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December 2023/January 2024

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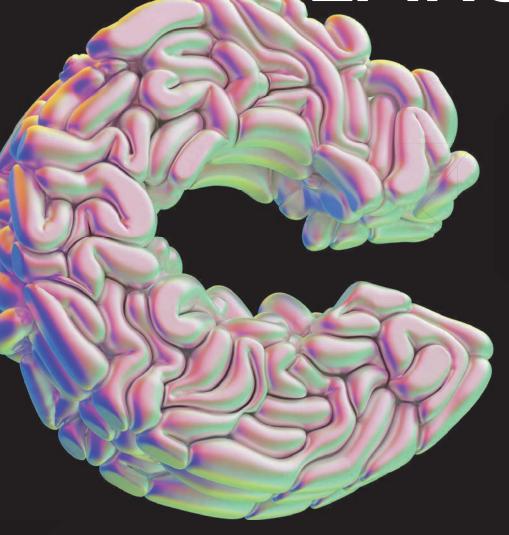


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Foreword

Welcome to the December/January edition of Northern Insight. As we approach the festive season may I place on record my sincere thanks for the wonderful support we have received this year from our clients, readers and suppliers through what has been a hugely challenging but very rewarding 2023.

Our 97th issue has been a joy to put together and is one we are very proud of.

The cover story from Sanderson Young is particularly striking and a great precursor to a huge range of content and analysis.

We showcase a wide range of North East businesses reflecting on their year as well as future plans.

Look out for a great picture spread from NE Youth from their recent Projects with Pride Awards.

Within a vibrant Arts section we interview Jonathan Higgins, new Chief Executive Officer at the wonderful Tyne Theatre and Opera House.

> On our travels we visit Leila Lilys and make welcome returns to Mantra Thai and the Northumberland Arms in Felton.

> > Now comes time to pause and reflect.

May I wish everyone a very Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year. See you in 2024!

























Monument









dunwoodieswift architects





















New RMT apprentices getting on the career laddder

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors is continuing to build for the <u>future after taking on its latest group of apprentices.</u>

Josh Bond, Aidan Duke, Natalia Kostenko, Kristian Kerr and James Hopkinson have all begun structured, multi-year training programmes with Gosforth-based RMT which will see them work towards industry-recognised qualifications as part of their professional development.

Josh and Kristian have started their training with the firm's healthcare division, RMT Healthcare, which is the largest specialist medical and healthcare accountancy practice team outside London, while Aidan and Natalia are working as part of its business services team.

James Hopkinson, who is in the third year of his apprenticeship, has joined RMT from another regional firm and is now part of its audit team.

Each apprentice is working on a variety of live client projects, under the supervision of experienced senior colleagues, and initially working towards gaining Association of Accounting/Taxation Technicians accreditations as part of their professional development.

RMT Accountants provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its accountancy, specialist tax, medical and healthcare, corporate finance and recovery and insolvency teams.

It works with UK companies of all sizes both within and outside the North East, as well as with a range of international clients, and currently has a total of 17 apprentices at different stages of their respective training programmes.



Malhotra Group PLC acquires new care homes

Jobs at three North East care homes have been saved and vital community resources protected, following a multi-million-pound deal by Malhotra Group PLC.

The Newcastle based company has acquired three homes which were formerly part of Four Seasons Healthcare, located in Howdon, Morpeth and Blyth.

Not only has the move saved 257 jobs, but crucially secures 217 critical care beds across the region, offering both residential and nursing care.



Furnishes Dunelm Stores with solar installations

Advanced Renewable Power (AR Power), a leading solar panel installation company based in Washington, has won a substantial national contract with Dunelm Stores, a major retail chain.

Dunelm Stores is a well-established national retail chain in the UK, offering a wide range of home furnishings and decor products. The new partnership marks a significant step forward in Dunelm's commitment to sustainability, and AR Power is excited to play a pivotal role in the project.

AR Power, founded by the dynamic husband-and-wife team of Mark and Maria Dunville in 2011, has steadily grown to become a renowned installer of commercial and industrial solar energy systems. Their dedication and excellence in the field have recently been recognised with the North East Solar PV Installer of the Year Award, and they recently represented the region in the national finals in Birmingham.

Under the terms of this contract, AR Power will be responsible for the installation of solar panels at multiple Dunelm Stores locations across the country. The aim is to support Dunelm's sustainability goals by harnessing clean and renewable solar energy. In total, AR Power will install 2,526 solar panels, providing a combined capacity of 1.35 megawatts (MW) of clean energy. The company will manage every aspect of the project, from initial consultations to the commissioning of each system, ensuring a seamless and high-quality installation process with minimal disruption to store operations. AR Power is poised to kick off the installation process with Swansea as the first site.

The newly acquired homes have been renamed, with the former Howdon Care Centre now named Eastside Gardens, East Riding Care Home as Bluebell Manor and Chasedale Care Home as Blythgate Manor and will be part of Malhotra Group PLC's new care home brand, Lifestyle Care. The company already owns 15 homes across the North East through its Prestwick Care brand.

As part of Lifestyle Care's aim to provide high-quality, person-centred care to its residents, Nicola Bowles has been appointed as its Chief Operating Officer. Nicola, who has 22 years of experience working in the care industry and who previously worked for Malhotra Group PLC, said "I am very excited to take the reins and use my extensive sector experience to further improve the quality of these newly acquired care homes for all who live and work in them.

"It is fantastic to be back working at Malhotra Group, it feels like a homecoming." Bunty Malhotra CEO of Malhotra Group said "We are a North East based company with deep roots in the local communities.

"This strategic move aligns perfectly with our vision to expand and enhance Malhotra Group's care offering in the region.

"I am confident that this acquisition will be greatly appreciated by the residents and staff."



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



Esh Group set for 'Even Greener' future with 2040 net zero target

North of England firm, Esh Group, has outlined its commitment to becoming a more sustainable contractor with the launch of a carbon reduction strategy named Even Greener.

By taking achievable steps across the business to reduce carbon emissions year-on-year, Esh Group aims to achieve net zero by 2040.

Targets include 100% of owned fleet being fully electrified or low carbon vehicles by 2035, and a 65% reduction in business operating carbon by 2034 – specifically, Scope 1, 2, and Scope 3 waste, business travel, upstream transportation, and staff commuting.

Award-winning Newcastle entrepreneur launches service to 'revolutionise' postage in the UK

Award-winning Rez Gachcar, who enjoyed global success with his pioneering pet product Mud Daddy, has now turned his sights to the booming e-commerce sector which is currently worth around £200bn-ayear in the UK.

The new service, Go NokNok, features a smart storage space capable of securely storing multiple packages and parcels on the side of your property.

With around £2bn worth of packages and parcels stolen each year in the UK, the container includes a camera for added security while users can operate the system remotely via an app.

Initially being launched across the North East before a planned national roll-out, there was a waiting list for Go NokNok before it entered the market – and the feedback so far has been "sensational".

"We tested Go NokNok at homes around the region, and people were blown away by how safe, easy and useful they found it," said the Newcastle-based entrepreneur.



"Our users love the discreet design that means it can fold down onto the side of their property if it isn't in use, and the e-commerce traders who trialled it were staggered by just how many packages they could safely store inside.

"For e-commerce businesses who have tried Go NokNok already, the feedback that we've had is that this is going to revolutionise the industry.

"It means no more trips to the post office or delivery depot with a car stuffed with packages – this effectively puts the post office on the side of your home.

In the first 12 months, Rez hopes to attract at least 1,000 sign-ups to the subscription service. The box itself – which is worth £199 - will initially be given away for free to early subscribers.



Gold Membership to The 5% Club demonstrates IMH's commitment to its workforce

Industrial and Marine Hydraulics, based in Middlesbrough, has been awarded gold accredited membership via The 5% Club's 2023-24 Employer Audit Scheme.

From a notable list of 180 members, IMH was one of 120 UK employers who met the gold standard.

The award recognises significant contributions made to the development of employees through 'earn and learn' schemes as well as auditing companies on a number of other requirements. This includes having 5% of their UK workforce on formal training programmes and auditing employee retention rates.

The award enables IMH to further highlight and demonstrate its proven commitment to investing in its workforce through its apprenticeships, placements and training schemes.

IMH has recently appointed its 28th apprentice and has developed a partnership with Hartlepool College of Further Education to elevate practical learning in hydraulic engineering. The partnership has seen the launch of the IMH Hydraulic/ Pneumatic Lab to which IMH has donated hydraulic equipment to enable students to have practical experiences.

Launched in 2013, The 5% Club works with UK employers and key influencers to inspire positive action for increased and accessible workplace learning, focused primarily on the number of apprentices, sponsored students and graduates employed. The goal of The 5% Club is to increase the employment and career prospects of today's youth and equip the UK with the skilled workforce it needs to safeguard Britain's economy.



DON'T KEEP YOUR GREAT ACHIEVEMENTS BÉHIND CLOSED DOORS. LET US UNLOCK YOUR BRAND AND SHOW YOU OFF TO THE WORLD.

www.bradleyomahoney.co.uk





Die Hard

Saturday, 16th Dec, Doors: 6:30pm

Join us for an action-packed festive evening with comfy seating, treats, and text-to-seat drinks service.

£12.50

LED Christmas cards 2.0

Saturday, 9th Dec 6pm-8pm

Back on popular demand, join us for a morning of festive family crafting, using STEM skills - suitable for ages 5+. From £5

Glass Bottle Painting



An evening of relaxed bottle painting and drinks in our 5|Quarter café bar. Create a Christmas decoration or gift, lit up with fairy lights, to take home. £12.50



Christmas party packages

We are available for Christmas lunch and dinner packages in our exquisite Wood Hall. Celebrate Christmas with your colleagues in style!







HASSLE FREE HOME MOVES





Do you need help with your move? Sanderson Young are here to assist. We have curated some of the best in the business across the North East region, in order to assist our clients buying, selling and renting through our agency with hassle free home moves.

With our newly launched 'Friends of Sanderson Young' service, we offer our clients tailor-made solutions to enhance their move. From architects to builders, from removal companies to gardeners, and electricians to plumbers, we can point you in the direction of the best in your area. We know many of our customers will benefit from this personal service and look forward to providing genuine recommendations of

trusted tradespeople.

