and red strips, which will help the team look professional as they play their league this coming year.

West Denton Junior Football Club was established in 1982 and has gone from strength to strength thanks to the sheer hard work and dedication of all involved both past and present.

It is now one of the region's most recognised clubs that boasts an impressive 22 junior football teams from Under 7 all the way up to Under 17, as well as a Senior team and the very successful Little Dribblers setup for little stars of the future.

Founder and managing director of shineVision, Lee Taylor, is a local man and is passionate about both football and opportunities for younger generations.

He said: "West Denton Junior Football Club is a registered charity that relies on the support of donations and grants. The amateur club trains on All Saints Playing Fields on West Denton way not far from where the shineVision office is based, so when we were looking to support the local community, it was the natural choice. We love to see the team in their strips with our logo proudly emblazoned on the front. We do, of course, wish the team all the luck in the world with the coming season."

Joining a number of businesses from the area also sponsoring the club, the club recently thanked all the sponsors including shineVision: "As a club we are stronger when we all work together as one, on and

off the football pitch. We both depend and thrive on the constant hard work and commitment from all involved with the club.

"Without the dedication and passion of our committee, trustees, coaches, parents, players, sponsors and the local community to mention just a few, it would not have been possible to get to where we are today."

shineVision is passionate about digital transformation playing an essential part in supporting the golden thread that forms an impressive Building Safety Case in any industry that involves property and people. Customers choose to use shineCompliance to ensure accurate reporting, health and safety, and because of its innovative ability to capture, store and manage all essential data, allowing a solid foundation for those managing properties to fulfil all duty holder responsibilities.

More information on shineVision is available at www.shinevision.co.uk and information on the club is available at www.westdentonjuniorsfc.com/home



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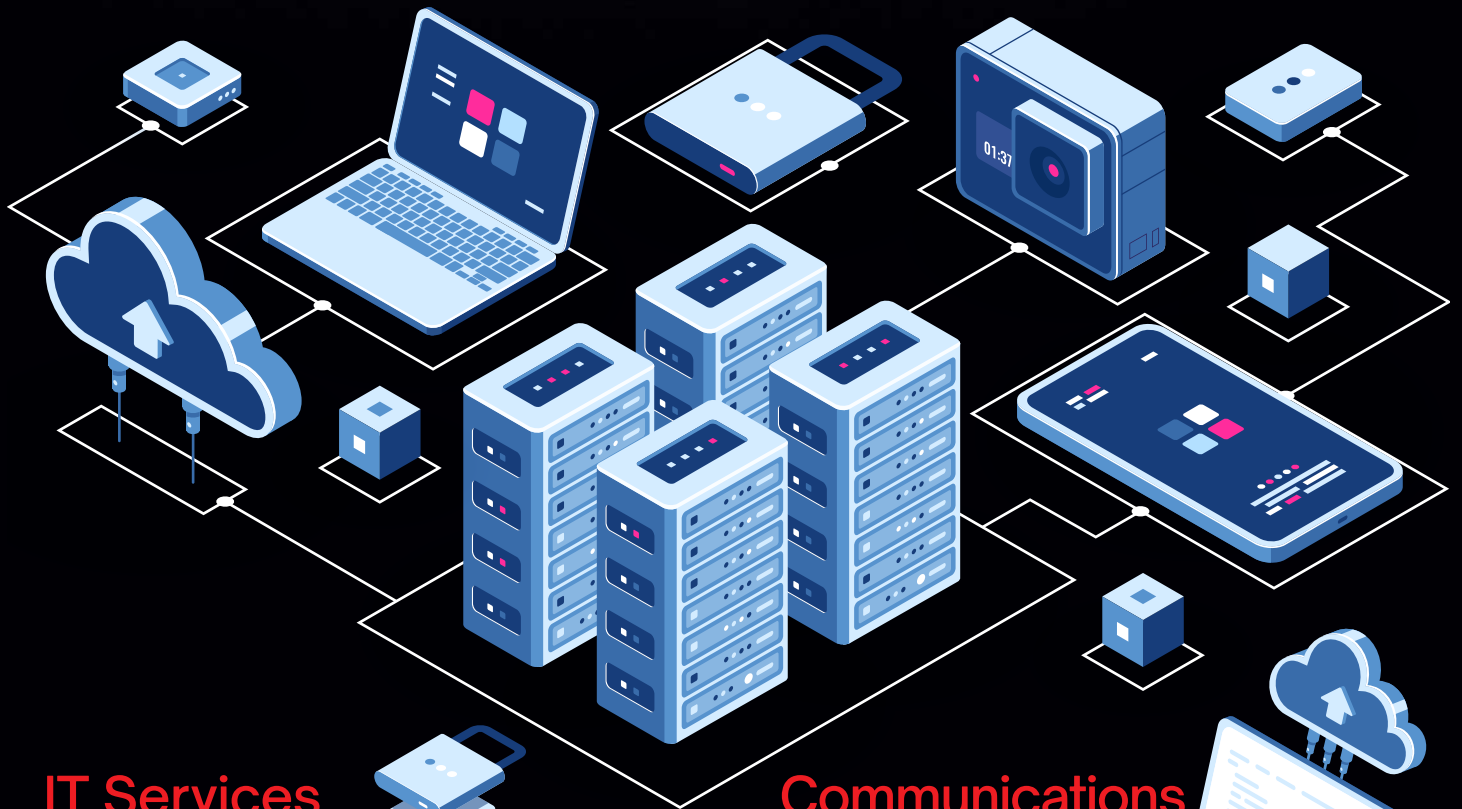
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Wolves in Chic Clothing

A leading North East housebuilder has swapped homes for away – by providing kit for a team of young footballers.

When Miller Homes heard Forest Hall U12 Wolves needed an away kit for the coming season, bosses immediately stepped in to help.

The company - which is delivering new homes across Durham, Tyne and Wear and Northumberland – agreed to sponsor the team and provide sufficient shirts, socks and shorts to last all 13 players for the next two years.

And not only will the Wolves be the best dressed team on the pitch, but the deal has once again highlighted Miller’s commitment to the communities it serves.

The team, which plays in the NFL on Sundays and is made up of Newcastle boys aged 11 and 12, has continued to improve and push on and up through the leagues, winning league titles in the past two years.

They will wear the new kit – which carries the Miller Homes name and logo - when they travel across Tyneside and Northumberland to take on other clubs and it will also double as their training kit.

Wolves’ coach, Andrew Lawson, said, the team was “blown away” by the £600 sponsorship from Miller Homes.

“On behalf of all the players I’d like to thank them for ensuring we have great quality kit – and enough of it – to last for quite some time,” he said.

Aisling Ramshaw, sales director for Miller Homes



North East, said: “When you are building homes you are building communities and we are committed to doing what we can to support those communities.

“Forest Hall U12 Wolves are a great team and we wish them every success for the coming season.”

Miller Homes is also now inviting groups, organisations and good causes to bid for a share of £10,000 from its Community Fund.

Launched in 2022 to help grassroots projects linked to education, wellbeing, the environment and sport across the North East, the fund gives out grants of up to £2k to successful applicants, who have until 25 October to apply.

To make an application to the Miller Homes Community Fund visit www.millerhomes.co.uk/corporate/community-fund



Five Star housebuilder launches brand new Durham development

Construction is now underway to create a new community of energy-efficient homes in Durham.

Old Durham Gate, from Barratt Homes, is an exciting new collection of two, three, four and five bedroom homes ideally located within walking distance to Durham city centre. Every home will be designed to be up to 63% more energy-efficient, saving customers up to £2,200 each year on bills. The majority of homes (66%) will be accessible and adaptable housing, which means the hallways are wider for wheelchairs, the WC can be converted into a wet room, and the living space is bigger.

Less than two miles from the historic city, homes at Old Durham Gate will offer beautiful walks along the River Wear, surrounded by scenic views. The new homes have been crafted with flexible living in mind, to encourage prospective customers, such as first time buyers and growing families, to create their dream home. The development will also benefit from a fantastic range of local amenities such as shops, cafes, restaurants and OFSTED-rated ‘Good’ schools.



Sustainable development for the city’s oldest housing trust

Councillor Veronica Dunn, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, today officially opened a sustainable housing development designed specifically for disabled residents in Spital Tongues, Newcastle.

The St Mary Magdalene & Holy Jesus Trust’s £3.8m Magdalene Court, located on a prominent site at the top of Richardson Road, is set amongst mature retained trees and has been designed by JDDK Architects. The development has been built by Meldrum Construction to meet the current National Space Standards, providing extensive circulation space for residents of the 15 accessible one-bedroom apartments designed for older people with a disability who wish to live an independent lifestyle. The development also includes three, two storey, three-bedroom homes designed for families - the first time the Trust has provided housing for families.



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How to become an architect via the apprenticeship route

Architectural Assistant at Dunwoodie Swift Architects, Jamie Whitfield, discusses his alternative route to qualification.

The traditional route into architecture broadly comprises a three year undergraduate degree, at least 1 year of professional experience (Part 1), a two year full time postgraduate degree, at least 1 year of professional experience (Part 2) followed by professional accreditation (Part 3). This structure has been around since the middle of 20th century and in recent years has been criticised for taking too long and being exclusionary to potential students from a wide variety of backgrounds.

In 2016, in response to this criticism, a group of architectural Practices and universities across the UK began developing a ‘trailblazing’ apprenticeship route. The model of this new apprenticeship is to combine the postgraduate study with professional accreditation and wrap it up in a single process. Not only does this streamline the later stages of an architect’s education, it also produces architectural graduates with a much broader and extensive practical experience.

In spring of 2018 I was preparing to embark on the second half of my studies and was looking to pursue the part time-distance master’s degree offered by Oxford Brookes. When the offer of the apprenticeship at Northumbria University, and the benefits this offered, was put onto the table the opportunity was too good to pass up.

In the autumn of the same year, I joined the first cohort of students taking the apprenticeship and embarked on the final stage of my education.

Before I joined Dunwoodie Swift I worked at a well-known Practice in Newcastle, who kindly supported me through my Part 1 experience and the first few years of study on the apprenticeship. They specialised in town planning/urban design, and volume housebuilding, and also have work in other areas including student housing, elderly care, and private residential. During the pandemic, lockdowns, and with working from home I moved to a different Practice. Based in Ripon, they specialise in complex planning cases, primarily land diversification in rural and agricultural areas; listed building consent; and projects in the greenbelt and conservation areas. They also had a regular stream of barn conversions, extensions, and private residential work – including paragraph 80 houses. My time with both companies gave me a breadth of experience of the various planning processes and the myriad complications within.

Though this experience was broad and varied, I needed to experience the whole construction process, in particular everything that follows the planning application, all the way through to completion. Something I had covered as part of the apprenticeship but need first hand practical

experience of in order to attain my professional qualification.

In September 2022 I joined Dunwoodie Swift, and very quickly found myself working on technical drawings for a wide number of projects including some of the well-known exciting STACK projects that the Practice is becoming well known for. Whilst the technical aspects of using containers is quite niche, the opportunity to be so involved in this work serves to re-enforce a broader skillset which can be turned to a variety of sectors. Additionally, these projects move forward extremely quickly and have enabled me to communicate directly with the consultants and contractors, gaining valuable experience of the wider procurement process. Working with a tight knit group has given me the opportunity to take greater responsibility and a larger role within individual projects. After a brief pause, I look forward to finishing my studies next year with the support of Dunwoodie Swift.

Looking to the future, I eagerly anticipate the St James Fanzone (pictured) getting onto site and having the opportunity see a project, which I have been so heavily involved in from the outset, through to practical completion. On top of this shipping container-based scheme, other STACK projects which are located in existing buildings, provide an exciting opportunity to explore the retrofit sector, as well as the complications thrown up by listed building consents and conservation area controls. These complex projects throw up the opportunity to synthesise the research I carried out for my master’s thesis, into a well-rounded understanding of performance venue acoustics. All this helps to bolster my experience gained so far and leaves me excited to build my career as an architect at Dunwoodie Swift.

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What it takes to be a woman in commercial property

The commercial real estate sector has historically, as with most industries, been male dominated, but in recent years there has been a growing trend towards greater gender diversity and inclusion.

While women remain underrepresented in the industry, there are many talented and successful women working in commercial real estate today. One such woman is Commercial Surveyor Stephanie Dixon, Associate based in youngsRPS Newcastle City Centre office on Grey Street.

Stephanie's route into commercial property began after she returned home to Newcastle after graduating with a BA Hons degree in business studies at Manchester University. After successfully securing a role with a local estate agent Stephanie quickly climbed the ranks to Branch Manager of a residential and commercial property agency before making the move to youngsRPS and qualifying as a Chartered Surveyor in 2022. Stephanie has certainly made her mark, managing, and securing several client projects since her arrival resulting in the recent promotion to Associate.

We caught up with Stephanie to ask what it takes to be a woman in commercial property?

Stephanie says: "Although women have come a long way in the property sector and positions are on the rise, some areas within the industry remain male dominated. This is especially noticeable in leading management positions.



Stephanie Dixon

I have sometimes found there is an element of doubt in my abilities by which my knowledge and experience is questioned. It does seem to be more pronounced when working with those in the trades or construction sector. Women must work much harder to gain respect, but it is worth it."

Despite these obstacles, there are many organisations and initiatives that are working to support and promote women in commercial real estate. "Don't be put off thinking that there are no opportunities for women in this industry", says Stephanie. "Confidence and knowledge are the key factors in successfully navigating the industry.

Focus on giving yourself a head start by:

1. Asking lots of questions and read regular publications.
2. Take every opportunity handed to you.
3. Push your comfort levels: try new things.
4. Network as much as possible to build connections.

5. Stay present on platforms such as LinkedIn.
6. Empower and support young people in the role.
7. Don't be afraid to speak up or ask for advice."

Any final words for those considering a career in Commercial Property?

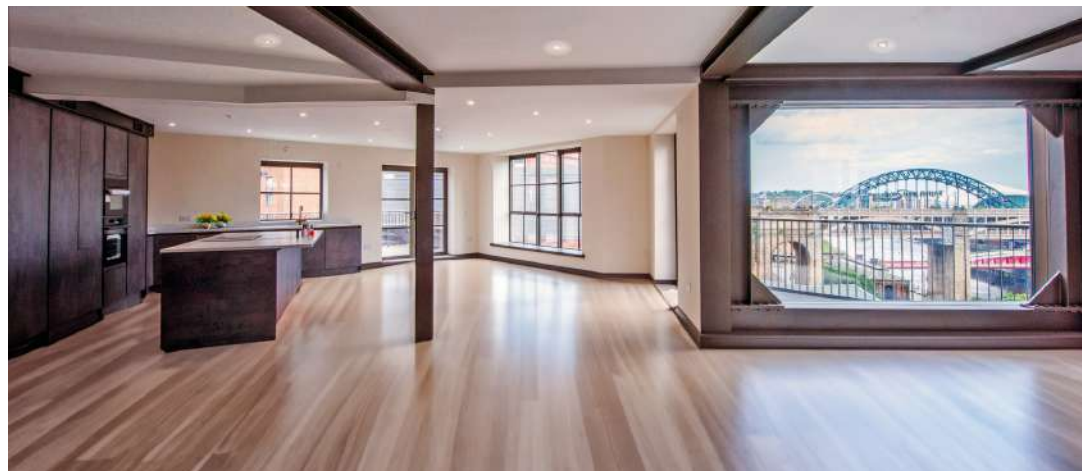
"Women are making significant strides within the commercial real estate sector and are poised to play an increasingly important role in shaping the industry's future."

Stephanie has been working in the commercial sector predominantly in agency, asset management and property management since October 2014.

If you would like to discuss commercial property opportunities in the wider North of England contact youngsRPS' commercial team on 0191 261 0300 or email Newcastle@youngsrps.com



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Luxury apartment scheme in Newcastle's vibrant Quayside district

Renowned North East property developer and investment house, Adderstone, recently unveiled its latest residential showstopper - Hanover Point.





Sir John Hall officially unveils and launches Hanover Point, Newcastle (with Ian Baggett)

Situated in the heart of Newcastle, this luxurious apartment project offers an unparalleled urban living experience, showcasing stunning views of the iconic Quayside.

Located in Clavinging Place, adjacent to the newly revitalised Stephenson Quarter, Hanover Point stands as a testament to Adderstone's commitment to upscale living in the North East.

The official launch event was graced by Sir John Hall, the nationally recognised developer and former chairman of Newcastle United FC.

Hanover Point comprises a collection of 10 meticulously crafted apartments, spread across eight levels, all within a secure, landscaped courtyard. Each of these contemporary-styled apartments boasts panoramic vistas of the majestic Tyne River, providing residents with an exceptional blend of urban sophistication and natural beauty.

Notably, the crown jewel of Hanover Point, a lavish penthouse valued at £1 million, has already been claimed by an astute buyer. However, opportunities exist for those seeking to make this extraordinary location their home, with seven apartments still available for purchase, ranging from £525,000 to £975,000.

Adderstone has consistently demonstrated its prowess in delivering high-end residential properties. Notably, they previously developed the North East's most valuable apartment, the Moorlands Penthouse, situated in the Gosforth neighbourhood of Newcastle, which commanded a sale price of £1.35 million.

An independent report by Pegasus confirmed that more than 1% of people in Newcastle's urban core now live in homes developed by Adderstone. The business has also created in excess of £1.1bn in economic output and thousands of jobs across the North East.

Ian Baggett, the visionary founder and CEO of Adderstone Group, expressed his enthusiasm for the grand opening event, stating: "I was delighted when Sir John Hall agreed to officially open and launch Hanover Point. His legacy, particularly in the North East, has been truly inspiring.

"Sir John showed me and an entire generation of entrepreneurs that it was possible to stay and build great businesses in the North East. He inspired me to become a property developer."

Sir John Hall, guest of honour at the launch, took the opportunity to reflect on his illustrious career. From his pioneering role in developing the Metrocentre to his tenure as chairman of Newcastle United FC and his stewardship of Wynyard Hall, Sir John emphasised the enduring importance of family values.

In his address, Sir John remarked: "Ian and I go back a long way and it's great to see him and his colleagues continuing to deliver these ambitious projects. More than ever, Newcastle and the North East needs brave developers who make markets. With all the talk of affordable homes it is important not to forget that the North East needs high quality homes if it is to retain and attract talent and ambition."

Hanover Point stands as a testament to Adderstone's commitment to creating exceptional living spaces, and also serves as a testament to the enduring spirit of development and innovation in the North East.

This project exemplifies the region's readiness to welcome luxury living while preserving its rich heritage.

Leading North East estate agency Urban BASE has been appointed to promote Hanover Point. Jan Dale, director of Urban BASE, said: "Due to the exemplary nature of this scheme, the unique high level river side location, close to main transport hubs, and the overall high-quality design, interest from the local luxury-buyer market, investors and business executives is strong. These apartments take city living to a whole new level of luxury."