This exclusive service, which is all part of our sales package, is available to all clients and we have personally selected our contacts list to ensure our recommendations are of exceptional quality and provide the highest levels of service. Our mission is to exceed the expectations of our clients and we know that is something shared by the businesses we are recommending.

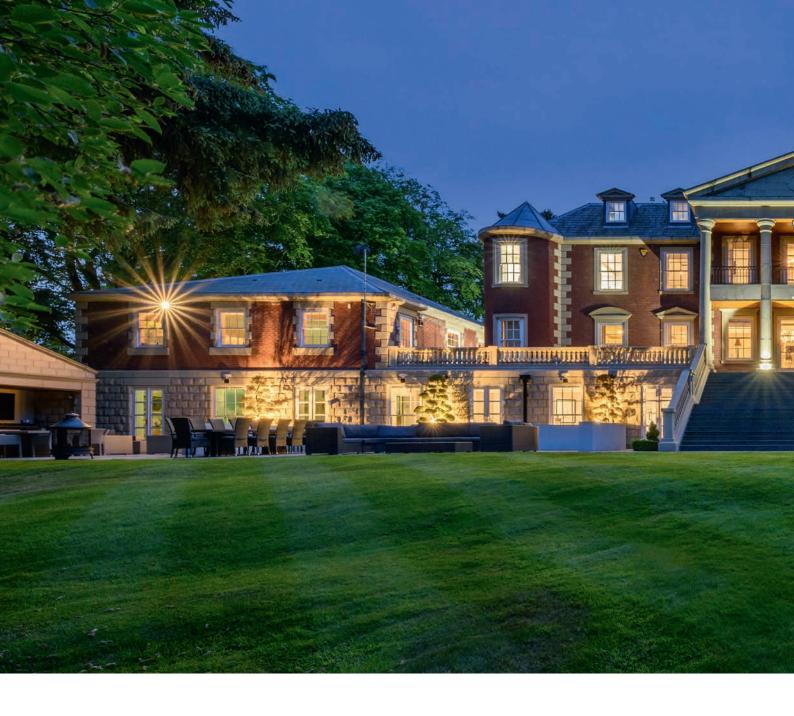
Please feel free to discuss this with our sales teams, who can recommend a wealth of suppliers and businesses to assist you along your moving journey.

If your company represents the best of the best, we are looking to support and help you to be introduced to like-minded clients.

If you are interested in finding out more about becoming a 'Friend of Sanderson Young', please contact Cassie Walton

07776 300192

cassie.walton@sandersonyoung.co.uk



SANDERSON YOUNG 'BESPOKE'

A regular part of our company activity each year is the increasingly important "low profile sale" and the introduction of perfectly matched buyers to a property not currently being promoted on the open market.

On these two pages are a few examples of those sales where we successfully moved a client who didn't want the glare or publicity of a public marketing exercise.

These sales are all about our very discreet knowledge of the market and matching the exact requirements of buyers with the right housing stock.

On this page are two beautiful Gosforth semi detached villas, sold in 2023 to perfectly matched buyers, as well as a prominent, three storey, detached house which another agent

had struggled to sell and we were able to quietly identify and match it to the right purchaser to achieve the sale.

Further out, the magnificent Runnymede Mansion in Ponteland, which only sold through us in Feb 2021, came back to us at £6.5 million and we were delighted to be able to quietly match this house and re-sell it; the new owners are now enjoying an amazing Christmas in their stunning new home.

Just outside of Ponteland, a modern country house with its beautiful gardens and grounds was quietly sold in the summer of 2023 and both buyer and seller were pleased to transact this business quickly and efficiently to move on.

In Jesmond, we were delighted to sell a modern, five



bedroom detached house only a short walk away from the beautiful Jesmond Dene, as well as a very special four bedroom property with views to the County Cricket ground; both of these sales were achieved, at the sellers' request, without any promotion on the open market.

The ability to pull these deals together is all about our in depth knowledge of people and their requirements as well as houses that may match.

It's our attitude of "can do" and "will do" which these clients appreciate, as well as our decades of local knowledge

and our ability to be confidential and professional that makes the difference.

Please call me if you are looking to move, and I, along with all of my team, will do our very best to make your New Year's wishes come true.



















A SNAPSHOT OF OUR 2023!





























Looking back on 2023, we have once again been highly impressed with the quality of some of the fabulous homes that we have sold and the great interest we have received throughout the year for unique, bespoke, and often very special properties. We have showcased some of these properties in this two page feature.

The housing market continues to be positive and, in many cases, we are seeing demand continue at a high level, especially in traditionally popular areas and with certain styles of houses where there are many more buyers than sellers.

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

We very much look forward to working with all of our current and future clients over the next twelve months to produce successful and efficient sales of some of the region's finest homes.

SANDERSON YOUNG 0191 223 3500

contact@sandersonyoung.co.uk

WWW.SANDERSONYOUNG.CO.UK



VILLA DAMIANOS

SAN STEPHANOS | CORFU







8 GUESTS | 4 BEDROOMS | 3 BATHROOMS

Overlooking the pretty harbour of San Stephanos, the charming Villa Damianos provides the perfect place to relax and unwind. As well as stunning views over the Med, the three storey villa has spacious, sunny rooms and beautiful terraces which provide a number of sitting areas as well as a newly built outdoor kitchen, barbecue and bar area, lawns and private pool. San Stephanos is on the north eastern side of the island and provides a stunning horseshoe bay which enjoys a quiet and serene pace of life.

This beautiful villa, which was built by Damianos himself, is available for rental, sleeping 8 people in four bedrooms and can sleep 10 people if visiting with younger children.

PRICING FROM: £2950 PER WEEK FOR 8 GUESTS



VILLA GEORGE

AVLAKI-KASSIOPI | CORFU







10 GUESTS | 5 BEDROOMS | 5 BATHROOMS

Villa George, built in very recent years, has established itself as one of the finest private villas on the island with an exclusive gated entrance, private driveway and magnificent grounds. It is an extremely impressive holiday home which sleeps 10 people in its five double bedrooms.

The villa has a heated infinity swimming pool, as well as stunning day bed terraces and private sitting areas in the beautifully landscaped gardens.

The villa internally replicates a Venetian style of Corfiot design and is available with housekeeper, private chef and support concierge services.

PRICING FROM: £8500 PER WEEK FOR 10 GUESTS







Strategic Sales and Marketing in 2024

Sales remains for many, a role with little to no entry conditions or qualifications. Many people fall into Sales rather it be a planned career move and as such our perception of the industry varies greatly.

I've met some enormously talented sales professionals over the years but unfortunately, I've met more who take a volume-based approach with little direction and wins are often more luck than anything else. Sales and Marketing in my opinion, have never been more closely aligned yet in so many organisations remain distant relatives.

Organisations use outsourced agencies for one, and inhouse teams for the other creating a misalignment and an ineffectual amalgamation of brand tones. We are so often operating in saturated markets with the term 'USP' used less and less – the alignment of your sales and marketing teams, narrative and strategy are therefore crucial.

Companies that thrive are the ones who embed both disciplines in their core strategy – they are a harmonious team. This is a challenge, especially for owner-managed SMEs looking to grow. A question I get asked regularly is 'which comes first?'. Both role profiles come at a cost and a sales and marketing professional cannot deliver every aspect you need. There are different disciplines – so where should you start?

Work with an outsourced provider who will have all these skills internally to try and test the model, mitigating the risk for you. Perhaps I would say that; given Just Williams primary business is an expert for sales and marketing outsourced for growing SMES. But this model

was created as I was at that point myself. It's hugely costly and risky to hire a c40K sales and marketing professional without having a strategy in place – but there are alternative options.

"Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results"

Albert Einstein

Looking to start 2024 differently? Don't keep doing the same thing...

Just Williams is a certified B-Corp – we believe in using business as a force for good. We offer outsourced sales and marketing support, consultancy and mentorship.

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

Jessica@JustWilliamsLtd.co.uk Twitter @JessicaJAW1903 @JustWilliamsLtd @JustWilliamsSa1 www.justwilliamsItd.co.uk



How invested are you in your team?

2024. Are you planning for a year of growth or sustaining your existing customer base?

Either way, one thing is certain - developing and maintaining relationships with your customers, new and old, will be an essential element to this.

Retaining existing customers as well as developing new relationships are often down to your Customer Service, Account Managers and Sales Professionals. Yet these customer facing people representing your organisation, being the main point of contact are more often than not, the least invested in when it comes to training. Do you know the true potential of your teams, or are you at risk of feeling the impact of neglecting their development.

The least invested people in business are the ones we rely on to bring in new business and retain existing customers...

We are from the industry and have trained over 3500 individuals in the last few years in the Customer Service and Sales space. Following a range of forums and feedback, we have launched a range of new one day courses from January 2024. These are available individually or as a collective for up to 10 people from any one business.

- Customer Service Excellence •
- Account Management and Retention
- Creating Customer Lifetime Value
 - Sales Leadership •
 - Sales Fundamentals •
 - Sales for Start Ups •
 - Sales and Marketing for SMEs •
- Delivering Sustainable Sales Growth
 - Communication Skills •
 - Presentation Skills

We work with individuals and organisations with one off training courses or over a 12 month coaching course to help develop your teams into high performance, strategic customer facing professionals ensuring you and they achieve the goals set. We have seen teams come alive with drive and ambition once they spend some time on their development - what will your team take away from a day with The Just Williams Sales Academy? What impact can it have on your staff - and ultimately, your bottom line?

In June 2024 we host our third annual Sales, Service and Success Conference and this time we are heading to Newcastle. Our host is confirmed as the legendary Alfie Joey and a full speaker line up will be announced in the coming months. To save your place email JWSA@ justwilliamssales.academy

Save the Date -Tuesday 25th June 2024

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

Jessica@JustWilliamsLtd.co.uk Twitter @JessicaJAW1903 @JustWilliamsLtd @JustWilliams\$a1 www.justwilliamsltd.co.uk

NorthStandard: Taking on tomorrow, together

Northern Insight talk to Jeremy Grose and Paul Jennings, Managing Directors of NorthStandard.

You might never have heard of them, but NorthStandard is truly a hidden gem, born and based in the North East.