**For more information contact Urban BASE
info@urban-base.com or visit Adderstone Group
www.adderstonegroup.com.**



Neil Turner

Predictions for 2024

By Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield

It's perhaps a sign of age that the years whizz past but I think this year has gone so quickly. I've been busy across many projects with clients, working hard to achieve buildings and developments that assist their way of life, business, and teaching facilities.

So, it's always fun to try looking into the future for trends, approaches, or ideas. I always promote style over fashion, as a building must last many years - nothing wrong with investigating the latest material or idea, but will it look so clever or relevant in ten years' time?

So, what will be the trends for 2024? Here are my thoughts.

1. Ever more focus on energy consumption and net zero

This has become a political matter and it will be interesting to see how the parties push net

zero as we head towards a general election and the social, political, and economic influences that surround this principle. In the North East we hope that the region can develop new technologies and industries to assist the move towards reducing energy consumption. The battery plant at Blyth would have been a great asset - let's hope it develops.

2. Bio diversity

New rules come into the planning system from this autumn about biodiversity and achieving a 10% net gain across sites. This will have a major impact in 2024 on development and will influence design, layouts, landscaping and how we consider new development. No longer an afterthought, everyone will need to plan biodiversity in from the outset - it will be fascinating to see how this impacts architectural decisions.

3. Building costs

Over the last few years, building costs have risen, along with the energy costs required to make and transport materials, which in turn, have accelerated development costs. I think (and hope) we are at the top of the cycle and that gradually costs will come down. I don't think this will be quick or particularly deep. Certainty of cost would certainly help as clients plan out their projects.

4. Housebuilding

It would appear to be no easier in 2024 than ever before as we try to solve housing issues across the country. The cost base is lower in this region, but we still need to be looking at building

well designed, quality housing and affordable housing. I don't envy developers trying to get their project moving with all the red tape.

5. Designs

Changes in building regulations in 2024 /25 with uplifts to Part L of the Building Regulations is designed to pave the way for the more stringent changes that will be introduced through the Future Homes standard in 2025. It will require at least a 31% reduction in emissions compared to current standards.

Extensions and new builds are seeing greater standards in performance for glass and the percentages of glass that can be used. I think this will affect house designs and I hope people will still look to create interesting and exciting solutions rather than ones that simply manage to 'tick the box'.

6. Reuse, Renovate and Recycle

We will see more emphasis on using existing buildings to convert, alter and give a new lease of life - surely that is the most carbon friendly approach.

As ever in the region we have some great innovative architects, designers and building contractors that are able to serve this region and beyond, in whatever challenges are thrown our way.

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,

Back home and settled in after my break at the coast. Still got some puppies so my ears are getting nibbled.

Daddy is going on holiday so Uncle Alexander and Auntie Lena are going to be looking after us all – lots of spoiling and treats I hope! See you soon, Ziggy.

Q. I live in a cottage built around 1900 with rendered brick walls (render possibly original) and a slate roof. After the heavy rains recently there was water ingress around the two chimney stacks through to the bedroom ceilings. A roofing company repaired the stacks and treated the render but during the following winter one chimney stack appeared to be waterproof but the other not. I re-called the roofing company who stated that the chimney stacks were sound externally, but the chimney brickwork etc may be “hygroscopic” which might require expert attention. This chimney stack was linked to an open fireplace downstairs used over the years. Coincidentally we had a multi burner stove installed last year. The stove company recommended and installed Leca insulation, inserting this down one chimney pot before fitting a cowl. The other chimney passage to the bedroom is vented. The loft space is small but on inspection this chimney stack was quite damp inside the loft after the winter, drying out afterwards. The loft has original airbricks plus three ventilating ridge tiles, fixed at a much later date. Has the fitting of the woodburner contributed to what may be condensation? What are your suggested solutions please?

A. The brickwork forming the flues in old houses will be impregnated with salts given off by decades of coal and wood smoke. These salts make the brickwork hygroscopic, meaning that it can absorb moisture directly from the air. This is not the same thing as condensation. For a common example of hygroscopicity, think of a salt cellar on the table of a steamy café in winter –

sometimes you can see individual grains of salt around the spout forming into little pools of water. Or – if you don’t frequent greasy spoon cafés as I do – have a look at the salt sprinkled on the roads during dry but icy weather – you will see each grain of salt sitting in its own little damp patch. For this reason, it is important to keep disused old flues, chimney breasts and stacks ventilated, allowing a trickle of air to flow up from the room below and out through the pot. It sounds as though the flue used by your multi-fuel stove has been fitted with a corrugated stainless-steel liner, with Leca insulation granules poured around the outside. This is standard industry practice, and helps the stove to draw when it is first lit. But it does take away that important drying effect.

The chimney breast in the roof space being damp is not in itself damaging, and you say that space is now well ventilated. So the only problem would appear to be the hygroscopic moisture migrating to the adjacent bedroom ceiling, which I’m guessing is probably modern gypsum plasterboard – a material which itself is hygroscopic. You can prevent this migration by cutting a physical gap between the chimney breast and the ceiling, and hiding it with acrylic mastic or a timber moulding.



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

Christmas is just around the corner! Are you using your loft space to the best of its ability?

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Ian Knight - We first learned about Access 4 Lofts through a local advertising leaflet, and our experience with them exceeded all expectations. From start to finish, their service was exceptional.

Initial Impressions: Our journey with Access 4 Lofts began when Simon came to provide us with a quote earlier in the summer. Right from the start, we were impressed by his professionalism and courteous manner. His thorough assessment of the work required, and his insightful recommendations left us with no desire to seek quotes from other companies.

Flexibility: Access 4 Lofts was incredibly accommodating when it came to scheduling the work. We mutually agreed on a start date that suited our convenience, which was greatly appreciated.

Efficiency: True to their word, the team completed the loft work in just one day. Their efficiency and dedication were remarkable.

Clean-Up: Post-completion, the team left our place spotless. They took care of all the tidying up, ensuring that we didn't have to worry about a thing.

Valuable Suggestions: Simon went the extra mile by recommending some beneficial amendments to our initial plan. His expertise added significant value to our project.

Recommendation: We wholeheartedly endorse Access 4 Lofts for any loft-related work. In fact, we've already recommended them to our neighbour, and they were equally impressed. Access 4 Lofts embodies professionalism, efficiency, and thoroughness. Throughout the entire process, they communicated with us effectively, making the experience truly excellent.

So, if you're looking for a company to supply and fit a new loft hatch, ladder, flooring, insulation, shelving, or lighting, in order to make your loft more usable, Access4Lofts Newcastle and Durham is here to help.

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Building better lives...

Building new homes is about far more than bricks and mortar. One leading housebuilder believes it's about building communities and helping improve lives.

For Miller Homes, community engagement is more than a box ticking exercise, it's an integral part of the company ethos – and it's prepared to put its money where its mouth is.

The company – which is delivering new homes as far afield as Chester-le-Street, Corbridge and Bedlington – introduced its regional Community Fund in 2022 to help grassroots projects linked to education, wellbeing, the environment and sport across the North East.

The initiative proved so popular and such was the interest – with applications

flooding in from charities across the region, keen to bid for a share of the £10k pot – that it is set to be an ongoing annual commitment.

And, following earlier donations in May, Miller Homes has announced its Community Fund is inviting applications in a second funding round for 2023.

Groups, organisations and good causes hoping to be considered for a grant of up to £2,000 have until 25 October 2023 to apply – and follow in the footsteps of a wide range of earlier beneficiaries.

Scout troops and charities supporting young people with life limiting diseases were among those who benefitted from the first funding round of 2023, in May, while eight organisations received a donation of between £500 and £1,000 to help them continue their good work.

They included Washington-based Little Onion Club, which uses gardening activities to bring the community together and promote sustainability, and the Newbiggin Heritage Partnership, which runs the local Newbiggin Maritime Centre.

Other beneficiaries included Durham's Laurel Avenue Community Association, Ringway Primary School at Choppington and the 2nd Herrington Scout Group HQ from Sunderland.

Health related charities were also successful, with Newcastle-based FANS (Families1st4Additionalneeds), which supports people and their families dealing with autism and other neurological conditions, Tyneside Women's Health and The Nicole and Jessica Rich Foundation were also among the beneficiaries.

The latter was set up by the parents of Newcastle youngsters, Nicole and Jessica Rich, who were both diagnosed with the life-limiting Batten Disease.

The family set the charity up to raise awareness and to support research.

And the largest payment went to Byker-based

organisation, Tyneside Women's Health to help the group continue the delivery of its Sunday Lunch Group.

The group, which meets fortnightly when other services are closed, provides a "vital space for women who would otherwise be alone on weekends," said chief executive, Elaine Slater.

"The main purpose of the group is to reduce social isolation, enabling women to access light touch mental health and peer support.

"The donation from the Miller Homes Community Fund will allow us to continue to provide this vital service," she said.

Miller Homes sales director for the North East, Aisling Ramshaw, said the Community Fund "is our way of supporting the people and good causes of the North East.

"We build houses for people – and those people matter to us," she said. "We want to see them, their families and their communities thrive – after all they are our communities too.

"Our Community Fund is there to help, so we would urge any grass roots projects linked to education, wellbeing, the environment and sport which haven't already applied to do so now – it could make all the difference to them."

Applications for the second round of funding close on Wednesday 25 October, after which donations up to a maximum of £2,000 will be awarded to the successful applicants.

To make an application to the Miller Homes Community Fund visit www.millerhomes.co.uk/corporate/community-fund

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Aurora Managed Print Services Expands into Newcastle

Aurora Managed Print Services, a leading provider of comprehensive managed print solutions, is pleased to announce the opening of its new office in Newcastle. This expansion aims to better serve the North East of England, reinforcing Aurora's commitment to local engagement while extending its reach.

Aurora's primary objective is to strengthen existing customer relationships and forge new partnerships across the North East. The company offers a broad range of managed print services, telecoms, access control solutions, print fleet optimisation, document security, eco-friendly printing initiatives and smart building management.

With its presence in Newcastle, Aurora is also dedicated to creating employment opportunities and contributing to the local economy, underlining its commitment to regional prosperity.

Aurora's core values drive its commitment to customers, illustrated by its in-house support and rapid response times. The company has established enduring partnerships with reputable suppliers, such as Canon, who sponsored the new office.

Aurora's Newcastle office is staffed by a team of highly skilled print management professionals dedicated to providing tailored print solutions that address the unique challenges faced by local businesses.

Aurora's telecoms division offers wireless communication alternatives, including VoIP and SIP trunks, to assist businesses in their preparations for the 2025 'Big Switch Off'. These solutions ensure a seamless transition during this critical period.

Aurora's rapid expansion reflects its belief in the power of collective effort. The company leverages collective knowledge and resources to support local businesses with a personalised, responsive, and dedicated service.



SEO specialists celebrating 200% increase in turnover within two-year period

A growing digital marketing agency is set to double its annual turnover for the second year running as it nears the half a million pound mark in the current financial term.

ROAR Digital Marketing experienced a 100% increase in its turnover for 2022/23 when it recorded £282,000, and that figure is set to be doubled again in 2023/24 as the business closes in on the £550,000 mark.

ROAR, which is based in Tyneside but has a client base throughout the UK and into Europe, specialises in Search Engine Marketing services particularly strategic SEO and PPC solutions.

The company has enjoyed rapid growth since being founded in 2016 by former Google Digital Trainer and university lecturer Michael Knowles, with the number of clients it works with more than doubling in the past year alone.

Michael said: "Reflecting back to when the company was close to collapse when Covid-19 hit, the growth ROAR Digital Marketing has experienced ever since has been remarkable.

"It's been a long and difficult journey to get to where we are but, with the hard work of the excellent team here, we have consistently provided a professional and knowledgeable service to ensure we improve business' search engine rankings and significantly boost their online visibility.

"I couldn't be more proud of the team for the exceptional results they deliver for a variety of clients working across all sectors, and I'm looking forward to continuing to watch them as individuals and as a team develop ROAR even further in the coming years."

ROAR's clients are based throughout the UK, with a high proportion based in London, and it recently celebrated acquiring its first fully international client within the insurance industry.

As the company's customer base has increased, the team has grown accordingly and the number of staff members jumped from two to six within a 12-month period.

It was recently bolstered with the appointment of experienced sales manager Chris Graham who was recruited to create and lead a sales division for ROAR.

Michael said: "It's been great to watch the team grow as more businesses enlist our services, and I'm excited to be in the privileged position where we are looking to recruit further team members which will allow us to work with even more amazing companies."



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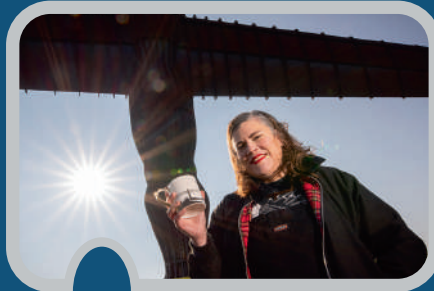
...That time of year...

October is the month when the clocks go back. If your business or organisation had the chance to turn back the clocks, what would you do? Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what they would do.



Off The Grid Adventures has been delivering mentoring work to some of the North East's most vulnerable young people and adults for over five years. One to one mentoring demand has significantly increased year on year over that period. If we were to do it all again, our main focus would definitely be mentoring. To address the growing need we have just agreed to host the amazing Pad B Mental Health and Addiction Programme from our base in Byker. There are some really interesting joint projects in the pipeline which will make a big difference to the clients we will be supporting in the coming years! Check out our recently updated website for more details on the essential work Pad B do.

Paul Kirkpatrick www.offthegrid-adventures.co.uk



There is only one thing I would change about my business if I could turn back time, and that is launch it the moment I left university. Reflecting on my journey, I'd encourage aspiring entrepreneurs to seize their dreams without delay.

Looking back, I'd embrace the opportunity sooner. Powder Butterfly's commitment to excellence, creativity, and customer satisfaction has propelled it to remarkable heights. With an unwavering dedication to producing memorable souvenirs that stand out from the rest, my company has captured the hearts of discerning travellers and locals alike. By marrying British heritage with contemporary design, we have redefined the souvenir industry, offering a refreshing alternative to conventional trinkets.

Corinne Lewis Ward www.powderbutterfly.com



If I had to turn back time, I would realise that even when things go wrong, good things can come from them. When I was 17, I desperately wanted to join the Merchant Navy. It was my life ambition. I passed the interviews and got my qualifications but failed my colour-blind test. My life seemed to end. However, as one door closed another opened and I started a lifelong career in the gas industry. I also managed to join the naval reserves and now, I have my own floating office. Have faith in what life sends you and with a bit of luck all will turn out ok.

Keith Newman www.highlightspr.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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New Season, new term!

Now Autumn is here. It means the beginning of a new term for nesma. We are starting strong after a busy Summer building the team, entering new partnerships, and expanding our portfolio of learning options.

By the time you read this, we will have tucked all our students into their chosen qualification courses and ensured they have everything they need to assist their learning journey. And, of course, our talented tutors will take every care to nurture them towards another 100% pass rate!

We didn't idle the summer away; we made new things happen!

We doubled our internal capacity. In addition to Paul Sutherland, our new Commercial Director, we welcomed Laura Henry as our new Client Relationship Manager and Lydia Hart, our year-long intern, a Marketing and Advertising Management student from Leeds Beckett University. We also embraced Heather Yaxley as a highly experienced practitioner and examiner specialist tutor to complement our tutor team for our CIPR programmes.

We now have graduates of both the CIM and CIPR sustainability qualifications at the Diploma level, and we have started to roll out the CIM Marketing Leadership Sustainable Transformation in Marketing module at Level 7 (Masters level). These qualifications are ideal for

Marketing Managers wearing the sustainability or ESG hat, as they can gain a wealth of knowledge and understanding of what is required and who needs to get involved.

Four new CIM digital marketing qualifications at BA Hons level have been launched with the savvy practitioner in mind. They cover Social Media, Content Management, AI, and SEO and Paid Social. These modules can all be studied as standalone over a matter of weeks or can sit within or add to your qualification portfolio.

We entered an exciting new partnership with PR Smith, the renowned author and marketing expert, to add new SOSTAC® Principles and SOSTAC® Certified Planner masterclasses to our portfolio. PR Smith will appear on our webinars to introduce them alongside our expert subject tutor, Sali Midjek-Conway. It will be a fantastic ongoing relationship with Paul, with additional projects to follow in the future. The PR Smith SOSTAC® masterclasses are ideal for those starting in marketing planning or seasoned professionals who would like that extra affirmation to make their strategic planning more effective. It is a versatile framework which suits the needs of individuals and organisations in different industries and contexts, making it a valuable tool for decision-makers, planners, and marketers.

All our university visits are underway. In these sessions, our nesma alumni share their career and learning journeys, mistakes, and all, with marketing and communications undergraduates in the region, highlighting the opportunities ahead of them in the world of work as a marketer.

Our series of Know-How and Do sessions are back this Autumn, with Andrew Swan LLP discussing the legal aspects of Direct Marketing and Chris Thompson, MD at Mediaborne discussing the new creative landscape for highly targeted media advertising and the latest techniques for monitoring our viewing behaviour and response rates.

But it's not all about work, you know

We have also entered sponsorship arrangements with the CIPR in London and across the regions to support their PRide Award events. Once again, nesma is also thrilled to be the Corporate Sponsor at the prestigious North East Marketing Awards (NEMA) at St James' Park on 30 November. We love this event, which recognises the exceptionally talented marketing and communications individuals and teams in the region. Of course, many of those have also participated in learning programmes with nesma, so it's always great to catch up.

And it won't be long before we share the proud joy of graduation with our students at CIM's formal graduation ceremony in Westminster Hall, London, on 11 November. It really is one of our favourite days of the year!

As one of the leading centres for the Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM) and Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR), we have an impressive pass rate record, which is representative of the combined experience of our tutors and our approach to skill development and empowering confidence through knowledge sharing.

PR Smith's SOSTAC® Masterclasses start on Monday, 16 October 2023.

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If you think we can help your teams or individuals within your department develop their marketing, communications or digital marketing skills or level up their credentials in specific areas like marketing leadership or strategic planning, please get in touch.

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Ian Davidson

Working with the ambitious

Wadds Inc. works with ambitious creative agencies and communications teams dedicated to achieving growth with social impact.

Its focus is on helping management teams build a future proof, differentiated market position that exploits emerging opportunities, manages risk, embraces innovation and navigates economic volatility.

One of its clients is Cravens, the oldest UK independent creative agency in the UK. Here, chairman Ian Davidson explains what's next in this exciting new chapter for the business.

Tell us about Cravens

This year we are celebrating our 75th anniversary and we are proud to be the oldest independent agency in the country. We are a creative consultancy whose skills span the world of brand strategy and identity and every field of brand communications.