Highly respected in marine industries worldwide, NorthStandard has an annual turnover exceeding \$US 800 million (£680 million) and is growing at a rate of more than 2.5% annually, ahead of the growth in the global commercial fleet. NorthStandard's insured tonnage now exceeds 260 million gross tonnes, roughly equivalent to one in five of the world's ocean-going

NorthStandard specialises in providing "Protection and Indemnity" (P&I) insurance, a type of marine insurance that shipowners purchase to cover the potentially huge costs of any harm they accidentally cause to people, property and the environment.

As liabilities for injuries, cargo loss, collisions and pollution can far exceed the value of a vessel, shipowners have found since the 19th century that the most costeffective way of buying P&I cover is through not-for-profit 'clubs' of like-minded shipowners - NorthStandard is one

In February 2023, in a visionary strategic move ahead of its main rivals, Newcastle's 'North P&I' merged with one of its largest competitors, 'Standard Club', to form NorthStandard.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

Our number one goal for 2023 was to achieve a successful merger between North P&I and Standard Club. This took place on 20 February 2023, and NorthStandard instantly became one of the largest and most influential forces in global marine insurance.

Not only did we face the legal challenges of a merger of this scale but the logistical and practical task of combining two large and global workforces, each with their own established structures, IT systems, policies, procedures

Our aim was to establish NorthStandard as an industry leader and position ourselves as something genuinely experience and expertise.



Has everything worked according to plan?

Overall, yes!

Discussions ahead of the merger had been ongoing for a while, so preparations were underway well in advance, and an extraordinary amount of work went into getting us to the merger date of 20 February. Our integration planning is still underway as we work to seamlessly bring together two such successful organisations into a single, larger business that has been shaped to support a strong in-house expertise base across the world.

What are you most proud of this year?

Without a doubt, our people. Seeing our teams thrive in the face of such change has been inspiring. We've been so impressed with how the two organisations have worked together to overcome challenges and truly make NorthStandard stronger than the sum of its parts.

The support we've seen from our members has also made all of us at NorthStandard incredibly proud. Our members make us who we are, and without their support for the merger and our new organisational structure, NorthStandard simply wouldn't exist.

Describe 2023 in three words...

Challenging. Reaffirming. Rewarding

What are your aims for 2024?

We aim to continue our work to bring our teams and offices around the world together - we've successfully merged our offices in New York, London, Singapore, Greece, Hong Kong and Tokyo in 2023 and look to do the same in other global offices.

We are also in the early stages of planning a complete refurbishment of our Newcastle headquarters, based on the Quayside. This investment will reaffirm our commitment to the North East and to our people. Creating a dynamic and hybrid working environment to equip our people to work in the ways that suit them best whilst simultaneously allowing the business to meet the challenges of the future.

2024 will also see the launch of our new website and an expanded range of digital services. This will help our members keep up to date with the latest news and guidance on everything from sanctions and geopolitics to health and safety at sea.

Thanks to our members, we can also boost our support to local charitable causes in the North East and beyond in 2024 with increased funding for a wide range of organisations active in the region, ranging from end-of-life care to the environment to combating poverty to animal welfare.

north-standard.com



NE Youth's Projects with Pride Awards: **Celebrating the** young people of the North East

NE Youth - the leading youth development charity in the North East, hosted their annual awards events 'Projects with Pride' on 8th November at the Grand Hotel sponsored by Perspective (North East) Ltd.

The celebration event, now in its 12th year and saw 300 young people gathered together to enjoy a night of togetherness, entertainment, food, dancing and of course awards.

The awards include Young Achiever of the year, Youth worker of the year, Community Champion & Volunteer of the year.

NE Youth hosted their event during Youth Work Week (6-12th Nov) Youth work saves the government 3.2 billion a year through education & employment outcomes & positive impact on mental health but since 2010 annual spending on youth services has dropped by almost 1 billion!! (UK Youth Oct 2023).

The evening showcased the diverse talents we have in the North East and included performances from Horizon Cheerleading, Care to Dance, True Colours Theatre, Alf Hill, Jazzy Dystopia and Lola & Erin.

CEO of NE Youth Jon Niblo commented: "We are incredibly proud to be host our 12th 'Projects with Pride' Awards- and celebrate all that is great about the youth sector.

Big thanks to Perspective NE for sponsoring the night and all the other sponsors of the awards. Being a young person in 2023 in not easy...we've seen so many more come to NE Youth over the last couple of years for support and guidance. For many young people youth groups and projects offer an alternative education, a safe place to talk and friendship.

These guys are the future and its imperative that we listen to them, give them a voice, invest time in them and help reach their potential."

neyouth.org.uk





























CMYK Business Technology supports dance theatre company balletLORENT with new tech



The region's leading business technology and managed services provider CMYK have partnered with internationally acclaimed and award winning dance theatre company balletLORENT to provide technology to help support aspiring young performers.

balletLORENT is the North East of England's leading Dance Theatre company dedicated to creating ambitious, inclusive, high quality work, touring to the UK's most prestigious theatres. balletLORENT mission is to create world class, distinctive dance, for diverse family and adult audiences and participants of all ages, life experience, culture and backgrounds

The announcement of tech support from CMYK will help the dance company with delivering its youth academy programmes and providing high quality creative material for its young performers and local communities.

James MacGillivray, education and projects manager at balletLORENT said; "balletLORENT is extremely grateful to CMYK for generously supplying IT equipment which will support our work with and for children, and young people in the west end and across Newcastle. Members of our Youth Academy and other groups will have better access to creative materials. The support by CMYK, has enabled the dance company to create activity books and sheets to complement our new dance theatre show for 0-10yrs, 'The Velveteen Rabbit', and provide resources for our Youth Academy and other groups. Having this new IT resource in house allows more efficient and affordable means to printing high quality material."

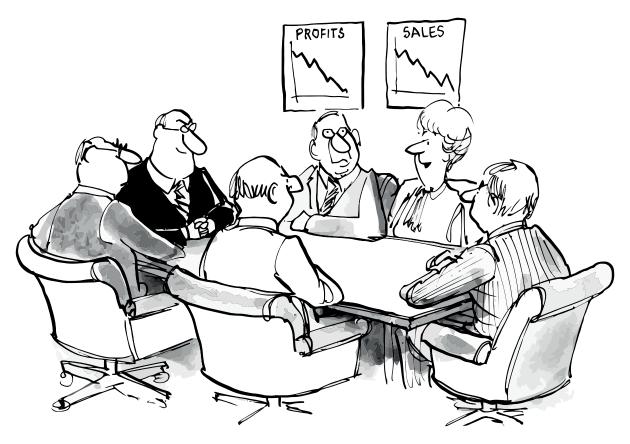
Alongside the donation of a professional print

device, CMYK have pledged additional tech support to help aid the delivery of their Arts Award, a national programme which 'takes children and young people on a creative journey, exploring the arts world, discovering their potential as artists, developing leadership skills – and gaining a recognised qualification along the way'. Children and young people will be able to build digital portfolios for their creative work to be shared online.

Craig Pratt, regional sales director at CMYK commented; "we are delighted to be supporting balletLORENT with new tech to enhance the delivery of their youth academy projects. We are extremely passionate about promoting the positive use of technology across our younger generations. This support adds to other tech initiatives we are actively involved with which is having a huge impact across our region".

Craig added "I was lucky enough to be invited to the dress rehearsal of 'The Velveteen Rabbit', which is a truly fantastic performance! I highly recommend this to anyone with young children to go and see this production when it tours early next year.'

To find out more about balletLORENT and book tickets please visit www.balletlorent.com



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

Business Distress and Insolvency is no joke.

Directors of distressed businesses must proceed carefully.

Seeking good early professional advice usually means more options, and always means that a concerned Director is much better informed.

Northpoint is an established local firm with a personable, pragmatic approach to best assist in business distress situations with expertise in rescue,

corporate restructuring, accelerated business sales, and closure options.

We advise on and act in most situations, advisory and formal, with fixed fees an option in many cases.

Call Greg Whitehead or Linda Farish for a charge free confidential consultation with no obligation.

If your company has had a CBILS or Bounce Back loan and insolvency is a possibility we can provide early, sensible professional advice, based on significant recent experience of dealing with such cases.

- Rescue/Restructure
- Voluntary Arrangement
- Administration
- Liquidation
- HMRC negotiation
- Law of Property Act
- Bankruptcy
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Groundscrews4U taking sustainable staygrounded system nationwide with North East fund backing

Sustainable technology developed by a North East entrepreneur is set to gain ground nationwide with the help of a five-figure investment from the North East Small Loan Fund Supported by The European Regional Development Fund.

Andy Gabel, founder of the UK's leading professional ground screw installation firm Groundscrews4u Ltd (GS4U), has developed a bespoke system of ground screw foundations for use in the holiday park and leisure

The new system allows customers to secure holiday lodges structurally and safely in place without pouring tonnes of concrete into the ground to make foundations, thus making installation quicker, easier and with less impact on the local environment.

Gateshead-based GS4U launched the new STAYGROUNDED system at the Great Holiday Home Show in Harrogate in September and has already had significant interest from some of the holiday park industry's biggest names, with a number of new projects already lined up to start in the new year.

The firm has now worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in the £50,000 investment, which will support its



presence at forthcoming leisure industry trade shows and contribute to the new system's wider marketing campaign.

GS4U is expecting to double its current eight-strong team of installers over the next 12 months on the back of forecast customer demand for the STAYGROUNDED system.



Hundreds of jobs planned at North East recruitment business

A recruitment and outsourced HR business is looking to create hundreds of jobs in the North East in the next five years as it continues to see soaring local, national and global demand for its specialist services to the STEM sector.

Jackson Hogg has grown consistently since being established in 2012 and now employs over 110 people between its bases on Tyneside, Teesside and Leeds, with its teams supporting clients across the world working in the science, technology, engineering and manufacturing industries.

Now, the business - which works extensively across Europe and the United States and Canada - is looking to build a specialist team of around 500 people as it continues to expand its offering across recruitment and HR.

The latest office has been established in Leeds to expand the local geographical reach within the UK, and to take advantage of the strong talent pool in the area. As well as the expansion into Leeds, Jackson Hogg will keep focus on growing its site at CBX in North Tyneside, as well as on the Belasis Business Park in Billingham, where Jackson Hogg has just moved to a bigger site to accommodate further expansion.