Cravens has doubled in size over the last three years and we now have a multi-skilled team capable of developing outstanding work across all communication channels. We've remained relevant because we always focus on creating proper impact for our clients. Proper impact being one that makes an intended commercial difference for a client's business or organisation.

What does your focus on purpose mean in practice?

Giving life to purpose is at the centre of everything we do and it proves to be the most important element in helping clients align their brand messaging across all their target stakeholders, both internally and externally to achieve their goals. This also means aligning your brand purpose with the critical topics of today, such as sustainability.

We employ a three-stage approach which first helps a client find (or re-connect with) the right brand purpose for them. This work is undertaken by a combination of our strategic planning and creative teams to make sure the output is the optimal articulation of the brand purpose.

Our approach then looks at how the brand looks, acts and speaks and directs this with brand books and guidelines. In the third and final stage, we apply the purpose to developing all the communications that will actually deliver the desired impact.

Depending on the specific client assignment the assets can vary significantly and can include such things as investor decks. In practice the key to delivering purpose is to arrive at the right creative articulation of it that anticipates all the uses and stakeholder groups that need to be factored for, and then manage its implementation with integrity and control.

How does this translate into work for clients?

This work often involves senior members of the client team as it is vital to have the right people involved to ensure both support for the implementation stages, as well as the right inputs to finding/re-connecting with the brand purpose. It is important and beneficial to have an executive sponsor for the assignment.

What do you think are the biggest challenges ahead for creative agencies?

One of the biggest for our industry is undoubtedly going to be the impact of AI on what we do and how we operate.

Being fairly compensated for the contribution we make to a business or organisation has always been a recurring issue in our industry and we work hard to identify with each client what a 'proper impact' will be for them and link this back to how our performance for them is measured and assessed.

What big plans does Cravens have for the future?

We have happily enjoyed consistent success over the last few years and we want to continue that level of growth at a steady pace with international, national and regional clients. Two of the keys to achieving this will be building our profile further and continuing to attract and retain highly talented people who want to remain true to who they are and collectively prove that you don't have to be based in London to be successful as a creative company.

Why is the right non-executive director (NED) support so important to realising those goals?

Appointing the right NED support is vital to make sure you can expand the range of management skills the company can call on to confidently tackle and embrace new opportunities for growth. Our NEDs are focused on our objectives and it's great to have them on the team.

If you run a creative agency and are looking for an experienced non-executive director to help build resilience and plan for growth, please visit www.wadds.co.uk

A unique interview...



Daryl Chadwick

Owner, Chadwick & Co.

How did you get into hospitality?

Aged 18, fresh out of the army having joined as a boy at 16, I started work at a small hotel in County Durham. Pushing the dessert trolley and I was allowed soon after to flame the crepes suzettes on the gueridon trolley.

After that I worked for an Italian family and soon found that the Mediterranean convivial way of eating and gathering together was far more appealing than the then staid formality of English hotel hospitality.

It wasn't long before I was a co-owner of an Italian cafe which was a roaring success and I found myself a restaurateur at the age of 21.

Who or what inspires you?

Early travel writers and food writers such as Elizabeth David, who's book 'An Omelette and a Glass of Wine' was my first cookbook.

I'm inspired by my staff who work hard every day, and my travels continue to inspire me having lived and worked in France, Italy, and Greece on and off for the last thirty years. I still look forward to annual trips around the Greek islands looking for local dishes and ingredients. The simple ways of Mediterranean living remains one of my main inspirations.

What advice would you give anyone interested in getting into hospitality?

I'd say only do it because you're passionate about cooking, then get a foot in the door of the best place you can - offer to wash the pots, peel veg, just get into a really good, busy kitchen and watch the action. Then decide what you want to focus on. Most of all, do the simple things well, make time in your day to create.

What's your favourite part of your job?

Every Monday morning. Everything starts again. Another chance to do different and better things. A new blank page.

What is your favourite hospitality story?

In my Italian days, I once had to douse a lady in Pinot Grigio to extinguish a flaming Sambuca fire which rolled across the table and onto her lap.



When I was much younger, I was lucky enough to be taught a very special lesson. I always used to take my mum on Mothers' Day to the Sharrow Bay Hotel on Ullswater and the owner (Francis Coulson) would wander about the tables doing what seemed the most basic task - handing out bread rolls. He had so much natural charm, but along with that he was teaching us all the importance of humility and service. There's no doubt that he was as great a leader as he was a hotelier.

What are your favourite magazines?

Marine Quarterly, Classic Sailor and Wood Worker Magazine.

What does the future hold for Daryl Chadwick?

Having a young family and having just opened a second cafe I'm looking forward to enjoying the consolidation of the two. I'm teaching my daughters to cook!

www.instagram.com/chadwickandcompany

uniquemagazines.co.uk



“
*...make time
in your day
to create...*”

Daryl Chadwick

“

...AI...I think if you aren't exploring it you will be left behind...

Marketing and Media Matters

In the latest of this popular series of features we talk to...

Henry Coggin

Co-founder and Digital Director at Vida Creative

Did you always envisage a career in the Media Industry?

From a young age I was obsessed with computers and the internet. I spent too many of my teenage years building websites for friends and family and even learnt how to launch an internet radio station when I was 14 - which looking back is as impressive as it is cringeworthy!

I always found coding interesting, so studying Software Engineering at university was a natural next step for me. When I was there, I couldn't wait to finish, I found the theory boring and was more interested in solving real-world problems and creating meaningful stuff - something that absolutely still motivates me today.

What has been your career path so far?

After university I worked at a great agency in Lancaster, and after a few years with blind confidence (aka naivety) set up Vida with my now wife Ellen. The first few years we worked remotely travelling around Europe in our rusty campervan. Business picked up and the constant travelling became tiresome so we made the fantastic decision to find our new permanent home in Newcastle.

What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far?

Expanding the team I've found quite challenging. Finding people that are good at what they do, fit the culture but also bring a fresh perspective is tough! Understanding what motivates others and how they like to be managed was a completely new experience for me and something I'm always trying to improve on.

What is your greatest strength?

Drive! I'm sure it is exhausting for the rest of the team at times, but I'm constantly driving to push and improve. Whether that looks like better results for clients, smarter ways of working or trying to make Vida a better place to work.

What is your biggest weakness?

Impatience! An ugly trait, and something I'm trying to work on...

What has been your proudest achievement?

Maybe not an achievement, but I had a noticeable feeling of pride this summer. We'd been working hard on the Soccer Aid for UNICEF campaign for nine months, and as a team we went to Manchester to see the match. Seeing our work all over the city, and then all over Old Trafford felt pretty special, especially as I'm a huge football fan. It was awesome to have that opportunity to celebrate that project as a team.

How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?

Boring answer, but AI. We're already using it in the development team to reduce grind work and speed up development. Our design team have been experimenting with generating images in MidJourney. It's getting better and better, I don't see it as a bubble and I think if you aren't exploring it you will be left behind.

How do you like to unwind?

I'm a long suffering Hartlepool United fan and get to most matches. Once a week I play (a pretty poor standard of) 5-a-side football, and we normally do quite well at the The Central pub quiz. Also cycling to and from work is a game changer, gives you some time to get ready for work/decompress on the way home - and no traffic stress.

vidacreative.co.uk



Sophia Gowland

Hey, what does your brand want to say?

Well, first of all, ours wants to say Hello, and welcome to our new Petite Agency column. We're excited to be partnering with Northern Insight Magazine to talk you through insights into the world of Social Media & Personal Branding.

Why? Well, because it's our passion. And, it's what we do for a bunch of our clients across the North East.

If you haven't heard of us before, we're a Teesside based marketing agency who specialise in Social Media & Personal Brand Management. We believe that great work starts with great relationships, which is why our approach is led by connection. The better our connection with our clients, their teams and their communities, the better results we can deliver for them.

So, where should we start? How about a little intro to Petite, where our journey began and, most importantly, why we do what we do.

I'm Sophia, Founder of Petite Agency. My journey in business began back in 2020 when I decided to take the leap and create the start up I'd always dreamt of. I'd worked in marketing for over a decade, and could see a gap in the market, especially in the North East, for a Marketing Agency who by definition was "attractively small" (see what we did there with the word 'Petite?') and by an attractively small agency, we mean:

Closely Collaborating: We're all about building real relationships and making genuine connections. So, when you need us, we're right there, ready to roll up our sleeves and work alongside you.

Being a Petite Partner: We're not here to just serve you. We want to be your partner on this journey. Your needs and goals are our top priority, always. When you work with us, it's more than just business; it's a partnership where you're truly valued.

Never feeling like you're on a conveyor belt: You won't ever feel like you're on a conveyor belt with us. We get it – support tickets & cold feeling content don't bring value. Our approach is all about giving you tailored, thoughtful strategies that fit your unique needs and goals.

Three years down the line, and we're proud to say our Petite approach is a success! We're now a multi award winning agency with a team of four...and growing.

We know every business has a story to tell, and we want to help you tell it. That's why our

tagline is "Empowering Ambitious Brands" we partner with SME's to empower their brands through storytelling, whether that's through the company brand on Social Media, or their Personal Brand.

Okay, why are we so passionate about this? Social Media Management isn't just about posting content and personal branding isn't just a trendy buzzword. For our clients, it's about creating an authentic online presence that truly connects with their audience. It's about connecting with customers on a personal level, telling their unique stories, and ultimately driving growth.

And for entrepreneurs, your personal brand is your legacy. It's how you're perceived by the world, how you build trust, and how you leave your mark. In an age where authenticity and relatability are paramount, your personal brand is your unique way of standing out in a crowded marketplace.

So, whether you're a client looking to strengthen your brand's online presence through Social Media or an entrepreneur seeking to elevate your Personal Brand, we're here to make it happen. We believe in the power of storytelling, and we're excited to help you craft your story, share it with the world, and make a lasting impact.

Now you understand a little more about us, we hope you'll be back to read our column in next month's issue of Northern Insight.

If you've made it this far down, thank you so much for reading.

thepetiteagency.co.uk



Sarah O'Mahoney and Neil Stephenson

Putting ambitious fast growth firms in the spotlight

An expansion of services and a strategic alliance, to support ambitious SMEs, has seen a surge in new business at corporate communications specialist, Bradley O'Mahoney.

The company has seen its collaboration with business investment specialist, Stephenson Ventures, launch with three products for companies operating in the tech and other high growth markets.

At the same time, the firm has introduced an

in-house video filming and editing offer that is being utilised by its wide client base to tell their own unique story.

Sarah O'Mahoney, director, said: "We are placing an emphasis on the growing number of companies in the region looking to scale quickly and with the ultimate goal being the sale of the business or further acquisitions.

"Our message to fast growth companies is that building fame and profile is a vitally important ingredient, something they really should work at when looking to build the confidence in them of a potential investor."

Demand for advice is set to grow as the value of Venture Capital (VC) investment in North East businesses more than doubled in the second quarter of 2023, according to KPMG's latest Venture Pulse report. A total of £23.9m was raised by the region's businesses from April to June, up 132% from the £10.3m raised in Q1, according to the report compiled by PitchBook.

In the UK more than 60 per cent of completed deals in the first half of 2023 were at seed, early and series A stage, showing that innovative, high-growth potential businesses are appealing to investors.

Sarah, continued: "Our collaboration with Stephenson Ventures has enabled us to convert clients from the tech sector, in particular, where Neil is a highly respected mentor, coach NED

and investor, having sold his own business, data centre specialist, Onyx, for a reported £60 million on 2016.

"Meanwhile, we have seen very fast uptake for our video offer and this is without actively marketing it. Many of our clients such as Hodgson Sayers, Constructing Excellence in the North East, Carney Consultancy, Castle Building Services, Silverstone Building Consultancy, Elanders UK, JK Property Services, Torgersens, Northern Counties Builders Federation, New Energy and Building Services Solutions, Peacocks Medical Group, HLA Building Services, North East Automotive Alliance and Laminform have utilised video to highlight business success, case studies, award wins, celebrations and to engage with employees, stakeholders and investors.

"To meet increased client demand we have also strengthened our PR resource at director level and formed a collaboration with national broadcast journalist for ITN, Rachel Sweeney, around media training and crisis management.

"We are a very agile and focussed firm that has developed a sustainable business model that is attractive to clients and which, we believe, will help us continue to grow."

www.bradleyomahoney.co.uk

Gateshead's newest film studio to make virtual production accessible to local businesses

Borne Studios is the brand new film studio and hybrid events space situated in Gateshead, from Newcastle based creative agency Media Borne, that aims to make professional virtual production accessible to local businesses and creatives across the region and beyond.



We spoke to Borne Studios founder and Managing Director of Media Borne Chris Thompson to find out all about how the new studio space can benefit your business.

What was the inspiration behind opening Borne Studios?

Well, as the MD at Media Borne I've worked with businesses around the UK for over five years now to bring them professional video production that makes their brands stand out. Over that time I've seen the technology in the video production sector grow at an incredible rate, particularly when it comes to virtual production services. We've always strived to be at the forefront of this technology and after undertaking a huge virtual production project with the NHS, I knew I wanted to make this technology accessible to as many businesses as possible. So, when the opportunity came up to open the studio I jumped at it, because I knew I could make this a hub for businesses in the region looking to take their video marketing output to the next level.

What is virtual production?

In a nutshell, virtual production combines physical and virtual filmmaking techniques to create really dynamic video projects. For example, with the NHS we helped them create an immersive virtual training programme using 360° video techniques. Meaning they can train their staff from home using videos that make use of virtual reality to put them in real-life situations. However, that's only one element of virtual production. Our studio has a green-screen cove that allows us to transform the environment around you and create completely virtual worlds that actually look real. It's not like

the old days of green screen where you could spot it in a film from a mile away. It's come on so far since then and the possibilities really are endless in terms of what you can use it for. For example, if you have a new product you'd like to showcase or a place to film regular social media content for your brand, our green-screen cove is perfect. It's truly astounding what can be done with virtual production and we want Borne Studios to be the place that makes this technology accessible to businesses of all shapes and sizes.

Why should businesses care about the capabilities of virtual production?

We all know video is number one when it comes to online content and promoting your business. But, there's so much content online, it's so extremely saturated, that it's easier than ever now to fade into the noise. Virtual production can make your video content eye-catching and engaging again. It can help bring your creative ideas to life in a way that makes people watch. Also, there are so many practical benefits of virtual production. At Borne Studios you can regularly come and create content in a way that's convenient, cost-effective and time saving. There's no need to travel to various locations or invest in lots of lighting and props, it can all be done in one room whenever you like.

Is the studio space just for virtual production work?

Not at all, it's a dynamic space that can be used for any video or content creation work. We've got our team on hand to help out with any creative productions, as well as professional lighting rigs, cameras and audio equipment. We can facilitate podcast production and we've got a dedicated post-production room. Whatever your idea may be, we can bring it to life at Borne Studios!

You mentioned Borne Studios is an 'events space' too, what do you mean by that?

We want Borne Studios to become a real hub for creatives in the region. It's a fully licensed events space and we've already got Newcastle Film Club hosting regular events at the venue. We're planning to put on live music, food and comedy events in the very near future too. So, if you're looking for a venue for your next event don't hesitate to get in touch!

mediaborne.co.uk/studios



“

...We want Borne Studios to become a real hub for creatives in the region...

Chris Thompson

The Culture Review

with Ivan Hollingsworth,
 Founder of Centric Consultants

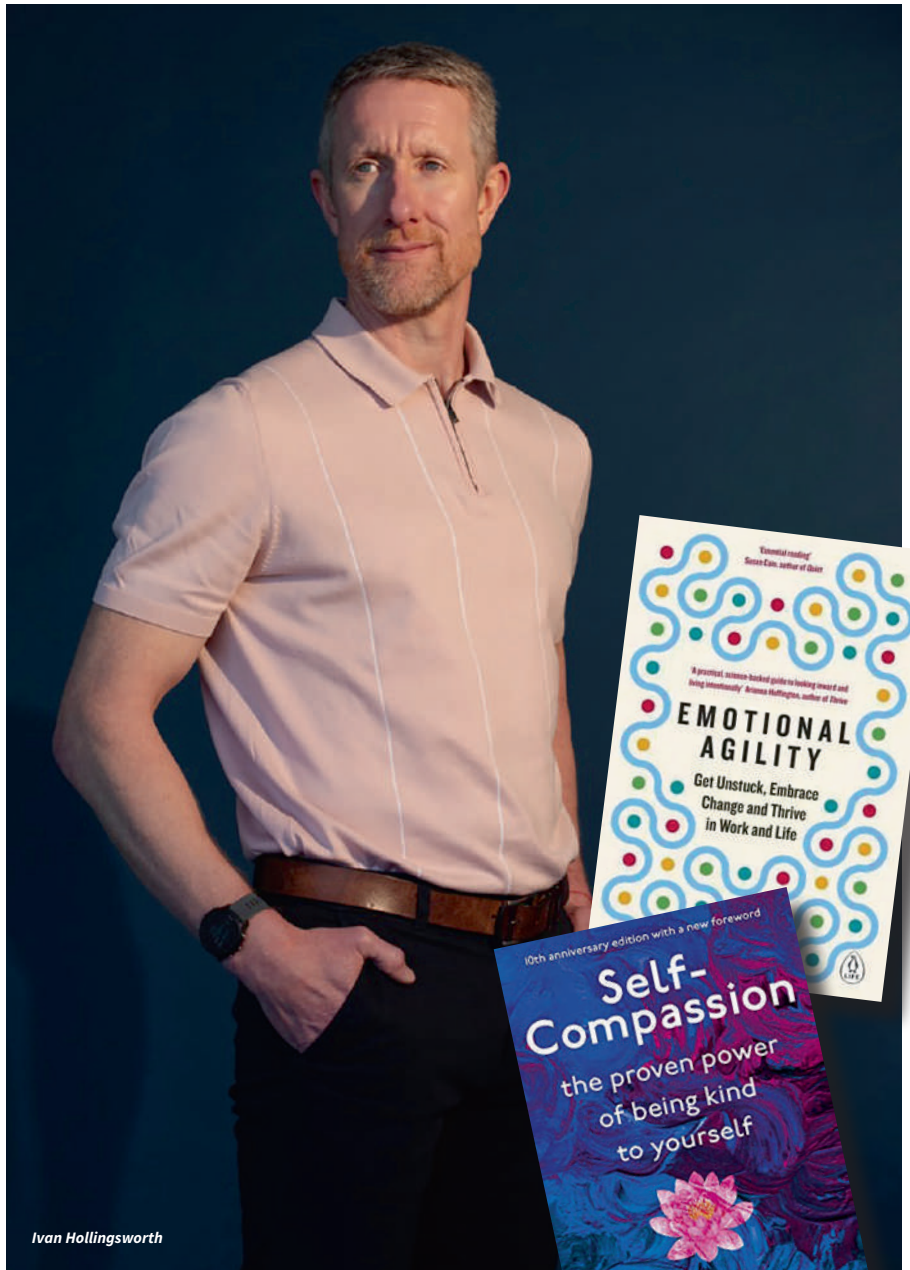
Being resilient doesn't mean that you don't experience stress, suffering, or emotional upheaval – instead it is the process you go through to navigate this distress or adversity that makes you truly resilient.