To support its growth plans, the business has secured a significant investment from NPIF-FW Capital Debt Finance, which is managed by FW Capital and part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund, as it pushes on with making its ambitions a reality.



Ascot Care eyes future growth with multi-million pound refinance deal

Further expansion is in the sights of a leading North East care provider after it completed a multi-million pound refinance deal with HSBC UK, thanks to support from award-winning law firm Mincoffs Solicitors and **RMT Accountants and Business Advisors.**

Ascot Care operates seven care homes across the region, with the team most recently acquiring Langley House Care Home in Horden and Princess House Care Home in Seaburn.

The funding will allow the family-run business to strengthen its presence in the sector and grow its portfolio across the North East and further afield.

Along with its other homes in Alnwick, Darlington, Durham, Whitley Bay and South Shields, the care provider also owns Ascot Care Agency, which delivers high quality home care and live-in care across the region.

Gareth Nesbit, director at Ascot Care, considers the recent refinance a crucial step towards achieving their long-term growth objectives.

"It's been a very smooth process with Mincoffs, HSBC UK and RMT," he said.

"We continually look to expand the group with care homes that fit our portfolio and a crucial part of that is obviously having the right professionals in place to assist, in terms of solicitors, banking and













"The world is too fragile to have businesses that are purely about profit. They just cannot exist."



Making a Positive Difference to People's Lives

Businesses are increasingly expected to consider purpose as well as profit, and the future of our planet and its people. These are collectively referred to as environmental, social and governance (ESG).

With so many aspects of ESG to consider, guidance from experienced professionals can help you to build a business that meets today's expectations and is ready for the future.

We can help you with:

- ESG strategy creation
- Sustainability workshops
- Carbon accounting and green tax incentives
- B Corp consulting
- ESG measurement and reporting
- ESG focused pension options
- Financial Planning for directors with ESG considerations

Complete your free ESG assessment tool to see what areas you need to focus on to make ESG improvements:



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This company meets the highest standards of social and environmental impact

Finding the right funding option for your business's needs By Michael Cantwell, head of corporate finance at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd



Starting and growing a small business can be an exciting journey but it often requires significant new financial resources to bring your vision to life.

If you are looking to grow your business and think funding is the best option, it makes clear sense to seek advice from a professional where possible. Having a business advisor as a helping hand can help to smooth out or avoid any bumps in the road and streamline the process, saving you time and money.

They will be able to identify which options are best to consider and have the necessary contacts and expertise to move things along.

Whether you're launching a new venture or looking to expand an existing one, securing the right type of funding can be a critical step in determining how you move forward.

Create a solid business strategy and business plan

No matter which funding route you choose, having a well-structured business plan is essential. A comprehensive plan not only showcases your business's potential, but also demonstrates your understanding of your chosen industry.

Craft an engaging pitch that clearly explains your business concept, target markets, competitor analysis, USPs and growth potential, calling in the help of your professional advisors as required, and tailor your presentation to each funding source, highlighting what makes your business stand out and what's next to come.

Assess your funding needs

Before diving into the world of potential funding options, it's essential to determine how much capital you're going to need and that you're able to explain what you need it for. Accurate financial projections are vital for potential funders to assess the viability of your business.

You will need to outline the financials including expenses, revenue projections, and growth goals. You should use historic data and market research to create realistic forecasts for revenue, expenses, and profits. The more detail you can provide upfront, the better your advice and funding options should be.

Types of Funding

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to funding and you might be surprised to learn just how many options are available.

These include, but are not limited to;

- Traditional bank loans
- Alternative lenders
- Government grants and subsidies
- Angel investors and venture capital
- Crowdfunding
- Business accelerators and incubators
- Personal savings or friends and family

So, how do you choose?

Each funding source has its own application process with different instructions to follow and it is likely a lot of documents and information will be required. It's important to stay organised as it can be difficult keep track of everything needed, especially if applying to multiple sources, and your professional advisors' support here can be crucial in enabling you to do this successfully.

Be sure to highlight your business's strengths and potential for growth. As mentioned earlier, the more information you can provide from the offset, the easier it should be to identify the best and most viable funding options for your business.

Prepare for funders to conduct due diligence on your business. They will examine and scrutinise your financials, operations and growth strategies to ensure their investment is secure and likely to grow. This can be an arduous and lengthy process, but a necessary one for all parties.

While securing funding is essential for your growing business, it's also crucial to recognise and assess the risks involved. Taking on debt, or giving up equity, can impact your business's future, so think carefully about the implications of each funding option.

What assistance is available?

RMT's Corporate Finance team has helped countless businesses to achieve their growth goals. From the start of your journey, deciding which route to take, through to the end, ensuring you have everything in place and can continue to grow if you wish, they're able to assist.

For more information, please contact Michael Cantwell on 0191 256 9500 or visit www.r-m-t.co.uk



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Why you should consider an **AppStack to assist** in supporting your finance function

As we look back following the COVID pandemic, many businesses had to pivot, adjust and improve their business processes and the working locations of their key assets (employees).

To achieve this, technology had to step in and support businesses like never before. Some businesses have had to significantly accelerate their technological plans and without the right knowledge this can prove to be extremely difficult.

Additionally, as the business landscape continues to develop, through AI (artificial intelligence) and machine learning, it is more important than ever to stay ahead of the curve.

RG's AppAdvisory service, delivered through the Outsourced|FD service line, supports businesses by identifying weaknesses in their current systems and provides clear recommendations as to the changes and improvements required, supported by modern day technology and advancements

What is an AppStack?

An App Stack is a combination of three or more Cloud based applications which provide additional functionality over and above standard accounting software.

In our experience, the adoption of cloud-based applications positively impacts on the management and delivery of many core areas within a business, for example the finance function.

Each AppStack should be tailored to the needs of a business and aimed at alleviating problems and inefficiencies, with the goal of improving and streamlining processes.

Problems and how adoption of technology can solve them

All business functions need to have modern processes to ensure the business is achieving the maximum return. Automation and integration of new technology are key to achieving this.

It is more important than ever for businesses to be aware of relevant cloud-based technology available to them. The accounting app ecosystem continues to grow year on year.

In this article we focus on the finance function of a business, and what areas can be improved and supported through the adoption of cloudbased technology.

The accounting eco-system surrounding the finance function

Areas of the finance function:

Accounting system management (bookkeeping) – using the right accounting system is key. Having a system that is compatible with other cloud-based systems will only allow processes to excel further. Having connectivity with HMRC is also essential, ensuring the business meets its compliance and reporting obligations (Making Tax Digital - MTD) as is the ability to maintain and deliver real-time information to allow business owners to make the right business decisions.

Our recommendation -



66 The Outsourced | FD service has been a perfect fit, bringing in much-needed financial oversight and advice and introducing new software platforms to give us greater visibility over our financial performance and key KPIs. 99

Business expense invoice management – having an automated OCR (optical character recognition) based system will not only save the finance team a significant amount of time, it can also improve the accuracy and quality of the data being processed. These systems can introduce efficient approval processes and auto-reconciliation, giving the opportunity for further time savings across the team.

Our recommendation(s) - PRICE ApprovalMax Prook

• Credit control - the level of overdue receivables will have a significant impact on the cash flow of a business: poor controls in this area can result in the business failing. Automated credit control (automated invoice reminders, automated issue of receivable statements and automated reminders of the terms and conditions of supply) will not replace all processes and requirements in this area but it can play a significant part in facilitating efficient cash collection.

Our recommendation - CHASER

■ Cash flow management/forecasting – careless and out of date cash flow management makes businesses particularly susceptible to failure. Businesses must have accurate, real-time financial (and non-financial) information enabling them to predict future cash movements. Having accurately maintained and efficient systems for management of credit control, as well as clear and complete information on upcoming spend (financial budgets), will enable a business to identify pinch points, and potential upcoming periods of financial difficultly which will require extra funding. An important point to remember is that the data available to predict future cash movements and business performance is completely reliant on the accuracy of data entered into the accounting system.

Our recommendation(s) - to float Fathom FUTRLI

Cash Payments

Payments In Developments in technology have given businesses the ability to manage the method of how they get paid. For example, businesses now have the ability to secure real-time payments and have cash collection scheduled.

Payments Out most businesses will, manually, log into their online banking account and set up their weekly/monthly supplier payment runs, which makes for a very manual process, and of course open to human error. Technology integration has played a significant role in developing and streamlining the process of making payments out, including authorisation requirements, enabling payments to be made from your accounting system, based on invoices logged for payment (including HMRC obligations).

Our recommendation(s) - TCPZCO apron. Mook

Management reporting – having clear, accurate and real-time management information, in a format that can visually present the performance of a business, is key to a business achieving its growth plans and indeed its ability to mitigate and react to risks. Many businesses still extract financial data from their accounting system(s), into excel, and manually prepare monthly/quarterly management reports, including consolidated reports. Not only is this a significantly manual and time consuming process, but it is also open to error. The adoption of technology will provide a business with a customised management reporting pack at the click of a button.

Our recommendation - Fathom

How to adopt a cloud-based accounting eco-system

There are a few simple steps to enhance and overall improve the finance function of a business. These are:

- Health Check and Finance Function review we recommend that the business engages a specialist AppAdvisor to carry out a detailed review to identify the areas of the current systems that have inefficiencies and areas that are fully omitted from the current processes of the business. Overall, this provides a deeper understanding and enables clear recommendations to be made.
- Findings and recommendations following the review recommendations will be presented to the business as to the suggested changes and the proposed adoption and implementation of new systems and processes.
- Implementation a specialist AppAdvisor should be engaged to carry out the implementation phase, based on the specific recommendations already made and agreed with the business. This ensures the set up and integration of the various applications are correctly configured, but also ensuring there is limited downtime during this process.
- Ongoing support it is inevitable that businesses, following completion of the implementation phase, will have ongoing questions, as they move to a new and efficient way of working: the ongoing support from your AppAdvisor is key to the success of this technological adoption.

66 We use a unique mix of skillsets, taking a carefully planned, strategic approach that ensures you have clear, accurate and real-time financial data. 🤊 🤊

If you have any questions or require any further assistance or advice about the adoption of cloud-based technology, please feel free to contact us at ryecroftglenton.com



Playing The Generation Game

The end of and start of a new year is a great time to look at what is working in your current team set up and making changes needed to ensure a successful coming year. One process to think about is a reset with your team, taking into consideration the Generation Game.

Vistage North East members recently enjoyed a session with speaker Henry Rose Lee, on how to engage, motivate, and manage different generations at work. Vistage chair for the region, Andrew Marsh, discusses here the highlights:

"I want to open up this article by thanking Henry for her insightful presentation to two of my Vistage groups in the North East. The sessions were held at St James' Park where members enjoyed lunch and could bring guests from their team to the meeting, which meant they were very well attended.

"The concept of generational workers is a really interesting one. We all know that people of different ages have different needs, differing ways of communicating and different things that make them tick or get excited. But how many of us truly think about that regularly in the workplace? I'd say not as many of us as should do!

"There are four key generational worker groups in the workplace today. Spanning from births in 1946 to 2009 (ages 14 to 77) they are Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Gen Y) and Generation Z. So if you think about it, how can those in their 60's and 70's possibly have the same drivers as say the youngest of the pack, Generation Z, aged 14 to 26?

"But more importantly, once we understand that, what do we do about it?

"The first thing is to celebrate that diversity of age (actually any diversity) brings benefits. Henry's presentation included the organisational benefits of a multi-generational workforce, including multiple perspectives, knowledge transfer, relationship building, and different approaches to problem solving. Older generations, for example, are known to try hard to work something out. Younger generations however can have a propensity to stop trying something they don't know and just ask someone else to do it. Speed is important. We discussed in groups that perhaps this is a reaction brought about with the digital age, the pandemic and other external factors each generation has experienced.

"Henry showed us the OECD Age-Inclusive approach, which includes benefits from multigenerational workforces such as increased productivity, stronger pipeline of talent, diversity of skills, increased resilience and more.

"Bearing that in mind, when you think of your own team as those in the room did, what do you see as benefits or challenges? It's a great exercise to grab a pen and paper to work out your balance. Have you got it right, is the team as diverse as it can be? And most importantly are the right people doing the right jobs and involved in the right things to get the most out of the generational differences?

"Henry also introduced us all to a great concept, the broken window. Ask the team to find something in the business that needs fixing, or doing differently, and allow them to work out by who and how it should be fixed. If they don't come up with a broken window, then give them one and watch how they interact, problem solve and thrive under the autonomy. This kind of collaborative leadership is something I spoke about in my last article and it is an excellent way to get the best out of every different aged person on the team.



"It is important though to not make sweeping decisions about each group. Henry took us through a true or false test which was illuminating on the presuppositions we have. She said: "There is evidence in research on things like the three top reasons why younger people leave a job for example, and despite the fact that most would say in 2023 that's likely to be for purpose or better working conditions, the top reason is still for money.

"There are actually lots of false beliefs held about all the generations, so it is a truly responsible employer who does their research properly to build a good culture across their entire workforce.

"I am keen to work with organisations who need help with this, so delivering sessions with Vistage is a great place to reach many good employers at once!"

"Personally, I think the hardest thing we have to be prepared for is the next generation ... those who have experienced a totally different upbringing, youth and education. Whose expectations for reward are expected to be beyond anything we have ever seen and whose digital capability will change the world at even faster pace. Guess we had all best buckle up!"

Henry Rose Lee is an Expert in Inter-Generational Diversity. She shares ways to adapt your leadership and management style to get the best out of people, from fresh GenZ talent (16-26), career developing millennials (27-42), and energetic and experienced 40-65+ employees. More is available on www.intergenerationalexpert.com/ about

You can also contact Andrew on Andrew.marsh@vistagechair.co.uk to find out more if Vistage sounds like a peer group that could help you be a better business leader.





New Year, **New Board**

The start of a new year can be a great way to ring some changes for moving forward. And there is no better way for your business than to look at whether your current leadership structure is fit for purpose. Here, Peter Neal, founder of Experience Bank Group, talks about how they can help!

"Many businesses find that during December and January they have more thinking time at work. And that they have more inclination to think of strategic change, driven by new year resolutions and the concept of that fresh start, which allows people to believe they can launch something more successful or better than they are doing currently.

"We encourage our SME and charity clients to use this time to assess their current leadership team and board effectiveness. The leadership team includes all decision makers including CEOs/MDs, functional directors and executive leads, trustees, chairs and non-executive directors.

"Look at your staff structure, and the roles. rather than the people in those roles. Are those roles fit to fulfil your strategic direction and plans, or are there gaps in your skillset? How can you fill those gaps?

"Upskilling what you have is always an option. There are lots of training options and peer groups. For CEOs and operational leaders peer groups like Vistage, which my business partner Andrew Marsh chairs in the region, can be invaluable. As well as skills to learn and expert speaker opinion, members gain a whole peer group circle of trust and their experience to brainstorm with.

"As for trustees, chairs and NEDs we ourselves at Experience Bank Group run a peer group that improves decision making skills, knowledge base, confidence and performance. Our Chatham House rules mean that members bring real time issues and challenges to the meetings, which are discussed and solutions proffered. If you think about it, it means any board with a member enrolled actually gets the experience and insight of up to 12 impartial individuals through the peer group. That makes it incredibly valuable.

"Another thing to consider is reshaping your existing board - the best place to start with this is to undertake a board effectiveness review, which we offer utilising Andrew's unique capability and experience. He will design and deliver a board evaluation and effectiveness review that results in improved leadership, greater clarity of roles and responsibilities, improved teamwork, greater accountability, more innovation and diversity of thinking, better decision-making, improved communication, and more efficient board operations.

"Each assignment is tailored to suit our client's needs, and could include:

- interview or questionnaire-based reviews
- a review of board papers, meeting observations and in-depth, candid discussions
- the provision of a detailed insight into the workings of the board
- the identification of strengths and
- the identification of the changes that will enable the board to achieve its full potential
- a look to the future and identification of opportunities for improvement and

"Why invest the time and money in this we hear you say? A board that truly adds value is not just a group of high performing individuals. A great board is a balanced team with complementary skill sets and a culture that allows them to work together to make the most effective decisions for an organisation. It is the full participation of every board member that contributes the most to the effectiveness of a board.

"Finally, your next thing to consider is new recruits to the operational team or board. Once you have identified knowledge and skills gaps that would help achieve your 3 or 5 year strategy, it is important to find the right people to complement the existing team. At Experience Bank Group we focus exclusively on recruiting Board Directors (Executive and Non-Executive) and Senior Management roles. We identify existing and emerging talent, assess, track, and place the right candidates at the right time for our clients."

If you are interested in any of the services from Experience Bank Group, then visit theexperiencebank.co.uk or contact peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk

The reemergence of the preemptive trade acquirer

The M&A market in 2023 has been fuelled by corporates who have remained active in pursuing strategic M&A. A key theme that has materialised in 2023 is the re-emergence of pre-emptive approaches by trade buyers which we can foresee continuing throughout the remainder of 2023 and into 2024.

The drive of corporate M&A activity and preemptive trade approaches is largely twofold:

- 1) The UK continues to be an attractive market for overseas acquirers, influenced by many factors including exchange rates, access to new geographies, services, talent and technology. Overseas acquirers are therefore still keen to continue acquiring quality UK businesses.
- 2) Private equity investors have backed businesses to continue to seek bolt-on acquisitions which enhance scale, expand service offering and are highly synergistic. The strategy is for private equity investors to position these consolidators for exit.

Overseas corporates and private equity consolidators that are driving pre-emptive approaches are primarily seeking to circumvent future sale processes and in some instances, they are willing to pay tomorrow's value today particularly if the synergy value is driven from an early stage of discussions.

For shareholders, there are many different factors to consider when being approached by a potential trade buyer for a pre-emptive discussion:



- Reacting to an approach your reaction to a pre-emptive trade approach will depend on a number of factors including your appetite for realising value through a sale at this moment, your current business strategy and your growth plan. If you are seeking to realise value for your business, it is important to consider next steps carefully as the party that approaches you may be the eventual buyer of your business and first impressions are important.
- Appointment of an adviser this is a crucial step which shareholders should consider at an early stage. Any decision to sell requires careful planning and preparation with your adviser, not just in terms of timing but also in terms of managing the approach to generate maximum returns for you as a seller and also to take the business forward.
- Filtering approaches whilst it can be flattering receiving pre-emptive approaches from trade parties, it is important to consider the credibility of such approaches with your adviser. This can include assessing the past acquisition history and funding ability of the party which makes an approach.
- Control of information flow it is vital to control the flow of information that is provided to a buyer that makes an approach. Not only could this impact current discussions, it may also impact future discussions if a sale does not take place now.
- Driving the synergy case during such pre-emptive approaches, it is very important to ensure that the business is positioned

appropriately including understanding and articulating specific synergies with a buyer. This is a vital stage of discussions during a preemptive approach by a trade buyer, as it will help drive a premium multiple and valuation for your business. The synergy discussion needs to be embedded into the thoughts of a buyer from an early stage.

• Keeping short timeframes – during a preemptive approach by a trade buyer, your adviser should aim to keep timeframes short to protect against a protracted discussion which could ultimately distract from the day to day running of the business, and impact momentum and value.

Over the last decade, Cavu have dealt with a number of pre-emptive trade approaches on behalf of clients. Whilst some pre-emptive trade approaches will ultimately lead to a successful sale, others will not and the focus thereon needs to be on your desire for discussions with other parties, potential marketing of the business and how to ultimately maximise your value.

We are currently working with shareholders of five businesses where a pre-emptive approach has been made and are therefore highly experienced and able to advise clients on key matters during such approaches. We would be would be delighted to meet to discuss how we could advise you in such instances and how we can help you achieve your goals.

www.cavucf.com



Data as an asset

By Emma Brice, Senior Data Strategy Consultant and Hannah Francis, Executive Data and Analytics Consultant.

Data is often described as a strategic asset but what does that mean? It isn't an asset such as a building or equipment; it's intangible, an abstract representation of something else, but unlike physical assets, can be copied and distributed widely.

Data must be processed into information in order to add value and, without it, organisations struggle to articulate and meet their strategic aims.

If you're asking yourself questions like: How can I reach new markets? How do we effectively target recruitment and

How can we improve performance by understanding strengths and weaknesses?

You need to be using data to help with decision making, but you also need to understand the quality of the data being used to make them.