Our business was founded to give people the tools to cope when things don't quite go as expected and a lot of the insights that we discuss with our clients are based on our lived experience as a family as our son, Seb, underwent heart surgery as a baby, and then again as a teenager.

Last month you may have seen our family on *Geordie Hospital* (Channel 4), the episode followed just some of our story and celebrates the amazing surgeon Mr Hasan, and the incredible team at The Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals Foundation Trust who mended Seb's heart. We talk candidly about what that experience taught us about resilience in practice, and we hope that the episode sheds some light on part of the context for the work that we do.

With the right support, resilience can be learned – and you can maintain your core purpose in the face of changing circumstances. Resilient individuals and teams are more likely to develop high-quality connections, manage stress effectively, avoid burnout, and stay inspired. But, it all starts with acceptance of our emotions. Rather than trying to change or control our emotions, practicing emotional agility allows us to use these feelings as data and guide our decision-making process. It helps you to step back and make decisions based on your values and goals, rather than acting rashly on impulse.

Understanding our emotions is the first step to having truly human connections in the workplace, and teams that are connected and resilient truly thrive. Individual managers and leaders are responsible for role-modelling and creating the space that enables their teams think and feel in the most emotionally agile way, by adopting an approach of being a listener, coach, and collaborator. The output of this is that you will transform employee engagement, mitigate the risk of burnout and improve your performance.



Ivan Hollingsworth

This month I've enjoyed two titles exploring the idea of how our emotions feed into resilience, and why self-compassion is a powerful solution for combating negativity and insecurity - the symptoms of living in a high-pressure world.

Emotional Agility: Get Unstuck, Embrace Change and Thrive in Work and Life
 by Dr. Susan David

Drawing on more than twenty years of academic research and her own experiences, Susan David PhD, a psychologist and faculty member at Harvard Medical School, has pioneered a new way to achieve our most valued goals and live life to the fullest.

Self Compassion: The Proven Power of Being Kind to Yourself by Kristen Neff PhD

Kristin Neff PhD, is a professor in educational psychology, and the world's expert on self-compassion. A pioneer who established self-compassion as a field of study, Kristin offers a powerful solution for combating negativity and insecurity - the symptoms of living in a high-pressure world. Through tried and tested exercises and audio downloads, you can learn the three core components that will help to heal

destructive emotional patterns so that you can become healthier, and happier, and replace negative and destructive measures of self-worth and success with a kinder and non-judgmental approach.

Ivan Hollingsworth is the founder and director of Centric Consultants - a business founded in a bid to tackle 'culture-washing' and support business leaders to build strong, sustainable, high-performing teams based on trust and psychological safety. Each month he will share his best business reads on key topics that can help business leaders address key challenges in the coming years, including reducing staff burnout, attracting and retaining people, and increasing team performance.

For more insights on what company culture truly means, and how to can implement change across your business follow Centric Consultants on LinkedIn or email Ivan directly at ivan@centric-consultants.com



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If you'd like to have a chat about how we can assist you, please do get in touch.

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FUSION



University of the Year recognition for Teesside University

Teesside University has been named among the Universities of the Year in a brand-new national university guide, which will be influential in informing students' choices about where to study.

The University's Professional Apprenticeship provision, graduate employment, student support and commitment to social inclusion were all highlighted as major factors in Teesside's strong performance in the new Daily Mail

University Guide (published Sunday 10 Sept).

Teesside University ranked 66th overall, out of 128 institutions, and also secured a shortlisting for University of the Year.

This success follows positive results in the recent National Student Survey, with Teesside the highest scoring North East University in seven out of 10 categories, and placing above the sector average in the majority of areas.

Alastair McCall, Editor of the Daily Mail University Guide, said: "Teesside University makes a critical difference to the North East region and its economy, with students benefiting from some of the most up-to-date facilities that can be found.



Jarrow primary with 'Outstanding' leadership and pupil behaviour praised by Ofsted

Happy, proud and superbly behaved pupils love to learn at a Jarrow primary school.

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, which is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was inspected by Ofsted in July.

The school on Ayr Drive has been rated 'Good' overall, with 'Outstanding' leadership and management and 'Outstanding' behaviour and attitudes, by the education watchdog.

Lead inspector Jenny Thomas said in her report: "Behaviour around school is superb. Any issues with behaviour are picked up promptly by adults. Pupils rise to leaders' high expectations for their behaviour in lessons and around school.

"The leadership of the school is outstanding. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the schools. Parents say that leaders and staff 'go the extra mile'.

"Leaders have carefully planned an ambitious curriculum. This curriculum starts in early years, building on what children know through the year groups. This ensures that pupils are ready for secondary school. Teaching plans are designed to ensure that pupils build knowledge over time."

The school leaders' approach to broadening pupils' experiences was also praised in the report, for example, children have been learning about water safety in "inventive ways" such as visits to surf school and pupils talk "excitedly about residential trips".

School leaders' approach to staff workload and wellbeing was also highlighted in the report with teachers quoted as saying they felt leaders took their workload "seriously", were well supported and "leaders act to manage their workload and wellbeing carefully".



Searching for spooky Sunderland stories

Budding authors are being invited to write terrifying tales and scary stories as a popular North East competition returns.

Entries are now open for Sunderland's annual Spooky Stories contest, when youngsters across the city show off their writing skills by penning a Halloween-themed short story in just 500 words.

The annual event, organised by Sunderland BID and supported by Sunderland City Council, is open to authors across three age groups - five to nine-year-olds, 10 to 13-year-olds and 14 to 18-year-olds.

And stories will be judged on originality, plot, characterisation, language and the level of enjoyment that the judges feel reading the story.

The competition is part of Sunderland's Halloween Fear on the Wear programme which will run from 20-31 October, in conjunction with Sunderland Libraries Services as part of the Sunderland Libraries' Literature Festival.

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¿Habla Geordie?

Steve Russell visits the International Language College in Jesmond and explores a lesser-known side-hustle, with a distinctly international accent.

There are some decisions in life which take you down an unexpected new path, and allowing a South American stranger to move into your abode is definitely one of them.

Being an open-minded gentleman (not code for attending 'couple's nightclubs' incidentally), when my wife mentioned that the International Language College in Jesmond were looking for hosts for their students, my immediate reaction was 'why not?'. And so, with very little ado, we welcomed a young man from Santiago, Chile into our family. A memorable, four-month adventure duly ensued (punctuated with the odd bottle of Brown Ale for cultural reasons!).

Opening in 2020, the college is a relatively recent addition to the city. While it's now thriving, the timing of their opening wasn't ideal, as Head of Marketing and Admin, Mabel Arguelles, explains: "After securing the premises, and a lot of effort

in getting it ready for students, we opened just in time for a global pandemic!"

Luckily, they weathered that storm and now attract students from all over the world, and existing international residents looking to improve their English. Their motto is 'Language for Life!' and during a visit to the college, it's evident that it's much more than just a place to learn your there, they're and theirs. The reception is abuzz with laughter, and the 'speak only English' policy is ruthlessly enforced with a small water spray! They pride themselves on this relaxed atmosphere, which was an essential element for its Libyan founder, Mahmud Elwerfelli. He wanted ILC to emulate the college he attended in Colchester when he first arrived in the UK, which he credits with changing his life.

Informality and a sense of community are key ingredients in their success, but behind it all are an experienced team of professionals offering a range of courses, including General English, Business English, OET and ILETS. Furthermore, College Director Tony Martin, has ambitions to diversify, inspired by a surprising source:

'I do CrossFit, and it's inspired me to create a similar structure for teaching English. In CrossFit, all the sessions are really specific, so you can cherry-pick. I want to emulate that, with specialised lessons aimed at people who don't have time to commit to our longer courses, which could be charged per class, or perhaps by monthly subscription.'

That's one for the future, but for now the team at ILC are proud not only of their educational

standards, but also the philanthropic aspect of their work. Tony elaborates:

'We work with lots of refugees and asylum seekers, some of whom we educate for free and some of whom are funded by Newcastle Council, such as the Ukrainian students we have had over the past year.'

There's a strong emphasis on student welfare, one of the reasons why they like to accommodate non-resident students in local households, to help them settle into life in the city. They're currently seeking to expand the homestay scheme, as Tony explains:

'We're always searching for suitable new hosts, and we're presently looking at increasing the rates of pay, as an incentive to get more people on board.'

The current rate is around £130 a week for room only, with a higher rate for providing meals. However, they're considering a range of options to increase these rates. It's a flexible scheme, with expected student tenancy anything from a couple of weeks to six months. If you have the space, it's certainly one easy way of withstanding the ongoing financial apocalypse. However, we found our hosting experience to be so much more than a few extra pennies in the coffers. On our part, we have an honorary Chilean family member, and on his part, he has the unfortunate burden of being the future president of the Santiago NUFC supporters club! Viva la Toon!

To find out more about the ILC and the student hosting scheme, visit www.il-centre.co.uk



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NHSG's academic Sixth Form programme has been designed to provide choice and the range of A Level courses are as diverse as its pupil community.

The School prides itself in outstanding teaching delivered by inspirational subject specialists whose knowledge and passion for their subject encourages pupils to achieve the very best they can. Alongside this, the superb facilities and smaller classes are the perfect combination to learn without limits and achieve outstanding A Level results.

Plus, all Sixth Form pupils have access to a superb leadership, enrichment and co-curricular programmes which are designed to broaden their horizons, develop new skills and grow confidence. This includes Life 360 an excellent programme that covers finance, politics, social responsibility and British citizenship so that pupils are prepared for life beyond school.

It's no surprise therefore that the school's success reaps real results, not just in grades, but in enabling its pupils to fulfil their own dreams and ambitions across a wide range of disciplines as the NHSG Class of 23 clearly demonstrate. These young female trailblazers, who completed their A Levels this summer, have taken up a range of exciting higher education courses at the country's top universities, and they say their achievements are deeply rooted in the support provided by NHSG.

Achieving A*/A grades in Fine Art, Politics and English Literature A Levels, Emma Scanlon has a bright future at Oxford University where she's studying English Language and Literature at St John's College. With a burning ambition to harness the power of words

to effect societal change, Emma is contemplating using her love of language to pursue a career in investigative journalism. She said: "I'd love to be an investigative journalist because breaking stories can have a big impact on society. Journalism can shine a light on societal issues, change policy and change how we think, too."

Joining Emma at Oxford after achieving a stunning set of A Level grades, Maia Broughton is reading Geography at Brasenose College. Maia achieved three A*s and an A in her A Levels, more than meeting the prestigious university's offer, and is contemplating a career in fields of sustainable finance or disaster risk analysis. She said: "The school has been second to none and words can't describe how thankful I am. I want to give a massive thank you to my teachers; they have enabled me to achieve my dreams."

Securing her place at renowned performing arts institution, Leeds Conservatoire, Madi French is taking her study to the next level as she embarks on a degree in Musical Theatre. NHSG, in partnership with Gateway Studios, nurtured Madi's love of musical theatre. Madi said: "The encouragement from my teachers, including my dance teacher here at NHSG, has always been great. They have really helped shape who I am today and I owe them a lot."

A career in Medicine beckons for Ishika Jha whose place at Nottingham University was secured thanks to outstanding achievements in Biology, Chemistry and Maths. Ishika has always known that the sciences would play a role in her future and believes that the NHSG community was at the heart of her achievement.





She says: "There's a really supportive community and sisterhood at NHSG. I couldn't be more grateful to the teachers and student community for the support I received."

Emma Hands, who is studying her dream course in film at Salford University put her success down to the confidence she gained while being at NHSG. "I joined NHSG in Sixth Form because I thought it would provide me with the opportunity to get into film. It's a male dominated sector but being at an all-girl school I have learned that I can achieve anything and it's made me much more determined and motivated as a result."

Amanda Hardie, Acting Head of NHSG, said: "You simply can't deny the benefits of an all-girl education - a productive environment that empowers girls to learn without limits and be the girl they want to be. I know these students will go on to blaze a trail of success in their chosen fields."

Did you know?

NHSG offers both Year 7 and Sixth Form Scholar and Bursary Awards? The application window for September 2024 entry is open until 11th December 2023.

Want to find out more?

NHSG's Senior School and Sixth Form Open Morning is on Saturday 11th November, 10.00 am until 1.00 pm. Contact the admissions team - T: 0191 2016511 E: Admissions@ncl.gdst.net W: newcastlehigh.gdst.net



Emma Scanlon

Show your support for anti-racism: How wearing red this October can change hearts, minds and lives



Chris Duffy



To mark Black History Month, education specialists NCFE sat down with Chris Duffy, Fundraising and Partnerships Coordinator at Show Racism the Red Card, to learn more about the national charity's North East roots, why more organisations should take part in Wear Red Day, and how football is helping to create a better future through education.

It was back in 1996 when Shaka Hislop – Newcastle United's then goalkeeper – was at a petrol station with his wife and young daughter in the centre of the city of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Upon seeing a black man, a group of young people, began to hurl racist abuse at Shaka causing understandable fear and discomfort to the young family. However, upon realising who Shaka was, the mood of the young people turned to one of awe and admiration, leading them to approach him and request autographs.

Shaka recalls: "It's an incident that set me back quite a lot. On the one hand, I'm thinking about my wife and daughter in the car and protecting them, and on the other I felt desperately disrespected as a black man. And then, it hits me – the power of the individual and, more so, the power [held by] footballers."

It was at this point that Shaka realised that his 'celebrity' status as a footballer had an influence that he had hitherto been unaware of. Coupling the power of football and his position as a role model, Shaka recognised that education could be a powerful strategy for tackling racism in society.

Soon after, Show Racism the Red Card was born – which is today, the UK's leading anti-racism education charity.

From humble beginnings to changing the curriculum

At the charity's first ever scheduled event at Gosforth High School in Newcastle upon Tyne, Shaka and his teammate John Beresford spoke to the small, acutely attentive group of students about their experiences in football and in society in general.

Today, our organisation reaches more than 60,000 young people and 14,000 adults every year. In fact, as of March 2023, we just celebrated an astounding landmark in our history – 1,000,000 people have now passed through our invaluable anti-racism learning experience.

The work we do includes visiting thousands of schools and workplaces annually, as well as running multi-school campaign events at football clubs across England, Scotland and Wales. As well as face to face and online anti-racism training, we provide a wealth of free to access educational materials, lesson plans and assembly guides.

One of our most recent initiatives, to provide free online anti-racism resources (The Education Hub) to every school in the UK, went live to great acclaim earlier this year. Currently, The Education Hub has 9,400 registered users and over 17,000 accessed lessons in countries as far flung as India, Australia and the United States.

Wear red and make a statement!

Wear Red Day is the UK's greatest celebration of anti-racism and the anti-racism movement and is taking place on Friday 20 October 2023. It is singular in its purpose as a national fundraising and awareness day for what is an international social movement.

Commencing in 2014, when a hardy band of just 7,000 people took part, Wear Red Day has since achieved a stunning metamorphosis with more than 440,000 individuals registering to take part in 2022.

The crux of Wear Red Day is simple – all those taking part wear an item (or a full outfit) of red to show solidarity and to spark discussion, before snapping photos of their support and circulating on social media with the hashtag #WRD23.

For those who take part and agree with what we do, we also ask you make a small donation to Show Racism the Red Card to allow us to continue our struggle for a world where lives are no longer ruined by racism.

To register and receive your free fundraising pack, visit www.theredcard.org/wear-red-day or text 'RED' to 70470 to donate £1 (text costs donation amount + a standard rate message).

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Fostering a love of learning through a curriculum of choice

Head of King’s Magna Middle School (KM), Mr Joseph Birchall, describes how his school operates on an educational philosophy centred on student experience and the principle of choices.

At KM, we believe in offering a diverse and enriching curriculum that shapes the student experience for the better and fosters a love of learning through providing students with the opportunity to do more of what they enjoy earlier in their student journey.

At the core of our curriculum are the fundamental subjects of English, mathematics, and science, which students engage with almost daily. However, we also recognise the importance of providing students with a broader and more varied education, which is why, starting from Year 6, we empower our students to choose two optional subjects they want to study. The flexibility to choose additional subjects across a wide range of options including academic, creative, performing, and sporting subjects, ensures our students can engage with topics they are genuinely interested in or passionate about.

KM is all about experimenting and learning through experiences, trying new things, and discovering what you enjoy and excel at. Students are encouraged to not only try different curriculum subjects but also extra-curricular activities which enrich their education. There are over 100 activities that our students can get involved in including Beginners Mandarin, Games Design, Practical Science, Home Economics, Woodland Sessions, and Enterprise Club as well as more traditional options such as Art, Dance, Design Technology, Drama, Gymnastics, Music and both competitive and recreational sports clubs. Students can compete in national competitions across a broad range of specialisms and can also join in whole collegiate projects such as the recording and release of the recent hit song, ‘Feels Like Home’.

Gifted students can enter onto our Performance Sports Pathway in Basketball, Cricket, Football, and Netball. This programme provides the opportunity to compete at a higher level, allows for extra training sessions by specialist coaches and offers students practical advice in areas such as sports massage, nutrition, fitness, strength and conditioning. Those that excel in performing arts can undertake our Academy of Dramatic Arts (ADA) Performing Arts Pathway which allows them to hone their skills in acting, musical theatre, comedy, stage combat, and a variety of dance styles. These pathways also come with extra support for auditions, sport trials, and moving onto the next steps in their chosen field.

Within our vast programme of choice, we identify skills that are essential for future career success – including entrepreneurship, collaboration, ICT, communication, life skills, and critical thinking.





In September 2020, we introduced a Business and Enterprise programme as an optional subject for Year 9 students to better prepare them for some of our most popular specialist subjects; GCSE Business, BTEC Enterprise, and GCSE Economics. This programme offers our students the opportunity to learn about finance through projects such as researching the set-up of an online t-shirt business which helps to develop an understanding of fixed and variable costs as well as how to calculate figures for breaking even, gross, and net profit.

Our boarding provision allows students to choose a variety of both onsite and offsite activities including weekend trips and recreational sport and games. Students can also enjoy downtime in either our house common rooms or our specialist activity centre, Muggles, which offers a variety of games consoles, board games, films, computers, table tennis and pool tables. In addition, students have access to recreational spaces including a park, climbing wall, basketball courts and grass areas for football and volleyball.



The theme of choices permeates throughout our school community. We encourage our students to be conscious of the choices they make in all aspects of their school life, emphasising values of respect, responsibility, and integrity. We offer a wide range of leadership roles throughout the school that allow our students to grow in confidence, developing core collaboration and leadership skills. This holistic approach to education helps us shape well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also contribute positively to society.

At KM, we are dedicated to providing our students with a comprehensive and empowering educational experience. Our commitment to offering choices in both the curriculum and in personal development ensures that every student has the opportunity to thrive and grow into a responsible and principled member of our community and beyond.

To learn more about King's Magna, visit www.qe.org or book a place on one of our open mornings on 18th November or 27th January. Alternatively, email admissions@qe.org or phone 01423 333333 to book a private tour.



SCAN ME





Embracing the AI revolution

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster of Newcastle Royal Grammar School

Much has been written on the subject of Artificial Intelligence and the effect it will have on so many areas of our lives. Some remain cautious of its growing presence but I remember speaking to an Oxford professor who said that, when he was doing his engineering finals in 1973, people were debating whether calculators should be allowed. By 1974 everybody had them.

Uptake of AI over the course of the last few months has shown that it is already even more pervasive with the potential for substantially greater impact. For better or worse, AI is here to stay and we need to learn to live with it, and seize the opportunities.

There are many ways AI and data technologies can be used in school, including providing individualised instruction or feedback to students to support intervention from the teacher. More advanced systems can automatically adapt to the level of challenge

to keep a learner motivated and on task, while students can use AI programs to help generate and expand ideas. Indeed, AI will soon be a part of most productivity and creativity tools, blending with human output. At the RGS, we therefore aim to harness the power of AI to enhance education, supporting both students and teachers, and create inclusive learning environments.

Our approach is to teach pupils to use it with integrity within their research and task completion. In doing so, we aim to help them use AI effectively and make good decisions, embracing AI's opportunities to work together to be creators and problem solvers, not just content generators.

While recognising the power of AI for educational benefits, we also have to be mindful about its limitations that derive from both the data AI draws upon and the ethical overlay that humans have added. We need to use AI and data technologies in a manner that is fair and does not lead to discrimination. This includes ensuring that these technologies do not reinforce existing biases or create new ones, which means that all users of AI, including students, teachers and administrators are expected to use the technology in a responsible and ethical manner. This means we will continually need to stay abreast of any potential biases in these technologies, take steps to mitigate them and retain a critical lens.

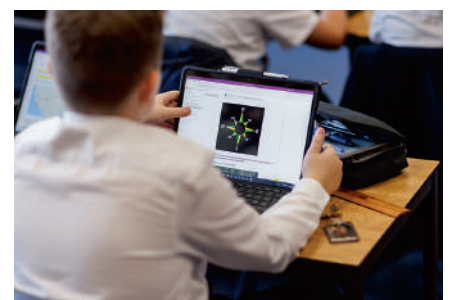
Clearly the submission of AI-generated answers could be a form of plagiarism and the capacity of AI to 'steal the struggle' from students needs to be avoided.

While it may be possible to use AI 'plagiarism detectors' or even professional academic judgment to identify use of AI, it seems highly likely that this concern will influence the development of how we assess students in the future. At the moment, exam boards only allow AI tools under certain conditions where the student is able to demonstrate that the final submission is the product of

their own independent thought and effort. While handwriting exams is, for now, a simple solution, it remains to be seen how long this will survive the march of time as, for many students, typing is likely to become their typical way of working, and so we will need to adapt to more varied forms of assessment.

Our job as educators is to help students understand that the material generated by AI programs may be inaccurate, incomplete, or otherwise problematic so they should check their ideas and answers against other, reputable source materials. Large language models tend to make up incorrect facts and fake citations while code generation models tend to produce inaccurate outputs and image generation models can produce biased or offensive products. Truly responsible use of AI should therefore encourage active engagement and independent thinking, thereby developing skills for life.

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Studio West makes massive investment to improve student experience

Studio West, a studio school in West Denton operated by Northern Leaders Trust (NLT), has recently benefited from a significant investment to improve the experience of its students.

Over the summer months, NLT undertook a full refurbishment of the school which also included new furniture and new school displays.

Along with a wealth of academic opportunities, Studio West learners are also set to benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities, designed to help them grow into socially responsible and caring citizens. To this end, a further £200k has been allocated to provide a range of life enhancing experiences - to ignite a fire within students and inspire aspiration.

This will see the continuation of a programme of regular visits by well-known school motivational speakers such as Wilfred Webster and Cameron Parker; Super Learning Days, which take place off-site for maths and science, removing Year 10 and 11 students from the classroom setting to make for a more memorable experience; the introduction of outdoor team building for all year groups, which includes visits to places of historical or social interest such as Beamish Museum as well as high ropes team building for every student within Years 7 to 9, to create strong bonds and conquer fears.

Martyn Gordon, the school's recently appointed Associate Executive Principal, said: "Every single student is given opportunities to develop both academically and socially, in a safe, inclusive and positive environment. We have an unshakable belief that every child can achieve and I am extremely honoured to lead a school where everyone is constantly working together to allow our students to fulfil their potential."

"Staff are highly skilled and passionate about providing high-quality education and to ensure our students have the best possible chances of success, both while at school and in the future."

While students can explore either academic or vocational pathways, the arts also play a central role, enabling students to pursue creative pathways and Studio West recently celebrated the news that three students had passed their graded piano exams - funded by the Trust.

A £1400 personal allowance for all students

In fact, NLT's ongoing investment in young people at Studio West means that every student is also entitled to a £1400 personal allowance over the course of the seven years they attend the school.





The allowance is made available at a rate of £200 per annum to enable students to broaden their experience outside of the curriculum. For example, this may include learning a second musical instrument, additional sports lessons, trips, foreign exchange visits and all kinds of exciting, new experiences.

A new Studio Stars programme has just been launched too, designed as a central motivating force within the school. Students collect points and once they have reached a certain number, they are rewarded with a certificate, which enables them to go to a principals' dinner. Points are awarded for exceptional work or exceptional endeavour within the Studio West community.

Mr Gordon added: "Our strapline is 'learning that connects' and Studio West is a school where learning really does connect to the workplace, opening up a world of exciting possibilities for our young people.

"We are very excited about what the future holds at Studio West, so please feel free to visit us at any time and see our wonderful school for yourself."

For all enquiries, please call our main reception between 8.30 am – 4.00 pm on 0191 481 3710

Contact us through any of our social networks, or via email: studiowest.admin@northernleaderstrust.org

Studio West, West Denton Way, Newcastle upon Tyne NE5 2SZ



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Learning that Connects

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



Tony Jackson

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

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1



2

Education Trust celebrates hard work and school successes at special awards

Hundreds of school staff from across Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust attended the Chadwick Celebration Awards 2023 at Ramside Hall in Durham.

The inspiring event attracted more than 500 nominations across 16 categories from Gospel Values and Trainee Teacher of the Year to Everyday Hero and Leadership and Management Awards.

For the Most Inspirational Teacher Award, 250 pupils voted for their favourite.

Daniel O'Mahoney, chair of directors, said one of the Trust's key values is celebration and the Chadwick Awards were a chance for staff across the Trust, which has 25 primary schools and five secondary schools, to celebrate together as a community.

"To be recognised and nominated for your work is a great achievement and to be shortlisted is a tremendous accomplishment of which you should all be very proud," he told the awards attendees.

He added the leadership team at the Trust know how important colleagues are "to enable you to be the best version of yourselves".

For that reason, as well as receiving a trophy, winners also received a share the win package containing tea, coffee and biscuits to enjoy with their teams.

The winners were:

1. **Inspirational Staff Award (nominations by pupils)** – Fran Young, St Matthew's Catholic Primary, Jarrow
2. **Teacher of the Year (Primary)** – Katie Dixon, St Bede's Catholic Primary, South Shields
3. **Teacher of the Year (Secondary)** – Ian Johnson, St Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form, Peterlee
4. **Staff Member of the Year (Classroom Based)** – Melanie Conlin, St Cuthbert's Catholic Primary, Sunderland
5. **Staff Member of the Year (Support Staff)** – John Farrer, St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Millfield
6. **Leadership & Management (Education)** – Dionne Dunn, St Leonard's Catholic Primary, Sunderland
7. **Leadership & Management (Support Staff)** – Vickie Henry, St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn
8. **SCITT/Teach First Trainee of the Year** – Alice Liddle, St Anthony's Girls Catholic Academy, Sunderland
9. **Gospel Values** – Hannah Riddle, Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Primary, Peterlee
10. **Mentor of the Year** – Nicola Tomlin, St Anthony's Girls Catholic Academy, Sunderland
11. **New Teacher of the Year** – Jack Dixon, St Mary Magdalen's Catholic Primary, Seaham
12. **Team of the Year** – Estates Team (Tracey Field and Martin Scott), Central Team at the Trust
13. **Partnership & Engagement** – Norah's North Pole (Maria Butt), SS Peter & Paul Catholic Primary, South Shields
14. **Governance Award** – Lizzie Brooks and Tercy Thomas, St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Millfield
15. **Everyday Hero** – Ernie Laws, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland
16. **Achievement Award** – Peter Mitchell, St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn

For more information about Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, visit www.bccet.org.uk



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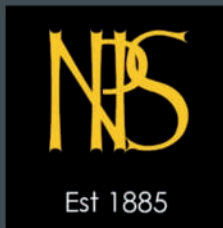
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Gemma Strong

Prepping for Success

As we enter a new school year Michael Grahamslaw caught up with Gemma Strong, Headteacher at Newcastle Preparatory School in Jesmond.



Gemma you are now entering your second year as Headteacher at NPS. What have been your highlights over the previous 12 months?

It has certainly been an exciting period that has flown by and we have achieved so much. I suppose it is the nature of leadership that we are constantly evolving and there has certainly never been a dull moment.

To the delight of our children, three guinea pigs – Nibbles, Posie and Spark – joined the team. We added a new fun playground, decorated our own Shaun the Sheep and went social with Instagram. We also enjoyed themed weeks and celebration days, from the Coronation to World Ocean Day, performances from every year group and our annual musical spectacular.

We also continued to enjoy listening to our pupils' voices at our school council meetings and added an eco-committee for children from Nursery to Year 6. The children quite rightly have a lot of input on what happens in their school.

What are your plans for the new school year ahead?

We have more exciting plans coming up, including the introduction of maths and computing weeks. The Code Show is also visiting NPS which will illustrate the evolution of technology and that promises to be fascinating for the children.

We also intend to further explore the history of the school which since 1885 has been a unique part of our city's history. This should prove to be an inspiring, hands-on project for children of all ages to be involved in.

How do you engage with parents and the broader school community?

In a multitude of ways from welcoming children at the door every day to always being contactable and adaptable to suit parents' needs.

Our casual coffee, cake and catch up events are a very popular and less formal way to feel part of our school community.

We also get regularly involved in community events, visiting Jesmond Library and other local organisations.

What is your strategy for balancing academic excellence with the wellbeing of students?

We are very focussed on building a school culture where children are safe and secure which allows them to build trusting relationships and develop, both emotionally and academically. Alongside a range of resources and techniques employed across school such as worry monsters and wellbeing check-ins, we also have a PSED (Personal Social Emotional Development) teacher whose entire role is dedicated to supporting our pupils.

I am supported by three assistant heads who cover academic, pastoral and personalised learning; they give these key areas the additional oversight needed.

At the end of the day, it is the children's school and we are there to help and improve their wellbeing. We have the firm belief that where children are happy, they will thrive.

Describe your leadership style

I have been lucky to have worked in the school in various roles and now that I am Headteacher, I like to think I encourage a collaborative approach. I trust everyone here to throw in their ideas and skills, so it really is a team effort. I welcome a challenge and my door is always open for dialogue.

How do you stay updated on developments in education and educational leadership?

This is a huge part of the job. I am a member of the Chartered College of Teaching and we are members of the Independent Association of Preparatory Schools. These allow me to share latest research and practice from industry experts which I can pass on at meetings with the staff and implement in our school.

One of our current projects is to adopt a neurodiversity approach, based on leading research, to promote inclusivity within the classroom.

What is your vision for the school's future and how do you plan to achieve it?

Rather than a specific vision, I think I would prefer to keep a critical eye and oversee a continual evolution of an already incredibly successful school. The very nature of education is that it is always evolving.

Away from work, how do you like to unwind?

I love to travel and enjoy short breaks away. It is fair to say that I'm a big fan of wholesome hobbies such as gardening, baking and reading.

For further information visit the website www.newcastleprepschool.org.uk





Sunderland folklore explored in new album

It has been said that every genre of music has its roots in folklore and tradition. Punk band Slalom D from Sunderland are no exception to the rule and have written a new song about

one of Wearside's most macabre myths.

The track, "Cat and Dogs" features on their new album "Waltz into Anarchy".

It delves into a local tale of folklore associated with Sunderland's coastline. "Cat and Dogs" refers to the same named 49 Steps at Roker Sunderland.

The origin of the name of the steps is a mystery as no one knows with absolute certainty why these 49 winding steps were so called. Legend has it that pet owners used to deposit their deceased or poorly pets into the nearby River Wear and the forces of wind and tide would wash the poor animals into the North Sea where the corpses would be found washed up at the foot of the steps.

Singer Fiona Duncan reflects on the inspiration behind the song, stating, "The steps were very close to my house when I was growing up. I spent a lot of time exploring and playing on the rocks around there. Only recently, my parents told me that when pet animals died, people just took them to the river, and that's where they eventually washed up. It was such a shock to hear this as an adult as it was like spoiling a childhood dream. That's what the song is about – blissfully being ignorant.

"I'm not sure of the origin of the tale but it's a part of Sunderland's rich folklore and worth preserving for generations to come in song," she added.

Theatre Royal announces fabulous new shows for 2024

All-time favourite musicals, show-stopping dance and a new twist on the classic whodunit dance are amongst the fantastic new shows for 2024 announced by Newcastle Theatre Royal.

The ever-popular Blood Brothers returns to the stage (Tue 30 Jan – Sat 3 Feb 2024). The captivating and moving tale of twins who, separated at birth, grow up on opposite sides of the tracks, only to meet again with fateful consequences.

Dance takes centre stage on Wed 24 & Thu 25 Apr 2024 when Rambert make a much anticipated return to perform two darkly funny short pieces packed with originality.

Based on the hit BBC TV show that entertained millions of viewers over four successful series, The Syndicate (Tue 7 – Sat 11 May 2024) is a new stage play by Kay Mellor that follows five supermarket employees whose lottery syndicate numbers come in.

Prepare to be swept off your feet with An Officer and a Gentleman The Musical (Mon 13 – Sat 18 May 2024). Based on the award-winning 80s

movie, this timeless story of love, courage, and redemption will make your heart soar.

The doors to the House of JoJo are open – and you are invited! Following two previous smash-hit productions, TV dance sensation and international champion Johannes Radebe is returning to Newcastle Theatre Royal with a brand new production Johannes Radebe: House of JoJo (Sun 19 May 2024).

Fans of the much loved board game are in for a treat with the hilarious whodunit Cluedo 2 on stage (Tue 28 May – Sat 1 Jun 2024) in a brand new tale, with a new house, new suspects, and lot of new bodies!

If you are a fan of musicals, Grease really is the one that you'll want (Mon 10 – Sat 15 Jun 2024). After a whirlwind summer romance, leather-clad greaser Danny and girl-next-door Sandy are unexpectedly reunited when she transfers to Rydell High for senior year. But can they survive the trials and tribulations of teenage life and find true love once more?

Tickets can be purchased at www.theatroyal.co.uk or from the Theatre Royal Box Office on 0191 232 7010.

Peaky Blinders returns

It is 10 years since the first episode of Peaky Blinders aired on the BBC. Created by writer Steven Knight, it has since become a household name across the world.

Having collaborated with the Peaky Blinders creator to present and tour popular new dance theatre show Peaky Blinders: The Redemption of Thomas Shelby, which saw audiences in excess of 100,000, Rambert is thrilled to announce its return to stages next year.

Inspired by the TV series produced and owned by Caryn Mandabach Productions, the explosive and exhilarating performance has been adapted for the stage by Steven Knight and choreographed and directed by Rambert's Artistic Director Benoit Swan Pouffer.

Featuring the full Rambert dance company and an iconic Peaky soundtrack from a live on-stage



band, Peaky Blinders: The Redemption of Thomas Shelby will take over the Sunderland Empire's stage from Tuesday 29 October –

Saturday 2 November 2024.

Tickets are now online at ATGTickets.com/Sunderland

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North East businesses gift mental health support to the region's children through creative intervention programme



A unique programme supporting children aged seven to 11 years with their mental health has secured backing from two of the region's most prominent businesses.

Law firm Muckle LLP and architecture practice Ryder Architecture have joined forces with award winning theatre, drama, and creative learning company Mortal Fools to support the distribution of their children's mental health programme, MELVA, by gifting 13 licences between them to schools across the North.

MELVA is a creative intervention programme for key stage two children, their teachers, and families, designed in response to the 2017 green paper 'Transforming children and young people's mental health provision' and the national young people's mental health crisis, which currently sees one in six children aged 5-16 with diagnosable mental health conditions.

Initially established by Mortal Fools as a live touring performance package for North East schools, MELVA has since been developed into a digital resource accessible to thousands of young people across the UK, with 66 schools having used it so far.

A chargeable web-based creative programme available through annual licences, MELVA is designed to be led by teaching staff, taking children through a fun, creative story-based programme to help them better understand and manage their emotions and mental wellbeing.

Comprising animations, a feature film split into episodes, an interactive choose-your-own-adventure game, interactive teacher and classroom resources and flexible delivery structure, the MELVA programme follows the adventures of Melva Mapletree, a young girl who navigates a set of challenges as she learns to recognise, understand and manage her 'worrits' - what she calls those niggling worries and concerns that can be difficult for children to identify and deal with.

Kiz Crosbie, Mortal Fools CEO & Artistic Director, said: "Collaborations with compassionate and civic-minded business partners like Muckle LLP and Ryder Architecture enables us to remove significant barriers for schools to access this important programme, placing effective mental health resources directly into the hands of the children who need it most. The more businesses like this we work with, the more children we can reach. We would love more businesses to invest in Melva, so we can reach even more young people!"

The support of businesses enables schools, many of whom have been impacted by increasing demands and shrinking budgets, to access the MELVA programme and learn new ways to support their children.

Muckle LLP community team selected five North East schools to gift MELVA to as part of their evolving commitment to ESG, while Ryder Architecture are gifting eight licences to schools across the North as part of their 70th anniversary celebrations.

Hugh Welch, senior partner from Muckle LLP commented: "We are delighted to have been able to partner with Mortal Fools. We believe that business can and should be a force for good - giving back and sharing our success is central to our values and culture.



"We know that all actions, big and small, can move the needle in a positive direction. That's why it's important for us to be able to support our local community with resources like MELVA, that align with our values of supporting young people, overcoming disadvantage, and improving social mobility."