Make data fit for purpose

In order to treat data like an asset you can start by creating quality specifications for your data and putting processes in place to monitor that your standards are being met – don't leave it to chance, make sure you have a sufficiently detailed understanding of what and where your data is and who is responsible for it.

Improve data management by mapping out processes, ensure data architecture has been documented and staff are well versed in data use and business rules – without this, data cannot be understood or useful. Make sure you do this in the right order – just as you wouldn't build the top of a skyscraper before laying the foundations, you cannot architect after implementation.

As well as the risk to operational efficiencies and strategic insights, businesses have the added hurdle of meeting external regulatory data requirements and poor quality data returns can result in audit, fines, or even the retraction of funding.

Well managed data gives a level of assurance in terms of cyber security, knowing where your sensitive data is held and that it is being managed properly. But not just this, when data quality is enhanced, you know that the information you are being provided via business intelligence is trustworthy and you can gain more interesting and timely insights. The experience of staff is improved via more automated business processes that remove manual data entry, and access to reports and systems that provide the data they need to do their jobs well.

Data management is not just about security, or quality or accessibility, it also ensures that the

foundations are in place so that when you want to innovate with data you can, anything from investigating new market areas and creating new products to fulfil customer demand.



The practice of giving a real monetary value to data is still in its infancy, not least because most organisations do not understand what they are spending in terms of time or technology to enter, process, store and gain insight from their data. If we were to think about the value of university student data as an example, a student cannot participate without a student record, so at a minimum it is worth a student's fees, but the creation and maintenance of that record requires input from many different departments and from the student themselves. Beyond these operational realities lie questions of the strategic value of data - what would be the financial impact to a university if it only grew by a quarter or half of the targets that have been

A data management strategy will set out the starting point for improvement activities and can cover many themes such as data governance, data quality, technology and data culture. This guidance should be the cornerstone of a digital organisation.

To find out more about data management, governance and use, get in touch with our team at info@waterstons.com



Whether you're an individual, a family, a business owner or you manage a trust, we are committed to delivering quality service with a personal touch at a competitive and transparent cost.

If you would like to start the conversation give us a call on

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Tier One Capital achieves £40m deals milestone

Tier One Capital (Tier One), the Newcastle-based wealth and fund management specialists, has achieved a significant milestone in its deal making history, having arranged in excess of £40m debt finance for property development projects in the past five years.



Develop North PLC provides loans to the property sector and is a credible alternative lending source for property developers in the North of England and Scotland.

Since inception, Develop North PLC has created almost 3,000 jobs, provided over £70m of loans and supported 33 developments with a GDV of

Recent property developments supported by Develop North include:-

£3.8M senior debt facility to deliver a new ultra modern and environmentally friendly advanced crematorium on the outskirts of Glasgow for Horizon Ceremonies, creating 25 new jobs in the construction and operation of the facility.

Funding support for £9M Bede Homes Bill Quay development in Gateshead, facilitating the construction of 30 three and four bedroom family homes.

£3.4M senior debt facility to support the development by Homes by Esh for the construction of 34 family homes at Chilton Moor development, Tyne and Wear.

£1.2M senior debt facility with the Apartment Group to upgrade the Grade II listed building Croft Hotel and create a new wedding venue in North Yorkshire, creating 30 new jobs as part of the upgrade.



Ian McElroy, Chief Executive Ian is one of the founding shareholders of TOC and a board member of Develop North PLC.



Jess Swindells, Managing Director Jess joined TOC in 2017 and is a practising lawyer specialising in Banking and Corporate Finance.



Brendan O'Grady, Fund Manager Brendan is a Chartered Accountant and corporate treasurer and joined TOC in 2017 and leads the Fund Management team.



Paul Crawley, General Counsel Paul provides legal counsel to TOC's board of directors and senior management team.



Richard McEvoy, Head of Credit Committee

Richard is an experienced Corporate Banker providing lending process and governance advice to Develop North PLC.



Credit Committee Member Andrew is a Restructuring Solicitor and Certified Turnaround professional providing advice to Develop North PLC.



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Businesses urged to file VAT returns on time due to change in HMRC's internal processing



Following a change in HMRC's processes, UNW's specialist VAT team warn businesses of the consequences of submitting a late VAT return.

Where a VAT return is not submitted by the due date, HMRC has an automated process in place whereby a Central Assessment is issued, in effect as a prompt to submit the outstanding VAT return.

When the VAT return was subsequently filed, previously the Central Assessment was withdrawn automatically, and the return processed as normal.

However, with HMRC's migration to a new platform, to deal with VAT through Making Tax Digital and linked with the new penalty/interest regime introduced for VAT from 1 January

2023, we have been made aware of a change in HMRC's processes.

As before, where a VAT return has not been filed by the due date, HMRC continues to issue a Central Assessment. However, it is from this point that HMRC's internal processes have been changed. When the outstanding return is filed, instead of it being processed automatically and the Central Assessment withdrawn, it now appears to need manual intervention from HMRC.

Recently, we have seen this process take over 100 days to flow through, while in the meantime businesses are being chased by debt collection agencies for payment of the Central Assessment. It is also adversely affecting the normal payment of VAT through direct debit, and resulting in HMRC issuing additional charges for interest and penalties despite the business thinking they are up to date.

Our advice to businesses is to try and ensure that VAT returns continue to be filed by the due date. Should a business not be in a position to pay its VAT liability by the due date, HMRC will discuss the possibilities of a payment plan, but the VAT return should still be filed by the due date if the consequential administrative havoc is to be avoided.

If you are having practical difficulties with submitting VAT returns through Making Tax Digital compatible software, please contact enquiries@unw.co.uk

If you would like more information about this, or any other VAT related matter, please contact one of UNW's dedicated VAT specialists:

Mark Hetherington VAT Partner E: markhetherington@unw.co.uk T: 07715 704 739

Ian Coulthard VAT Senior Manager E: iancoulthard@unw.co.uk T: 0191 243 6017

A year in the life of...

Peter Cromarty

Managing Director, CCBS Group

What did you set out to achieve this year?

We set out to achieve a 9th consecutive year of growth when we looked at our key metrics ahead of the current financial year, but we also wanted to make sure we were looking after our existing customers as well as we could. This became even more important as the business community tried to deal with the uncertainty created by the autumn mini-budget 2022. The turbulence from that mini budget affected interest rates, business confidence and lender credit appetite and so we have worked hard to make sure our clients can still access funding to allow them to achieve the business goals.

Has everything gone according to plan?

No absolutely not! Does it ever? The world is a difficult place now and business is impacted by global problems, whether it be political or economic. We have had to navigate a particularly tricky path around some of the points mentioned above, but we work hard to achieve the right solutions for our clients. So, we got there but not necessarily the way we thought we would.

What are you most proud of this year?

This year will be another record year for CCBS Group. To achieve what we have this year and the past nine years gives me immense pride. But I am particularly proud of how we are evolving, looking for new growth areas, not standing still and working hard for our clients and professional introductory base.

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

Over the past couple of years, I've really started to revisit some business advice and look for new inspiration. I really like some of the High-Performance Podcasts and I've listened to a lot of these over this year. One bit of advice that really sticks with me is about you being your 'authentic self' (Ric Lewis E76). In a world of social media, influencers, and image consciousness, I see so many young people in the business world currently trying to be something that they are not. It is so important for long term success to be 'authentic'. I have always tried to be who I am, and I am pretty sure that will work for some people and not for others. However, I am content with that.

Tell us about your team?

The team has grown and evolved over the last few years, and we are constantly looking for good people who can add to what we do. As a team we have looked to support

our existing client base as well as grow with new client requirements. It has been a challenge this year, there is no doubt, with rising interest rates, tightening credit criteria from lenders and weakening business confidence. However, I'm really proud of the team's resilience to keep going through these challenges and continue to deliver for our clients.

What has been the most enjoyable deal you've been involved with?

Every deal we do is important to our clients so it's important to us. However, I have always loved working on MBO's, and we've been really fortunate to be involved in a few this year. Confidentiality prevents me from naming the exact deal, but we completed an MBO of a well-established family-owned construction related business. The complexities of the negotiation and the eventual success to overcome these, working with the funders and advisors together, gave a great deal of satisfaction when it completed.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

As you can see from the above answers this year hasn't gone according to plan, but it's at these times you learn more about yourself, your business, and your key stakeholders and from that you get growth. Oh...also, that I can't drink as much as I used to!

Describe 2023 in three words...

Retain. Develop. Growth.

What are your aims for 2024?

Next year promises to be exciting for several reasons. We are committed to help our clients through, what we see, will be another tough year. We are looking at further expansion to help us further support businesses in the Tees Valley and North Yorkshire regions. We also need to look at new funding markets to us which will benefit us further down the line. We are always looking to see if we can grow the CCBS family, and so if you think you would additional strengths to our team, please get in touch.

www.ccbsg.co.uk





Sweeney Miller Law advises ambitious property firm on lease of popular Grey Street café

North East commercial property, hospitality and leisure operator Sayturk Group has successfully taken over the lease of 93 Grey Street, Newcastle with the help of leading commercial law firm Sweeney Miller

The premises, currently the home of European-style café bar Société, occupies a prestigious location at the top of Newcastle's famous Grey Street, a short distance from Grey's Monument and the Theatre Royal.

Sayturk Group, headed by CEO Zafer Saygilier, is a high-growth property development, hospitality and leisure operator based in the North East and manages several individually designed sites, including concept bars, latenight venues, pubs, cafes, and luxury holiday apartments. The acquisition of Société adds to the ongoing expansion of the Group's already impressive leisure portfolio.

The ambitious property firm was advised by the Commercial Property team at leading commercial law firm Sweeney Miller Law, who successfully negotiated the new lease and business purchase, as well as dealing with the licensing for the premises.

Commenting on the transaction, Sweeney Miller Managing Partner, Surbhi Vedhara, said: "It was a pleasure to work alongside such an enterprising business with plans for continuous growth in the region. This will be a great addition to Sayturk Group's existing portfolio and the Grey Street hospitality scene as a whole.

My Sweeney Miller colleagues and I look forward to working with Zafer and the team again on their next venture, and we are excited to see them continue to make an impact in the North East and beyond!"



Hay & Kilner promotions for **Kerry & Tom**

Two solicitors who trained with North East law firm Hay & Kilner have taken their next steps up the career ladder with the Newcastleheadquartered practice.