Richard Wise, Partner from Ryder Architecture added: "I have two hats to wear when it comes to Mortal Fools. As a partner at Ryder Architecture, I cannot praise them enough for what they do. Many of our people have benefitted from the personal and professional development training programmes they deliver. As Chair of Trustees, I am incredibly proud of the positive impact Mortal Fools has on the lives of the young people they serve.

Melva has never been more relevant, it tackles issues of anxiety, confidence and mental health in an imaginative and engaging way and we are delighted to have been able to support the programme as part of our 70th anniversary year."

To download the MELVA brochure showcasing how businesses can support children and young peoples' mental health visit: www.mortalfools.org.uk/news



MELVA

A fun, creative digital package supporting children 7-11 years old and their adults, to talk openly about and better understand their mental health, emotions and wellbeing.

By purchasing Melva, you gain access to an online portal, a toolbox of resources, an episodic film, lesson activities, a choose your own adventure digital game, an interactive activity booklet and a teacher user guide.

Developed in consultation with children, teachers, mental health professionals and educational psychologists, Melva is a high impact revolutionary way to invest into practical mental health education, a meaningful way to deliver RSHE curriculum AND enhances The Thrive Approach.

www.melva.org.uk



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Success leads to expansion for North East restaurant

The success of a Washington-based Italian restaurant has led to the owners taking over a new site in Newcastle.

Novellos, based at New Road, Washington, opened its doors in March last year and has been a huge hit since day one.

And that has given the team behind it the confidence to take over the former San Lorenzo restaurant at Gosforth High Street, as part of its expansion plans.

Around £100,000 is being spent on giving the restaurant a refurbishment, with plans to be open in November with a new name and a new look.

Novellos was launched as a joint venture chef Dean Lathbury and experienced restaurant manager, Dorian Koti, who had previously been involved in a number of ventures, including setting up their own restaurant in Durham.

The two men reunited last year to open Novellos, which has proved hugely popular with diners from around the immediate area and beyond.

The combination of Italian pizza and pasta favourites with some unique twists as well as more substantial main courses has proved a winning combination and one the team now intend to replicate in Gosforth.

The restaurant has stood empty since San Lorenzo shut its doors in April, with the previous owners' company going into liquidation in August.

"We are delighted to be extending the Novellos brand into this fantastic site in Gosforth," said Dorian.

"We know it's a busy location and we are sure the restaurant will be as popular in Newcastle as it is in Washington."



First images revealed of new Keel Tavern creating 30 jobs

The first images of the new Keel Tavern at Riverside Sunderland have been released ahead of its planned November opening.

The Keel Tavern will sit under the Holiday Inn at Keel Square, next door to award-winning bar and restaurant The Botanist, and will see 30 new jobs created.

Serving up a range of quality craft beers and food, the venue is the latest in a string of openings by leading North East hospitality firm the Vaulkhard Group.

Vaulkhard, which has been operating in the North East for over 30 years, is best known for its successful venues Barluga, The Bridge Tavern and Redhouse.

The Keel Tavern however will mark the group's first foray south of Tyneside and will see its portfolio grow to 19 venues across the region.

Oliver Vaulkhard, founder of Vaulkhard Group, said: "We are incredibly excited to be opening the Keel Tavern just in time for Christmas.

"The individual charm of the venue and the fantastic food and drink offer we have crafted will create a really compelling offer which we're sure will prove a huge hit with residents and visitors alike.

"It will also tie in with the ongoing transformation of Riverside Sunderland, which alongside the opening of The Botanist, Holiday Inn and The Stables at Sheepfolds, will see the venue provide a huge boost to both the city's day and night-time leisure economies.

"Previously, we'd only ever looked north of Tyneside when scoping out new venues, however the ongoing transformation of Sunderland presented us with an opportunity too good to miss and I'm sure there'll be plenty more businesses turning their attention to the city as we look to the future."

Something new to get your teeth into at STACK Seaburn

A celebrated burger brand, which was set up during lockdown, is now opening its fifth outlet, after securing a unit at STACK Seaburn.

Brack Burger was set up by brothers Joe and Ollie Brack in 2020 after their work in hospitality and events dried up during the pandemic.

Their hand pressed freshly made patties became a huge hit when they were sold as takeaway items from a Newcastle pub - leading to the pair opening three outlets in bars and cafes on Tyneside and one in Tynemouth. The company will be taking its first foray into Sunderland, after

setting up shop at STACK Seaburn from Friday 8 September.

"We are absolutely delighted to be moving into STACK," said Joe.

"We've always been massive fans of STACK so for us to be operating there is brilliant."

Brack Burgers offers a range of beef, chicken and vegetarian burgers, as well as loaded fries.

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Shearer's former training club open new community and sports hub



Elliot Anderson (NUFC) with Steve Dale, Chairman of Wallsend Boys Club



Anna Foster- BBC Radio Newcastle

Wallsend Boys Club has been going for almost 120 years. Started and supported by Swan Hunters ship yards as a way to keep the young apprentices fit and healthy it evolved and grew into probably the best grass roots football club to ever exist. 92 professional footballers have come from WBC and they promise more!

The new community hub aims to provide sport for all, going back to the ethos which was offered back in 1904, its named after Peter Olsen- one of the main funders.

'The Peter Olsen Community Hub'- or POCH will be the home of SPORTING WALLSEND a community based, open access sports club, offering free or low cost membership to local residents. The aim is to improve the physical and mental health of all members by developing Kirkley Park into a fully inclusive community Hub, which will cater for people of all ages and abilities seven days a week. The idea is all based on inspiring the community to be happier and healthier.

There will also be outreach programmes which will ensure young people are encouraged to further develop their interests and talent at the Hub. Sporting Wallsend aims to address the

existing health inequalities in the region which too often hold back local people, particularly young people, from reaching their potential.

The opening celebration saw members of the local community, funders, stake holders, media and a surprise appearance from Elliot Anderson (NUFC) Anderson, who came straight from rehab work at Newcastle training ground, attended Wallsend Boys Club as a kid and hasn't forgotten his roots.

BBC Newcastle broadcast live from the Hub for

four hours to celebrate the opening and featured interviews with Steve Dale, Chairman, Peter Olsen and Kim McGuinness- PCC.

Sporting Wallsend wants to inspire the community to be healthier & happier- to do this they need support from local people and organisations to make the Hub the success it deserves to be. If you'd like to get involved in the journey please contact: JOHN PERCIVAL, General Manager, johnp.wallsendboysclub@gmail.com

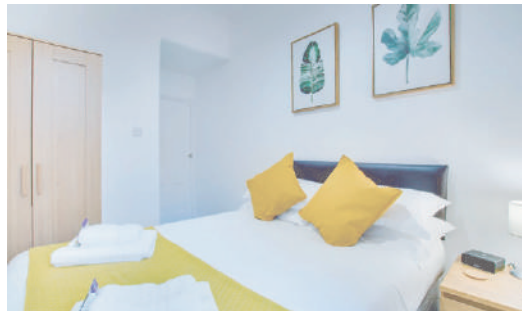


Peter Olsen, major funder of Sporting Wallsend



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Luxury at The Lord Crewe

By Michael Grahamslaw

The historic village of Bamburgh has been a lifetime favourite of mine so when the opportunity landed in my inbox to visit The Lord Crewe, I absolutely jumped at the chance!



On a rare sun-kissed Sunday afternoon my wife Lisa and I took a leisurely drive up the coastal route. Following a pleasant lunchtime pitstop in the friendly port of Amble we arrived in Northumbria's ancient capital eagerly looking forward to what lay ahead.

As ever this "jewel in the crown" was in great order with a buzzing throng of holiday folk and weekend visitors as well as a cricket match in play in front of the famous Castle.

If the setting was impressive then the venue was no less so.

The Lord Crewe is a stone's throw from the glorious beach and the perfect base from which to explore Northumberland's famous coastline.

Greeted by the warmest of welcomes we were shown to the Bamburgh suite, our base for the night.

This is one of seven individually designed bedrooms designed to maximise relaxation and ours was certainly a haven of comfort and convenience with sumptuous king-sized bed, smart TV, Nespresso machine and other luxuries such as Molton Brown toiletries, fluffy bathrobes and homemade cookies.

After a quick change for dinner we adjourned to the restaurant with high anticipation. Led by the former Head Chef of the Crab and Lobster Restaurant and Crab Manor in Asenby the expert team specialise in luxurious seafood dishes with a high emphasis on quality local produce. There is also ample choice for meat eaters and vegetarians meaning there is literally something for everyone.

I kicked off with a stonking bowl of chunky fish soup swimming with mussels, scallops, king prawns and market fish. This was full of freshness and flavour, a great start.

Lisa opted for the heartiest of prawn cocktails with the famous Marie Rose sauce to accompany, an all-time classic starter.

Moving on, my main course of beer-battered cod elevated things further. Boy, this was good and clearly cooked by a chef who knows his seafood.

Lisa picked out an epic pan-roasted loin of lamb offset with a tasty rosemary red wine jus.

We washed this down with a lovely chilled bottle of Sauvignon Blanc and even found room to squeeze in some Dodington's ice cream, coffees and liquors with calorie counting postponed for another day.



Service was friendly and attentive throughout with staff guiding us through step of the menu with excellent recommendations.

The following morning after a full eight(!) hours sleep and a gorgeous cooked breakfast we headed home relaxed, recharged and re-energised.

For a moment magazine deadlines seemed a lifetime away. In conclusion I couldn't recommend The Lord Crewe in Bamburgh higher.

For full details on their new winter getaway offer visit their excellent website lord-crewe.co.uk

Meet the GM

In the return of these popular series of articles Michael Gramslaw spoke to...

Andrew Hogg

*General Manager, Park Head Hotel.
The perfect base for private events,
business meetings, networking and
overnight stays in the heart of
County Durham.*

Did you always envisage a career in the Hotel industry?

Not immediately no. I studied Media at University and flirted with a career in the PR industry. However the longer I worked in it the more I realised this wasn't a path I wanted to pursue. I already had a job working in a bar in a Hotel which I really enjoyed and decided that working in the hospitality sector was a more preferable route.

What has been your career path so far?

After I graduated I was able to move through the ranks at the Hotel and enjoyed spells working in reception, events and reservations. This was a fantastic learning curve.

I then moved from a what was a small 29 bedroom property in Spennymoor to a 351 bedroom Crowne Plaza hotel in Chipping Norton. Here I spent two fantastic years.

I then joined an events based company which included a number of wedding venues. The Managing Director took a leap of faith and trained me to become General Manager and following her retirement I ran the business for 10 years. Then Covid struck and the Park Head role came up and I thought it a good time to come home.

What have been your biggest challenges?

Unquestionably Covid was a very difficult period although getting through it certainly gave my confidence a significant boost and made me feel I could handle anything thrown at me.



Andrew Hogg

Tell us about your team?

I can't speak highly enough of the team at the Hotel. They are amazing and all well trained and skilled. We employ a number of good experienced people in addition to others just starting their career.

What about the Hotels facilities?

We have 38 brand new ensuite bedrooms which are amongst the biggest in the region. We also have a tremendous 74 seater restaurant called The Oak Room which has a great Food and Beverage offering. Our Laurel Room holds 50 people and is ideal for any event. Our courtyard is beautiful in the Summer and comes complete with a childrens playground. We also received a three star accreditation recently from Visit Britain which is testimony to the work of the team.

What are you currently working on?

We handled our first wedding In August which went fantastically well and this is something we hope to develop going forward.

Christmas looks like it is going to be a great success and we are working on the few

remaining dates we have. Looking to next year we look forward to more outdoor dining next Summer.

Is there a mantra you aspire to do business by?

Work fairly and always treat people with respect.

Who are your Heroes and Mentors?

Jules Patmore who trained me in everything I know and believed that I could work at a senior level. Sadly she passed away recently but her influence is something I will never forget.

How do you like to unwind?

Going on holiday a couple of times a year. I am currently going through a bucket list of visiting every capital city in Europe. Next stop Riga in Latvia!

*For further information on
The Park Head Hotel call 01388 661727 or
visit the website parkheadhotel.co.uk*



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To the manor born *By Jackie Marston*

I recently had the pleasure of staying at Derwent Manor Boutique Hotel in Consett, County Durham, and I must say, it was a really delightful experience. I had the opportunity to stay in one of their charming newly refurbished cottages, a 2-bedroom haven that truly exceeded my expectations.

I was immediately struck by the modern and tasteful design as you walk into the dining/living room and open-plan kitchen. The bedrooms were absolutely lovely.

The master bedroom boasted a spacious queen-sized bed that provided a really comfortable night's sleep, it was firm, but that's just how my hubby and I like it. The second bedroom was perfect for friends or family, featuring two cosy single beds. Both rooms were elegantly furnished and projected a serene ambiance that made it easy to relax and unwind.

Entertainment was not lacking either, as each bedroom and the sitting room were equipped with large screen televisions, and the sitting room area another enormous one!

In the dining area was a large oak dining table that could comfortably seat eight people. The beautiful light fixture above it added a touch of sophistication to the space. Although we were actually dining out that night, it was obvious that this area could become a gathering point for enjoying meals and engaging in conversations,

making it feel like a home away from home.

The kitchen was fitted with all the modern appliances that you'd need, and everything required to whip up a home-cooked meal. Whether you're a culinary enthusiast or just looking to prepare a quick snack, this kitchen had you covered.

We were planning to dine in their on-site restaurant; Prego as we were only there for one night, and this turned out to be a good decision. I wasn't hungry enough for a starter, but hubby had the Tempura Enoki Mushrooms with Seaweed Mayonnaise. The dish was a delightful combination of crispy tempura-coated mushrooms and a unique, salty seaweed mayo. The mushrooms were perfectly cooked, providing a satisfying crunch with each bite, while the mayo added a refreshing and savoury twist.

Moving on to the main course, the BBQ Lamb Neck was a standout. Tender and flavourful, it paired wonderfully with the velvety artichoke puree and the rich, creamy goat's cheese potato skins. I've never had these before, but it was

a good combo! The asparagus added a touch of freshness, and the gravy tied everything together perfectly. The fillet steak served blue, was what my husband ordered, he said it was cooked to perfection. The accompanying tomato, mushroom, and chips were all spot-on too. The side of buttered greens complemented the steak beautifully.

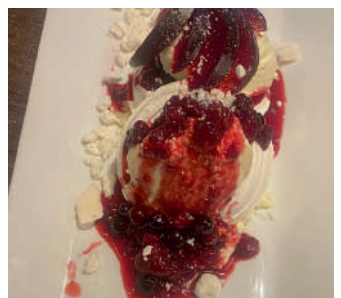
For dessert, we shared the Hedgegrove Berry Eton Mess was a sweet symphony of flavours and textures. The combination of fresh berries, meringue, and cream was simply delicious and a delightful end to an exceptional meal. We actually asked if we could take this to the cottage and the staff were more than happy to oblige.

Oh, I nearly forgot, the breakfast the next day was buffet-style and was a feast for the eyes and belly. You couldn't have wanted for anything, it was spot on, plus they serve fried bread. I honestly haven't had that in years, so I did indulge! It was worth skipping lunch for, let me tell you!

Overall, my stay at Derwent Manor Boutique Hotel's cottage was a memorable one. The combination of comfortable bedrooms, modern amenities, and a well-appointed kitchen made for a perfect retreat, but the restaurant is a good diversion, should you not feel like cooking.

The attention to detail and the elegant design of the facilities truly set this boutique hotel apart. I would highly recommend it to anyone seeking a relaxing and enjoyable stay in the picturesque surroundings of County Durham.

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An anniversary escape at Langley Castle Hotel *By Michael Grahamslaw*

Langley Castle Hotel is nothing short of a medieval dream come true. Situated just a short drive from the historic market town of Hexham this remarkable hotel offers an unparalleled experience that transports guests back in time while providing all the modern comforts one could desire.

I recently had the privilege of visiting with my wife Lisa to celebrate the Diamond Anniversary of her parents and my lovely in-laws, Joyce and Toomey.

From the moment you approach the imposing stone walls Langley Castle sets the stage for a unique and relaxing stay with every nook and cranny impeccably preserved to retain its historic charm. The medieval architecture, suits of armour and lovely tapestries all contribute to an atmosphere that feels truly immersive.

Greeted by the warmest of welcomes we checked in for the night ahead and looked forward to a rare time to fully unwind and relax.

The castle itself boasts five feature rooms which include chandeliered high ceilings, exposed stonework and window seats set into the walls to give the feeling of grandeur only to be expected from a 14th century Castle.

The impressive en suite bathrooms are perfect for relaxation and pampering and some even feature spa baths or saunas. Each room is individually designed, offering a blend of period appropriate furnishings and modern amenities. All feature four poster beds, ornate draperies and elegant décor to create a sense of opulence and occasion.

Meanwhile within the grounds a recent conversion and extension of a listed building has led to further Castle View Standard Rooms and Suites which offer magnificent views up to the main castle which is only 80 yards away.

Some of these have a lounge separate to the bedroom, complete with sofa beds and are perfect for families. Some are able to be used as twin bedded rooms.

If the rooms are impressive then dining at Langley Castle is no less so. The Josephine Restaurant is judged as one of the finest in the North East boasting a 2AA rosette using the finest produce available. A pre-dinner drink in the atmospheric drawing room is to be recommended also.

The adjoining Glass Pavillion is attached to the main castle building and is the perfect private dining venue surrounded by its own mini moat and shaded by glorious woodland.

As you can imagine Langley Castle is also the most amazing venue with packages available for exclusive use, weddings for two and day only weddings.

Beyond the castle's walls there's also plenty to see and do in the surrounding area with the nearby Hadrian's Wall and Northumberland National Park perfect for those who enjoy outdoor adventures like hiking and cycling.

Throughout our all too brief stay the staff were exceptional also with a high attention to detail enhancing the overall guest experience.

As my mother-in-law Joyce commented on departure "Michael that really ticked all of the boxes!"

For further information telephone 01434 688888 or visit the hotels excellent website www.langleycastle.co.uk





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Is it me or has the world got a little unkind since the pandemic?

This is a question I have been asked several times recently. And I must admit, it does feel that way. Although we hear lots of talk about being kind, being eco-conscious and protecting people, it's just that. Talk.

Reality is felt in the action. Currently, the actions aren't kind, we are still living in a culture very much led by greed, along with a few other of the deadly sins.

Success isn't about achieving status no matter what the cost.

So, what does kindness in business and the workplace act like?

Empathy – the ability to understand and share the feelings of another

Putting your agenda to one side and offering support to another. Stop, think, feel, how can you help the other person? Certainly, do not force your own agenda on someone when they are struggling i.e. with bereavement for instance, put measures in place to support them, I mean the least you can do is offer your condolences, have you even done that?

Inclusivity – everyone feels valued and included

There's a lot of policies about equality, every business has them, but they are just documents. Real inclusion is felt by people, are their needs being met and are you able to meet the needs of a diverse workforce and customer base? For instance, have you chastised someone because their productivity is down, or did you first act to see if their needs are being met to fulfil their role?



Michelle Jones

Trust – a firm belief in the reliability, truth, and ability of someone

Micro-managing is painful and not productive. Providing your colleagues with the trust to allow them to get on with the task at hand nurtures creativity, innovation, and productivity. If someone isn't hitting the mark, look at your management style, are you giving them the space they need to effectively produce their potential?

Gratitude – the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation

Saying your please and thank you's really do go a long way. Don't ask someone to do something for you and then disrespect them by not showing gratitude, or worse still, having a go at them. That's a slippery slope to losing their respect for you and their job and your brand. And don't forget, customers feel the same way!

Feeling valued, being understood, being appreciated, and being believed in, really does make a difference to a human, we are feeling creatures and our emotions play a huge part in how we interact with the world, as employees

and customers. Kindness in business and the workplace increases productivity, higher quality, increased engagement, satisfaction and happiness. If you are experiencing a negative culture, despite implementing 'a culture of kindness' initiative i.e. a smile policy, then look at the behaviour mechanisms adopted by you and your business are empathy, inclusion, trust and gratitude in action?

You will get no value from someone made to feel valueless and value doesn't come in the form of a heart shaped cookie once a month on their desk, it comes everyday in the form of a positive effective relationship. How you and your business behave affects your colleagues and customers.

Choosing kindness is the right thing to do but can be the difficult option, are you brave enough to be kind?

At the end of the day businesses with a reputation for being kind are more likely to succeed!

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

Places to go...Belsay and Wallington



I approached the Haymarket Bus Station in Newcastle on Saturday 26 August looking for the stand for the X75 special service to Belsay and Wallington. Stand N was the only one with roughly fifty people queuing for the second journey of the day to two of Northumberland's most loved tourist attractions: Belsay Hall and Castle managed by the charity English Heritage, and Wallington Hall managed by the National Trust.

Having explored the coach house and enjoyed a coffee in the Clocktower restaurant, I was heading towards the house before last admissions at 1530. I was stopped by a man I did not immediately recognise but turned out to be a friend of many years back and we had a good catch-up for 20 minutes, by which time the House was firmly closed, and there was not time to do any of the waymarked trails around the estate – apparently the Blue Route is particularly recommended. I would also raise a hand for the Walled Garden on the east side of the estate from a previous visit with my wife.

Once home to the unconventional and socialist Trevelyan family, the informal house is full of treasured collections, and I am sure the family would have approved of free buses to welcome visitors.

www.gonortheast.co.uk, www.nationaltrust.org.uk
www.english-heritage.org.uk

alex@nationalrail.com, www.nationalrail.com

Whilst either could provide a full day out, it is perfectly possible to do both in a day, transferring between the venues in the early afternoon.

Go North East started running the Saturday only service in May and it was due to finish on 2nd September.

However, loadings have been very encouraging so the service is being extended until 5th November, so plenty of time to take a ride and the reason it appears in this normally railway related column is that riding the X75 bus service is FREE, and (if you're not already a member of EH/NT) you get a discount off the admission price too. No wonder I'm not writing about trains for a change, although of course you may need to ride a train or another bus to reach Newcastle in the first place.

English Heritage invites you to come and see how the major "Belsay Awakes" project has transformed. Twenty acres of reinvigorated gardens make a wonderful setting for a succession of fascinating buildings: a freshly interpreted medieval castle, enlarged into a Jacobean mansion, and the elegant and newly conserved Greek Revival-style house that succeeded it. Belsay Hall was begun in 1807 by Sir George Monck, a man inspired by Ancient Greece and the buildings he had seen on his honeymoon in Athens. Despite its austere façade, it had a comfortable interior arranged around an amazing central "Pillar Hall". It is displayed without furnishings, so you can admire the fine craftsmanship of its construction.

Linking the Hall and the Castle is the spectacular Quarry Garden, now in full maturity. Children will imagine this is the haunt of giants and will proceed quietly to avoid waking them. £3.4m has been granted by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the new play area opened on 26th August when I was there. Not that I had any business visiting the play area so I settled down with a couple of good books in the second-hand bookshop until it was time for the bus onwards to Wallington.

Belsay seemed to be the main draw, and a few more passengers arrived on the third journey from Newcastle. I moved on to Wallington at 1432 to Belsay, unsurprisingly quiet. We arrived avoiding the famous hump-backed bridge on the south side of the Wallington Estate, which would have certainly grounded our single decker low floor bus.

For a copy of the UK rail map, extract below, visit www.railmap.org.uk

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A taste of Southern India

A restaurant which introduced the North East to the wonders of Southern Indian cuisine is the result of a long and international journey.



When Sudharsan Murugavel was growing up in Dhali, a small village in the Tamil Nadu region of India, he had no idea that the practices that were just part of his normal life would be with him throughout his career.

Growing up on a farm, Sudharsan developed a passion at an early age for using fresh produce, simply because it was readily available.

The same goes for sustainability – Sudharsan may not have known that word at the time but he recognised the importance of not creating waste and making use of everything that was close to home.

Those early lessons turned out to be the foundation of what has been a successful career- and has helped the Newcastle restaurant he co-owns become a firm favourite across the North East and beyond.

Dosa Kitchen, tucked away on Osborne Road, grew from an experimental pop-up to become one of the stalwarts of the Tyneside restaurant scene.

Introducing Southern Indian cuisine – which is very different from many of the region's curry house offerings – was a risk initially because the style of food and its authenticity was in complete contrast to what was readily available.

But it was a risk which has paid off, as Dosa Kitchen has become a firm favourite for everything from its warm welcome to the sheer joy of the food.

“In India the hospitality experience is as important as the food and that's what we offer at Dosa Kitchen,” said Sudharsan.

“And that's as a result of the fantastic team who work at the restaurant, some of whom have been with us since day one.”

For Sudharsan the journey to Newcastle has been a long one – picking up expert training and knowledge along the way, which is reflected in every aspect of Dosa Kitchen.

The Chef co-owns the restaurant with his long standing friend and business partner, serial entrepreneur, Mathen Ganesan.

Sudharsan trained in catering and hospitality in India before working in a number of five star hotels. He worked for The ITC Sheraton group in his home country as well as for Jumeirah Hotel Group in Dubai, which owns properties including the iconic Burj Al Arab.

The real game changer was working under legendary chef, Praveen Anand, renowned for his Southern Indian food, who helped Sudharsan hone his skills.

Eventually employed by the Accor Hotel Group, Sudharsan came to the UK, first to Wolverhampton and then to Newcastle via a stint in Birmingham. It was here that he felt truly at home.

“I just fell in love with Newcastle and knew I wanted to stay here,” he said.

His skill in Southern Indian cuisine became evident, leading to him even being allowed to create his own menu at one of the UK hotels to showcase his skills.

But despite his success there was one goal left to fulfill – creating his own restaurant.

“We started Dosa Kitchen as a pop-up so we could see how people would react to a different style of food,” he said.

“Southern Indian food is lighter and healthier. It's well documented these days how good fermented food is for gut health and that's exactly what dosas are.”

The thin pancakes are made of rice and protein-rich black urad lentils which are fermented over an 18-hour period, resulting in a batter full of amino acids, which is then lightly griddled and can be used in place of bread, to wrap, dip and accompany other dishes.

Its carbohydrate content enables the body to feel fuller for longer – one of the reasons why the restaurant is very popular with runners and athletes in general - and are also vegan and gluten-free.

While dosas are definitely a staple on the menu, there are plenty more tempting offerings all made with the same fresh produce – and love.

The success of the business has led to setting up a unit at STACK Seaburn – Big Fat Indian Kitchen – and an outside catering operation which can be seen at numerous events and festivals around the region.

Not content with all of that however, Sudharsan has very firm ideas about what he wants the future to hold.

“I really want to be at the forefront of highlighting food from Tamil Nadu internationally,” he said.

“I want people to know more about it, try it and enjoy it.”

For further information visit www.dosakitchen.co.uk





Sudharsan Murugavel



Steph McGovern to host ‘Secret Art Sale’ in aid of The Bay Food Bank

Much-loved regional retailer, For The Love of the North, is hosting a “Secret Art Sale”, hosted by Steph McGovern, to raise essential funds for The Bay Food Bank in Whitley Bay.

The event, held at Spanish City, will take place over the weekend of 13-15 October selling work from over 25 well-known local artists, who have all donated a piece of work to the collection. Each piece will be priced at £50, with the name of the artist only being revealed after purchase. All sales will be donated to The Bay Foodbank to allow them to continue their vital work.

The Secret Art Sale will open on Friday 13 October with a free preview evening hosted by local broadcaster Steph McGovern who is a trustee of the Foodbank, the artwork will then be opened to the public for purchase across the weekend. The preview event is a chance for guests to have their first choice of the amazing artwork on display and enjoy a drink arrival. Further refreshments are available to purchase throughout the night.

Artists who have donated their work include Ali Elly, an environmental artist and creator of the ‘Under the Waves’ Shaun the Sheep sculpture which can be found on Newcastle’s West Road, textile artist Jane Jackson and Darlington based Jonny Lancaster, who captures the beauty of iconic places right here in the region with contemporary designs.

Lucy Hull, who co-founded For The Love of the North with her husband Paul said, “This is a fantastic opportunity to get a unique piece of art and support a local charity which is close to our heart. Some of the artists who have donated work sell their work for thousands of pounds; this is a rare opportunity for both new and established creators to showcase their work and for art fans to snap up a bargain.

“In 2023 we aim to donate over a year’s worth of meals to the Bay Foodbank and, alongside the Secret Art Sale, with every adult piece of clothing we sell we donate one day’s worth of food. We are well ahead of our goal and have already donated over 650 meals so far this year.”

“We have a longstanding relationship with the charity, we have seen the increased need in North Tyneside and knew that we wanted to do something really meaningful to support the incredible work that they do. We spoke to Jackie and the team about what would add the most value, and with the dramatic increase in people accessing their services and food donations decreasing in recent months, this commitment seemed like the best way to make a lasting impact.

“From the very beginning, we wanted to be a business for good, that means being fair to our artists, being a real living employer, using sustainable and ethical products, and being an active part of our community. As a business we are committed to supporting our local community. The people of the North East have given us such fantastic support, they want us to do well and this is our way of giving back to our neighbors when they need us. We don’t want to just be a store or a website, we want to make a difference and keep our community at the heart of everything that we do.”

Earlier this year Lucy and Paul pledged to donate a full day of meals to someone in financial crisis, for every adult garment sold through 2023. A day’s worth of food for a person in financial crisis costs the food bank approximately £4.50 and as of September 2023, Lucy and Paul have donated over £1000 from adult clothing sales in-store and online, after working with local artists to create designs for sweatshirts and t-shirts.

The Bay Foodbank serves the whole of North Tyneside and is one of the North East’s busiest foodbanks, where a typical day can see anywhere from 30-50 emergency food parcels delivered to people who need them. Around 30% percent of clients who use the service are working and a lot of people are now being forced to use the service after working their whole lives and now falling on hard times. Food parcels are delivered to families in need using unmarked vans, using supermarket carrier bags, so they look just like a regular supermarket delivery.

Booking is essential for the preview event, free tickets are available at www.eventbrite.com

You can find out more about The Bay Foodbank and the items that they currently need here: www.thebayfoodbank.org.uk

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NEHA Awards ceremony acknowledges the best in hospitality

The North East Hotelier's Association (NEHA), established over three decades ago, has announced their ball is to be held at the Federation Brewery this year, after the membership numbers have increased considerably in the last 12 months.

NEHA serves as a vital organisation providing invaluable support, guidance, and a sense of community to hoteliers and businesses connected to the hospitality industry.

Distinguished as one of England's largest associations of its kind, NEHA presently serves as the collective voice of the hospitality sector. Its core mission is to advocate for change and question decisions impacting their industry while ensuring their voices are heard. NEHA is committed to simplifying the lives of hoteliers by addressing common challenges encountered in the field.

Over 370 guests last year enjoyed the experience at their annual awards ceremony, however it is expected that this year's event, on Thursday 26th October will see record numbers of up to 500 attendees who are all there to celebrate the best of the best in the hospitality industry.

The organisation annually celebrates industry achievements through the Excellence Awards, recognising outstanding contributors at a grand black-tie gala. Guests on the night will be treated to a 3-course sumptuous dinner, live music and compering on the evening is none other than Geordie favourite Charlie Richmond.

In collaboration with key regional sponsors, the gala spotlights exceptional individuals in 10 categories, presenting awards to those who have demonstrated excellence despite formidable challenges and celebrates their successes. Their objective is to seek out exceptional individuals who have gone the extra mile in delivering outstanding service.



Anna Wadcock, General Manager of the Maldron Hotel and affiliated with NEHA, expressed her gratitude: "Our dedicated staff have admirably achieved so much again this year and shown that the hospitality industry is one to be celebrated. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to our members and sponsors for their unwavering support over the years. This year's Excellence Awards Ball promises to be an exceptional evening for all, and we hope that the event continues to grow over future years."

With the hospitality and tourism industries being the 4th largest employer in the region, NEHA aims to encourage individuals into these professions and make people realise that in them, they can have good, fulfilling careers.

www.nehotels.co.uk



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Lanes & Co add another service to their luxury portfolio



Casey Lane

Following on from the success of their Summer season; luxury, jewellery, diamond, watch and auction specialist Lanes & Co have already started to plan the last quarter of 2023 in style.

Since their launch in May, they have sold an extensive range of luxury items, from loose diamonds, gold bullion & fine antique jewellery to renowned brands such as Cartier, Rolex, Chanel and Dior.



With an established international client base and presence in Hatton Garden, London, the heart of the jewellery and diamond merchant industry; the team have established a reputable stake in the market across the UK.

Based in the heart of Newcastle city centre, they are a prominent player in the industry and are now expanding their portfolio of buying and selling, Lanes & Co are have introduced a luxury consignment service.

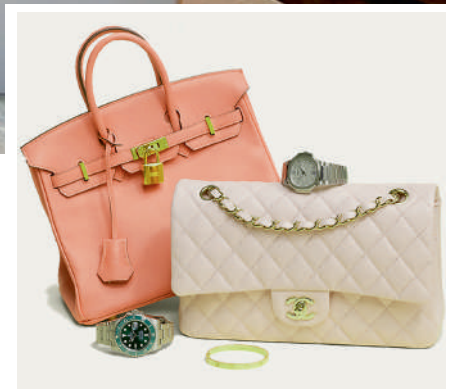
There are many options available right now, so with so many opportunities to sell, why use Lanes & Co?

Firstly, a bespoke service is guaranteed for every customer, the specialist team offer multiple options for clients to buy and sell safe in the knowledge that they are dealing with an expert team that strive to consign the best luxury pieces, sharing information and knowledge.

This is via direct buying and selling, via social media, auction and inhouse, thus creating a favourable result for the client via the impeccable service that Lanes & Co provide via multiple revenue streams, consignment also means all fees to the seller are eliminated; thus ensuring there's no effort needed from the client's perspective.

The fact that the items are advertised on an international scale, it means that they are often sold at fabulous prices.

The expert in-house team handle investment pieces like Gold, Rolex Watches & Diamonds on a day-to-day basis alongside high value items, adding a reassuring touch for the client in the



knowledge that their sale is being looked after by a professional team.

It is standard practice that, each item goes through a rigorous authenticity process, there is always prompt communication and they encourage sellers to provide them with original packaging and papers to help achieve the best price.

"Working in a similar trade for the past six years has meant I have watched many selling transactions unfold and here at Lanes & Co my goal is to eliminate that transactional feel and ensure clients know we are here to help. Whether that's providing additional information on their goods or achieving a great price both parties are happy with."

To conclude; Casey and her team are here to provide the personal touch in a luxury market that is constantly evolving, yet their ethos stays the same.

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Sanderson Arcade steps up its eating and drinking offer with new Martino Lounge opening



The shopping arcade based in Morpeth has recently celebrated the opening of a new trendy café bar called Martino Lounge, marking the first of the Lounges chain to open in the North East.

The former Laura Ashley shop has been transformed into a retro-inspired retreat, with a nod to a glamorous bygone era. Heavily patterned wallpapers, tiling and stripped wooden floors feature alongside oversized vintage sofas, upholstered lounge chairs, eclectic artwork and statement wall and pendant lighting, creating a variety of cosy and elegant drinking and dining areas to choose from. The new café bar also features an impressive, large-scale mural behind the bar featuring historical figure, Emily Davison, who had close family links with Morpeth.

A real home-from-home, Martino Lounge caters for all tastes throughout the day with a varied and innovative all-day menu. Whether it's a coffee with friends, a long lazy brunch with family or a relaxed dinner and drinks, Martino

Lounge is the perfect place to relax and unwind in good company.

The all-day menu features everything from tapas and salads to burgers and buttermilk fried chicken, with vegans and those favouring a gluten-free diet well catered for with their very own menus.

Particular attention has been paid to families with a selection of games, books, colouring pencils and pads on offer. A full menu, highchairs and baby-changing facilities are also available for Little Loungers with the venue also being dog friendly.

With community and neighbourhood at its heart, Martino Lounge will welcome locals looking for a welcoming and relaxed space for regular catch ups, meetings and events – everything from business networking, book or knitting clubs to parent and baby meets and life drawing classes.

Martino Lounge is the 198th opening for Loungers and will create 25 new jobs in Morpeth, with a range of front- and back-of-house roles currently available.

The new arrival has strengthened the leisure and hospitality offering at Sanderson Arcade – the centre is already home to Barluga, coffee shop Central Bean and the independent café Morpeth Larder.

Continuing with the new openings, the Arcade

also welcomed TUI to its Next store based at Stanley Terrace, providing another welcome boost to the local Morpeth economy.

The company currently has 321 branches nationwide and have a strong partnership developing with high street giant, Next.

Already housing a busy Costa Coffee branch, the Next store has now brought back into use some surplus storage space to house a TUI travel shop complete with Bureau de Change.

The new store is managed by Nicola Atkinson, who has more than 32 years' experience working with TUI and has generated 7 new jobs with advisors on hand to assist travel goers with their dream holidays offering specialist knowledge in family package holidays, luxury cruises, long haul excursions and European city breaks.

Sanderson Arcade boasts a weekly footfall of 55,000 – 60,000 visitors per week. The centre holds a waiting list for retail and office tenants wanting to join and very rarely has empty space, but anyone wishing to explore starting up or relocating their business to Sanderson Arcade, Morpeth should contact Olly Jansen.

**Olly Jansen, 01226 360644
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L-R: Lisa Hide with kleo Tabaku

North East Chef to open second restaurant

The success of a Tyneside restaurant has led to the team behind it acquiring a second site for a brand new venture.