Kerry Kelso and Tom Bridge have moved into partner and associate positions respectively, in recognition of their contributions to the success of both their departments and the wider firm.

Kerry joined Hay & Kilner as a paralegal prior to being offered a place on the firm's training scheme in 2002 and subsequently qualifying as a solicitor.

Based at the firm's Wallsend office, she has worked in its family law team right through her career and has developed a particular specialism in public and private children's law matters.

Kerry has been on the Law Society Children's Panel for the last decade, is a member of the UK association of specialist family lawyers, Resolution, and is recommended in legal industry bible, the Legal 500.

Tom graduated from Newcastle University in 2015 with a first in English Language and returned to the North East two years later after completing his professional qualifications to take up his Hay & Kilner training contract.

After finishing his training in 2019, Tom became a permanent part of the firm's expert private client team, and now provides advice on a wide range of matters, including wills, trusts, tax planning, Powers of Attorney, and estate administration.

He was recently shortlisted in the Rising Star category of the 2023 LawNet Awards, which aims to recognise individuals who will make an outstanding contribution to their firm in the future.

Law firm launches Sunderland office

One of the North East's longest established law firms has officially opened its Sunderland office at an event attended by dignitaries, clients and colleagues.

Samuel Phillips Law moved into its Wearside HQ at the North East BIC during the summer, and has officially marked its opening with a celebration event attended by scores of partners. Employees from the 104-year-old firm, including owner Sufe Miah, were joined by the leader of Sunderland City Council, Councillor Graeme Miller, and the local authority's executive director of city development, Peter McIntyre, who have welcomed Samuel Phillips' commitment to growing its presence across the region.

Headquartered in Newcastle since its inception in 1919, the business, which is already seeing the benefit of its move into the city, has long held ambitions to open a base on Wearside. Sharon Boyd, Group Chief Executive at Samuel Phillips Law, said the firm was now able to better serve its Sunderland clients, with a presence in an established business location.





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Is a Lasting Power of **Attorney** now more important than a will?

According to Martin Lewis, in many instances, yes!

Don't forget that a Lasting Power of Attorney is used during your lifetime, it is not used once you have died. You appoint attorneys to manage your affairs if you are unable to do so either temporarily or permanently.

You may not be able to cope because you have lost mental capacity or because you are physically ill. You may have cancer and be unable to deal with paying your bills, your bank, social services or care home provider.

Unfortunately, if you do not have a Lasting Power of Attorney in place, then it may become impossible for your family to immediately assist you financially or to make decisions about your healthcare needs.

Increasingly our clients at Emmersons Solicitors are asking their attorneys to step in and help run their affairs when they are simply too tired to manage things themselves. They have not lost mental capacity. However, they do not have the

energy to battle their way through the banking system, or to sit on hold for hours at a time trying to speak to a human being at their electricity or telephone company.

On the other hand some of our clients need help from their attorney on an urgent basis;

What would happen if you suddenly took ill? Would your bank immediately freeze your

Do you realise that if it comes to the attention of your bank that you have any type of mental impairment then they can freeze your bank accounts in order to protect you?

Many families are finding that they need to provide urgent care for their relatives as a result of a medical crisis. Unfortunately, without a Lasting Power of Attorney, those family members are unable to access their relatives' bank accounts.

If this happens to you, and there is no Lasting Power of Attorney, then it can take up to a year for a family member to be appointed as a Deputy under the Court of Protection. In the meantime, it would be left to your family to find monies to help you. This is adding to what is already a stressful situation.

What if you can't access your pension? Do you use drawdown from your pension?

Did you know that some pension providers are refusing to take instructions from their older clients unless a family member acts as an Attorney under a Lasting Power of Attorney.

Pension advice is complicated and pension providers are worried that their clients do not have sufficient understanding when it comes to using their pension pot.

If you use your annual drawdown as a source of income, you may find that you are suddenly



blocked from accessing this money. It's a frightening prospect!

At what age is your pension provider suddenly going to decide that you no longer understand the advice given to you when you ask to drawdown vour funds?

Thanks to the efforts of Martin Lewis many more people are now making a Lasting Power of Attorney. Perhaps now is the time for you and your family to have the Lasting Power of Attorney conversation.

If you require any further advice please don't hesitate to contact me our our award winning team at enquiries@emmersons-solicitors.co.uk



Have you made your **Lasting Power of** Attorney yet?

Who Will Help You?

What will happen if you can no longer manage your affairs?

A Lasting Power of Attorney is used by your family or friends to organise your finances and health requirements if you are unable to do so.

You may not be able to cope because you have lost mental capacity or because you are physically ill. You may have cancer and be unable to cope with paying your bills or dealing with your bank, social services or care home provider.

Unfortunately, if you do not have a Lasting Power of Attorney in place, then it may become impossible for your family to assist you financially or make decisions about your healthcare needs.

Please don't make things more difficult for your family. You should plan ahead so that they can help you when you need it most.

> Why not ask us for a No Obligation LASTING POWER OF ATTORNEY appointment.

Contact us now on 0191 284 6989 or enquiries@emmersonssolicitors.co.uk

Home visits are often available.

emmersons-solicitors.co.uk

The Big Interview...

From a department of one to 23

Richard Swinbank, Director, EMG Solicitors.

"When I arrived at EMG Solicitors in 2015, my role was to head a department which specialises in residential property. It was a small department...me."



That was how Richard Swinbank described his first experience of EMG Solicitors when we caught up with him at their head office in Durham. "Since then we've grown to a team of 23 in the residential property section of the firm and I'm delighted to say that it will continue to grow for the foreseeable future."

Richard, who originally comes from Woking in Surrey, studied law at De Montfort University in Leicester, although when he was at school his career aim was to join the Army. He was talked out of it by his parents. After graduating in 2007, he secured a job in the North East...and he's never left.

"It's a region that you fall in love with. I initially worked in Sunderland, but before joining EMG and moving to our offices on the outskirts of Durham, I'd worked in Stockton and Chester le Street...all of which is handy when you deal with residential property because, especially in the early days, you get a broad experience of property types and the sort of services that clients are looking for.

The majority of work in our residential department involves the buying, selling and refinancing of houses. Of course, this involves talking to clients to ascertain precisely what they are wanting. Even from when I was at school, I've enjoyed talking to people and it's helped me develop strong communication skills. This allows me to build up a rapport with clients when advising them on their transaction. Communication is something that we impress on all of the team here at EMG Solicitors. Anything to do with legal matters is important...and clients generally recognise that. This can be an extremely stressful time for them so we need to put them at ease and effectively lead them by the hand. This is something I enjoy managing and has become a trademark of how we operate here at EMG. Client care is essential and we're proud of the reputation that we've built."

Richard's property department isn't the only one that's growing.

"I arrived in 2015 when the company was still quite small having been formed the previous year by current Managing Director Emma Gaudern and Director Jemma Morland. Today our number of colleagues is approaching the 150 mark and, as with residential property department, the company will continue to grow. We now have offices in Gosforth, Penrith, Darlington and Manchester in addition to our head office on the Abbeywoods Business Park in Durham City. We're also steadily seeing an increase in the amount of national work we do.

The residential department is incredibly busy because interest rates and inflation have stabilised and are now starting to fall. Clients are becoming increasingly confident about the buying and selling of property and we're very close to the levels of business that we saw before the Covid pandemic. Remortgaging, refinancing and equity release are extremely popular, and the buy-to-let-market is very strong. We act for small and large developers as well as for individual clients either buying their first home or selling a large estate.

I wouldn't say that I've seen everything, but it's not far off.

And that is part of the beauty of doing this job within EMG Solicitors. Almost every day will see a new challenge arise...no two days are the same. There's a relaxed atmosphere within EMG but everyone works hard and knows what they have to do. We operate an open door policy at the firm which means that any queries from colleagues can be dealt with quickly so that the client's transaction will run smoothly."

In other words, if you would like any legal assistance when it comes to residential property, the best idea is to contact Richard Swinbank and his team at EMG Solicitors. You can find out more details about what EMG can do for you. No matter what legal requirement you have, they will be able to help.

Visit www.emgsolicitors.com for contact details as well as information regarding the services on offer at EMG Solicitors.



A raft of Employment Law changes

Sean Garmory is a Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Sean details the recent Employment Law legislation passed which employers should be aware of.

In 2019, the Government proposed a range of Employment Law reforms in the form of the Employment Bill. Although this Bill was eventually dropped by the Government, a range of Private Member's Bills covering the areas initially set out in the Bill have since been supported by the Government and have led to a range of new Employment Laws of which employers should be aware.

Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act

The current flexible working regime is to be made more flexible with the introduction of a number of changes which include:

- allowing employees to make two requests in any 12-month period;
- removing the requirement for employees to explain the impact the request would have on the employer; and
- reducing the period for the employer to make a decision from three months to two months.

Employers are now also required to consult with an employee before a flexible working request is rejected.

It is expected that flexible working will become a "day one right" through secondary legislation.

We expect this Act to come into force in July 2024

Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act

While not included in the Employment Bill, changes in this area have been anticipated for some time. The amendments in this Act create a new active duty on employers to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual harassment of their employees. Employment Tribunals will also have the power to award a 25% uplift to sexual harassment compensation where this duty is breached.



Amendments to reintroduce a duty for employers to prevent third-party harassment were rejected during the parliamentary process. This Act will come into force in October 2024.

Workers (Predictable Terms and Conditions) Act

Similar to the regime for requesting flexible working, workers and agency workers will be able to request a predictable working pattern. This will exist where there is a lack of predictability in relation to work carried out for the employer, the change requested relates to the work pattern and the purpose of the application is to receive a more predictable pattern.

"Predictability" is not defined in the Act (other than a presumption that a fixed-term contract of less than a year is unpredictable). Workers on zero-hours contracts or casual arrangements will likely be covered by this new regime.

Workers will be able to make 2 applications in a 12-month period. If a flexible working request is for the purpose of receiving a more predictable working pattern, this request will count towards the cap. The employer has 1 month to make a decision on the application and cannot reject the application unless a "prescribed ground" applies (such as the burden of additional costs or detrimental impact on other aspects of the employer's business).

The Act contains protections for workers should the employer fail to comply with the statutory regime, if workers are subjected to unlawful detriment or they are dismissed for exercising or seeking to exercise this right.