Lovage opened at St George's Terrace, Jesmond less than a year ago, with its authentic Mediterranean style food becoming an instant hit with both diners and critics – even getting a mention by Michelin within months of launching.

Headed up by chef Kleo Tabaku and front of house manager, Lisa Hide, the pair joined forces with hospitality entrepreneur, Stuart Young of Northern Bar Management to create a restaurant which was inspired by Kleo's upbringing.

Now the partners are adding another string to their culinary bow, with Osters which is scheduled to open at Gosforth High Street in mid November.

The new restaurant, in what was formerly Stock Gosforth, will focus mainly on seafood and fish, as well as catering for both meat eaters and vegetarians.

Kleo will be creating the new menu but will still remain as head chef at Lovage, with Albi Tabaku, a long-standing colleague who has worked with him for a number of years heading up the kitchen at Osters.

"This is a very exciting new venture for us and the opportunity to showcase new dishes but at the same level and with the same attention to detail that we have at Lovage," said Kleo.

"It will still reflect my style of food and hopefully will have the same amazing reception that we have had at Lovage."

Stuart Young of Northern Bar Management is equally as excited about the new opening.

"We've been overwhelmed by the response to Lovage and the style of food we offer there," he said.

"The opportunity came up to take over this prime site in the heart of Gosforth and we knew it was the perfect place for us to create a new restaurant with a different menu, but still reflecting Kleo's style of food.

"I am delighted at being able to continue the successful partnership with Kleo and Lisa and believe this will be a really strong addition to that relationship."

Work is now underway on revamping the restaurant, which will have a cool, Scandinavian style feel to the décor.



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North East scientist launches new platform to help people take back control of their health



Mana Living, a new online platform designed by North East-based biomedical scientist Vera Powles, has launched to give busy men and women a tool to take back control of their health, develop positive habits, and create a maintainable, healthy lifestyle.

The platform, which was inspired by Vera's work in DNA repair, takes a holistic approach to health, targeting the six pillars of wellness; sleep, stress, diet, exercise, emotions, and spirituality. Content includes tips on how to get a better night's sleep, yoga routines that can be practiced at home as part of a busy routine, healthy plant-based recipes, and proven habit change strategies that help individuals cope better with stress and balance emotions.

While we are currently living longer as a society, but the amount of time we are living without disease is in decline and our quality of life is decreasing over time. Vera developed Mana Living to address what is impacting our health, extend the quality of our years, and offer a goal-focused solution to wellness that will allow us to continue to enjoy the things we enjoy.

Vera Powles was born in Portugal before moving to the North East to further her career in molecular medicine. Speaking about why she launched Mana Living she said, "As I studied more about DNA repair, I became aware of the impact that our lifestyle choices have on our

propensity to develop chronic diseases. It totally changed the way that I perceived my health and while I had always been health conscious, I exercised, had a regular bedtime, and ate plenty of fruits and vegetables, I just didn't feel healthy.

"I had a major awakening at a crucial moment in my life, that made me realise that our health is more than the food we eat, how much we exercise, or how well we sleep. Our holistic approach at Mana Living, targeting all Six Pillars of Wellness, means that every aspect of your health is accounted for so you're not just told how to eat healthily or to exercise more. If stress, for example, is the root cause for your poor eating habits, we've got that covered too so you can make strategic changes that actually work. All our content is backed by the latest scientific information to share solutions that have proven or shown potential benefits to your health. We understand all the wellness information out there can be overwhelming so we sift through it, so you don't have to. Everything in our membership can be integrated into a lifestyle you can maintain forever and makes you feel good inside and out.

"We are getting busier and busier as a society and often our health and wellness gets pushed to the bottom of the list when other priorities take over. There is a lot of competition for our time and energy, especially for women who are still responsible for the majority of childcare and household chores, and the amount of information out there can be overwhelming. I wanted to create a single platform that simplified the knowledge and shared information and activities that cover all the different areas of well-being all in one place, making it much easier to access and stick with. New content is added every week and members also receive a weekly newsletter with new things to try and challenges to address the problems that face us in the modern world. Ultimately I wanted to develop a platform that helped people to look at wellness in a new way and feel good about themselves."

Alongside her scientific career, Vera has trained as an Integrative Nutrition Health Coach and vinyasa yoga teacher. She is joined at Mana Living by her husband, a Physics teacher, an accredited sound therapist, and a consciously connected breathwork teacher. James adds his experience in techniques to calm the mind and quieten the inner self-critic by delivering experiences that hack the body and brain to then receive personal insights.

Membership to Mana Living costs just £14 a month and more information is available at manaliving.co.uk/live-beautifully

The Funky Indian Wali shines at Feeding Families' warehouse launch in Blaydon

In a culinary extravaganza that left tastebuds tingling and hearts full, renowned Asian caterers, The Funky Indian Wali, stepped into the spotlight once again. They recently had the honour of supplying the buffet for the Feeding Families' launch of their new warehouse in Blaydon, and the results were nothing short of spectacular.

Over the past year, Feeding Families has experienced an astounding 100% growth in demand for their services. This surge in demand is a testament to the critical need for the work in the community, and as a result, they have found themselves needing larger premises to better serve those who rely on them.

Hearing of their launch, owners of The Funky Indian Wali, Kam and Nedhi Chera kindly offered to do the catering for the event, free of charge, as a commitment to their corporate responsibility.

The Funky Indian Wali has long been a name synonymous with exquisite Asian fusion cuisine. Their commitment to authentic flavours and innovative presentations has made them a favourite among food enthusiasts. And this time, they outdid themselves, wowing guests at the Feeding Families' event with an array of delectable dishes that went down a treat.

Juliet Sanders, CEO of Feeding Families said: "The Funky Indian Wali's buffet at the Feeding Families' warehouse launch was a resounding success. Their culinary artistry left a lasting impression on attendees and added a touch of gastronomic magic to the event. We can't thank them enough."

For more information on Funky Indian Wali, 07966 755 007
Feeding Families - www.feedingfamilies.org.uk



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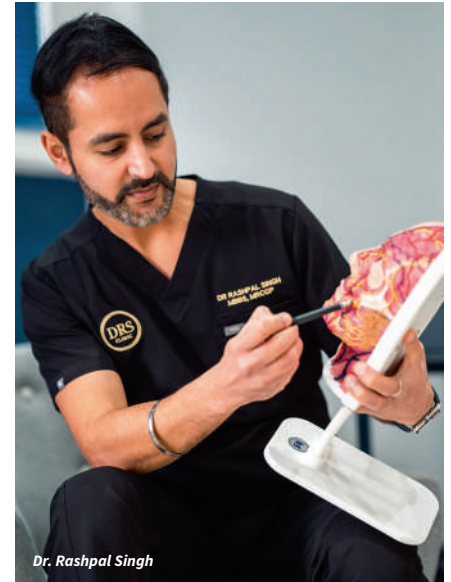
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Acclaimed cosmetic doctor named finalist in 2023 Safety in Beauty Awards



Dr. Rashpal Singh, a highly acclaimed cosmetic doctor and industry leader, has been named a finalist in the prestigious 2023 Safety in Beauty Awards. This notable recognition comes in the esteemed category of “Best Aesthetic Industry KOL & Ambassador,” highlighting Dr Singh’s exceptional contributions and unwavering commitment to excellence in the field of aesthetic medicine.



Dr. Rashpal Singh

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 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. stacey@racemarketingagency.co.uk

The Safety in Beauty Awards, established in 2013, are renowned for celebrating professionals and brands that prioritise high standards, safe practices, and excellent outcomes. Dr. Rashpal Singh's inclusion in the finalist list is a testament to his outstanding work, dedication, and professional ethos.

Dr Singh expressed his pride in being a finalist for the awards, "As an ambassador for safety in medical aesthetics, I'm so proud to be a finalist for these awards. Having served as a global key opinion leader and trainer for Allergan, a renowned pharmaceutical provider in the aesthetics industry, I consider myself fortunate to be able to share my passion by providing training to medical professionals throughout the UK and abroad. One of the absolute highlights of my journey so far has been the opportunity to expand my work internationally, including a memorable experience creating and delivering a masterclass to doctors from across the UAE at the prestigious Institute of Medical Aesthetics

in Dubai earlier this year. Being shortlisted alongside a group of esteemed colleagues is a true honour, and it further reinforces my dedication to advancing the standards of our industry."

Dr. Rashpal Singh has gained recognition as one of the leading facial aesthetic doctors in the UK, known for his natural, balanced results. His commitment to excellence and dedication to advancing the field of aesthetic medicine have made him a trusted authority and a sought after trainer in the industry.

The final winners of the Safety in Beauty Awards will be announced in December, and Dr Singh and his team are eagerly looking forward to the results. This recognition further solidifies Dr Singh's status as a leader in the field and reinforces his commitment to providing exceptional care and contributing to the growth of aesthetic medicine.

"To eat well in England, you should have breakfast three times a day." Somerset Maugham



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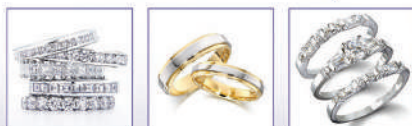
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David Fairlamb



Pushing the boundaries

Fitness is not confined by age, and neither should be the willingness to step out of your comfort zone. Pushing the boundaries and learning to go that little further or harder can make a big positive difference, not only physically but also mentally and can be learnt at any age.

The comfort zone is that cozy place where we perform exercises and routines that are familiar, easy, and non-challenging. It's where we feel safe, but ironically, it's also where our progress often stagnates. The thought of pushing beyond this zone can be daunting but the benefits will override this.

PHYSICAL BENEFITS

Enhanced Strength and Endurance

Stepping out of your comfort zone in fitness means tackling new exercises, heavier weights, shorter rest periods or longer distances. This gradual increase in intensity helps build strength and endurance. Whether you're lifting heavier dumbbells or running an extra distance, you're pushing your limits and will see improvements.

Improved Flexibility and Balance

Trying new activities, such as yoga or Pilates, challenges your body in different ways. These exercises emphasise flexibility, balance, and

core strength, which are essential for preventing injuries and promoting recovery, especially as we age.

Weight Management

Variety in your workout routine can help overcome weight plateaus. Pushing out of your comfort zone by introducing high-intensity interval training or resistance training can supercharge your metabolism and boost weight loss.

Bone Health

Weight-bearing exercises, like strength training, help maintain and improve bone density. This is crucial to introduce as we age because it reduces the risk of osteoporosis and fractures.

Heart Health

Engaging in cardio workouts outside your comfort zone promotes cardiovascular health. It strengthens the heart, lowers blood pressure, and reduces the risk of heart disease.

MENTAL BENEFITS

Boosted Confidence

Every time you venture outside your comfort zone in fitness and conquer a new challenge, your self-confidence receives a boost. This newfound confidence can extend into other areas of your life, making you more willing to take on new challenges in and out of the gym.

Stress Reduction

Exercise, in general, is a powerful stress-reliever. When you push yourself, the body releases endorphins, creating a sense of euphoria and reducing stress and anxiety.

Mental Resilience

Overcoming physical challenges can build mental resilience. You learn to embrace discomfort and understand that it's a necessary part of growth plus learn to deal with it. This mindset can help you face life's challenges with more confidence.

Sharper Cognitive Function

Regular exercise, especially when it includes diverse activities, has been linked to improved cognitive function and a reduced risk of cognitive decline as we age.

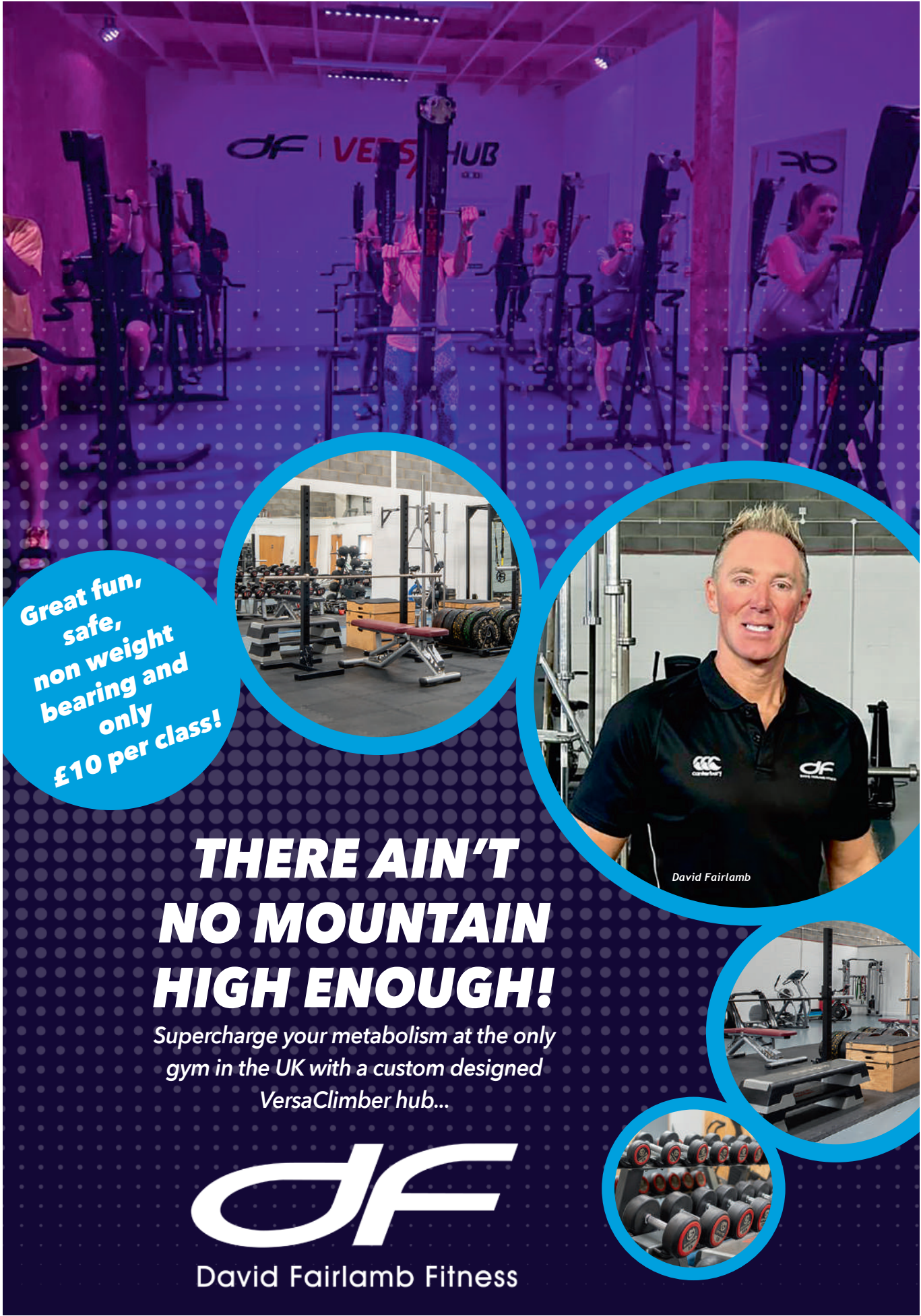
Social Connection

Trying new fitness activities often involves joining classes or groups. This encourages social interaction reducing feelings of isolation and loneliness.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

David's summing up...

Embracing the challenge of pushing out of your comfort zone doesn't require drastic measures. It can be as simple as adding a new exercise to your routine, increasing weights gradually, or setting new goals. The key is to have the will and determination to constantly challenge yourself.



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The Last Word

Having been involved in my legal practice for over 50 years with hospitals and medical practitioners, I have the greatest of respect for the expertise, commitment and dedication of the medical profession. A vocation, with the noblest commitment to alleviating suffering, healing the sick and caring for the most vulnerable, following the principle-Primum non nocere - First Do No Harm.

This latest development when for the first time NHS consultants and junior doctors are striking on the same day is irresponsible and renders them unworthy of public respect.

The junior doctors are led by a radical faction in the BMA, the doctors' Union, no doubt politically motivated, pursuing an unaffordable and unjustified 35%, and why? Because they are 'special'. Their earnings early in their careers may not be impressive, but before them is a path to a consultant's income of £120,000 and a pension more than double the current average salary. Their profession is dedicated to caring - how does this strike stand with ignoring the immense and continuing impact on patient care and waiting lists?

As to the consultants, the pay deal offered to them will mean average full-time NHS earnings for consultants of £143,100 when all allowances are added in. This is in addition to all private work and a very generous pension regime. They have held their place in the hierarchy of workers, being over the 98th percentile of earners, meaning more than 98% of earners will earn less than an NHS consultant.

The irony is that if a higher award is made it will have to be paid for by increased tax, falling on the highest earners, namely themselves.

Above all, the consultants should prioritise the patients to whom they should be dedicated. Withdrawing labour at the same time striking junior doctors delays treatment of hundreds of thousands, and leaves the desperately ill patients at extreme risk. Consultants should refuse to withdraw labour when junior doctors are on strike. That would show maturity, dedication, responsibility and care for patients.

Sage Gateshead is a much loved icon on our



Barry Speker

landscape and adds cultural richness to the area. It is now recognised around the world by its name and amazing architecture. The recent decision to change the name from Sage, apparently stems from a decision that the new convention Centre to be constructed nearby is to be known as Sage.

A request for suggestions for a new name for the concert venue produced a shortlist of 100 - and the selection made is The Glasshouse. This immediately produced protest that the name is well known slang for a military prison. No doubt we will continue to refer to it as Sage for years to come and crucially we will enjoy its rich and varied music.

A recent trip to Scotland to visit friends in their new flat in Edinburgh provided the opportunity to visit two special gems. No, not the picture in Holyrood Palace of Nicola Sturgeon with Her Majesty the Queen. We went to see and ride on the famous Falkirk Wheel, a marvel of 21st century engineering, erected to provide a link between the two main canals in Scotland, the Union Canal and the Forth & Clyde. It was the world's first rotating boat lift, raising and lowering gondolas with millions of litres of water, and boats, 35 metres

up. Amazing spectacle and a living application of Archimedes principle. The Millennium Link was opened by The Queen in May 2002.

Also I recommend a visit to The Kelpies five miles away. These are stunning hollow steel-plated sculptures of mythical Celtic water horses in tribute to the horses which used to pull the canal barges. They are 30 metres high and part of an eco park.

I was honoured to attend a party arranged at the Discovery Museum to celebrate the 90th birthday of Dr Hari Shukla CBE. Hari came to Newcastle from Kenya in the early 70s and for over 50 years he has played a leading role in promoting community relations, racial and religious harmony and cooperation. This has been rightly recognised by various honours including the award of Freedom of the City. He is a true hero. Long may he continue his excellent initiatives.

A valuable point for Newcastle United in the Champions League against A C Milan. Fortunately Newcastle took their own Pope to Italy.

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