We expect further regulations in this area (including an expected length of service requirement), it is expected that this Act will come into force in September 2024.

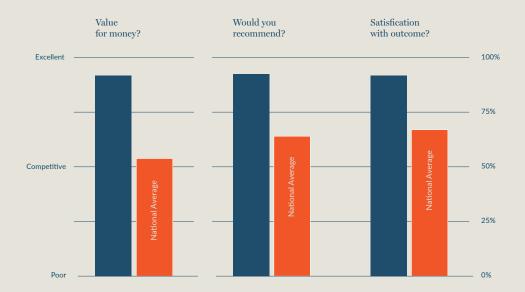
Keep aware of further changes

These reforms are not the only pieces of legislation passed in recent months. For example, the introduction of an entitlement to one week's unpaid carers leave, the provision of paid neonatal care leave and the extension of protection for those on maternity leave (and other forms of family leave) from redundancy. Legislation enacting these changes are expected in both 2024 and 2025 and employers should be wary of the constantly changing Employment Law landscape.

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

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Settle for average? Not likely!







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Solicitor of the month

Emma Canham

Solicitor, Jacksons Law Firm

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I think I've always wanted to be a solicitor. There's nothing else I've really wanted to be from when I was asked in High School. I asked my parents about it and they said, 'this is a good, stable career'. Criminal law has always interested me as well, so I did start off working in criminal law. If I hadn't been a solicitor I would probably have been a policewoman. It hasn't been an easy journey – I graduated in 2010 and had a really good mentor, Paul Hanratty, who helped me get to where I wanted to be.

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

I'm an associate solicitor now at Jacksons in the family team and I enjoy the client contact I have. I'm a personable person and getting to speak to clients every day and going through their case is great – and it's different every day. You don't really get two cases the same, so you're constantly coming across new challenges and learning new things.

What is your proudest business achievement?

It's difficult to pinpoint a specific achievement. A lot of them are around outcomes for clients. If you've had a particularly difficult case and you've reached a good outcome for your client, it's a good feeling. Also, being made an associate at the end of last year was quite a highlight. It's nice to know that Jacksons recognise your loyalty to the firm and that you're doing a good job.

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

The industry has evolved quite a lot in the past decade. In terms of family law, we now have same-sex marriage, and those marriages can also end in divorce. The age for marriage has also changed. [Last April, it was raised to 18 from 16 or 17 with parental consent]. The no-fault divorce has also come into effect recently, so you don't have to point the finger or blame the other party if you want to get divorced. It is making it easier for couples to divorce without hostility. There are campaigns to change the laws for cohabiting couples who separate. Many think that there is a such a thing as a "common law spouse" and that they are entitled to the same financially as if they were married. This is not the case and it can leave many people struggling financially upon separation. I can imagine there will be many more changes in the next decade. I think family law will continue to evolve and keep everyone on their toes!

What are you currently working on?

We have a vast number of cases ranging from divorce and finance involving high net worth individuals, to non-molestation orders, pre and post-nuptial agreements and a lot of cases involving children. There is a huge variety of cases we are working on across our family department.

Tell us about the team you work with?

We have got a great team. I work with Christine McVay in the Newcastle office and she's excellent and very experienced. She's got a great reputation. It's also good working with Katy Moody in our Stockton office. We are a close-knit team and call each other often to discuss cases. It's great if there's anything you need advice on or you want a second opinion.

What advice would you give to your 18 year old self?

Don't give up! Keep believing in yourself! It's not been an easy journey to get to where I am today. When I graduated in 2010 there weren't many training contracts and I started as a legal secretary and eventually after a few years of being a paralegal and a police station representative I managed to get a training contract, so I'm pleased that I didn't give up!

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Hopefully, I will still be here at Jacksons and I still think I will be working in family law. I've got a little boy who's three now so he will be a teenager!

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

I had to give this a lot of thought! Freddie Mercury and George Michael would be on my list – how amazing would that be!? I think they are both music legends and growing up, my parents were huge fans of Queen. Lady Hale [Baroness Brenda Hale of Richmond] is also such an inspiring woman – she's a well known name in family law who's been involved in huge cases and I had the pleasure of briefly meeting her recently at a conference. I'd also invite Deborah Meaden, from Dragons' Den. She's an amazing and inspiring businesswoman and she seems quite tough, but I can imagine she would be fun to have a conversation with.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I love horse riding. I used to own a horse but unfortunately, she had to be put down. I used to do dressage and show jumping. You can really unwind and let your mind relax when you're out with horses. My little boy keeps me busy now most of the time and I enjoy spending time with family and friends.

Favourite book and boxset?

I love anything by Martina Cole – I love crime and thrillers and find her writing is brilliant. With box sets, I'm torn between *Friends*, as those series are always comforting or *Prison Break!* Both of those box sets are great and Matthew Perry, who sadly died recently, was considered for my top four dinner guests!

www.jacksons-law.com



Bridging the (skills) gap

In a constantly changing business world, it has never been more important for your employees to keep their skills up to date, whether to grow in their current roles or expand their knowledge base for a promotion.



Leading commercial law firm Muckle LLP dispels some of the myths around upskilling and discusses how your employees can build their skills with ease.

Innovations in technology will result in new skills becoming more in demand, whilst other skills may drop off the map entirely. In fact, LinkedIn Learning's '2023 Workplace Learning Report' predicts that job skill sets are set to change by 50% by 2027.

One of the main ways to ensure your staff are ahead of the game is by upskilling them, but there are some preconceptions that can make this seem challenging.

Here are some of the top myths around upskilling to consider...

Myth #1 - Upskilling is a one-off

Upskilling isn't as simple as going on a course and then calling it a day; it is a continuous cycle of bespoke learning and

Amy Sergison, employment partner at Muckle, is no stranger to helping businesses upskill their workforce – she regularly plans and delivers employment law training to a range of businesses.

She says: "As an employer, it's important that your staff have regular access to training options to ensure their knowledge is up to date. At Muckle, we have an ongoing programme of training available annually, so that our clients can pick and choose topics that are most relevant to them".

Myth #2 - Upskilling only applies to formal qualifications

Although upskilling can include formal qualifications, it covers a much wider remit of training and can be delivered in a range of

Upskilling covers both hard and soft skills. Technical, or 'hard', skills, are specific skills needed to do a particular job, which can include using certain programs or software as well as task-based skills. 'Soft' skills are linked to people's personalities and can apply to a range of roles and responsibilities.



Amy agrees, saying: "The training we deliver for clients tends to be technical, but some of our events focus on soft skills, like our HR book club. Regardless, we've found that clients enjoy a mixture of training formats, ranging from 1-hour training sessions that anyone can book, to be poke in-person workshops for a particular client".

Myth #3 - Upskilling is only needed to change jobs

Research has shown the opposite – that skills training is a key factor in people staying in their jobs, particularly young people. For example, a 2022 Go1 survey showed that 78% of people surveyed would like to learn new skills in their role, but that 60% of young people left a job due to limited training opportunities.

In fact, upskilling can even go one step further and, by improving your internal skillsets, ease your reliance on external advisers, saving you time and money and helping your employees thrive. Amy says, "All of our training is designed to give employees the knowledge and tools that they need to handle issues inhouse, rather than fall back on external advisers. This increases employees' confidence in their roles and helps businesses run more smoothly".

Myth #4 - Upskilling is costly

Whilst upskilling can be costly – in both money and time – the costs can very much outweigh the benefits. For employers, it is more cost-effective to upskill existing employees rather than hire and train new ones. For employees, taking a little bit of time out of their day-to-day roles can help them become more efficient, saving time in the long run.

Additionally, low cost doesn't equal low quality. Amy says: "Free training is still a great option, regardless of the size of your training budget. We make sure that we offer training from a range of price points to ensure we try to cover as many skill levels as

Enhance your skills with Muckle

Investing in a continuous programme of upskilling benefits both employers and employees. Employers stay competitive by having highly skilled workers, whilst employees are empowered and more comfortable in their jobs.

Current upskilling opportunities from Muckle include charity trustee training and a workplace investigation masterclass, with more events planned.

Visit www.muckle-llp.com/events/ to find out more.



Five reasons to use a solicitor for your Will

Lydia McCaslin, head of wills, probate and trusts at Mincoffs Solicitors, explores the benefits of engaging with a solicitor to prepare a will – and the potential risks associated with other options.

While it is often a task many choose to put off, most people understand the importance of making a will to ensure that wishes are accurately carried out after death and to provide security for loved ones left behind.

However, the process can be expensive and some people may have wondered if they could save themselves time and money by drafting a will without engaging a solicitor.

While this is an option, it is important to note that there are a number of reasons people choose to place their trust in solicitors when creating a will, with potential consequences if it is not handled correctly.

Expert advice

Whether dealing with a young couple who have just purchased their first home, or a divorcee with multiple assets overseas, solicitors specialising in wills, probate and trusts can offer trusted, expert advice tailored to each client's particular circumstances. A full service firm, such as Mincoffs, also benefits from the ability to consult colleagues working in corporate or family law who can weigh in on more complex cases if needed.

Ensures validity

Like any other legal document, a will must meet certain conditions in order to be legally valid. A will created without the advice and guidance of a solicitor may open itself up to challenges of its validity, which could ultimately result in it being classed or considered as invalid after death. In these circumstances, assets would be distributed according to intestacy rules and, as a result, may not reflect the wishes of the deceased.

Awareness of broader issues

While some wills can be simple and straightforward, others require more attention. When these circumstances arise, solicitors are highly trained in

how to manage them in the most efficient way for their clients. This can include dealing with pensions, life insurance, foreign assets, complex family structures or inheritance tax, among others.

Regulated and insured

Unlike will writing services, law firms are regulated by the Law Society and are required to have professional indemnity insurance, which means there are protections in place for clients if something goes wrong. For example, if someone instructs a law firm to draft their will and then years later the business closes down, it must still follow specific requirements for the safekeeping of clients' documents even if the firm ceases to exist

Peace of mind

A will is one of the most important documents a person will ever have to sign and will be relied on after death. Knowing that assets will be distributed according to a person's wishes and that loved ones will be taken care of is a huge relief to many, so it is imperative that a will outlines this clearly. A solicitor knows the right questions to ask and how to draft the document so it doesn't leave anything open to interpretation further down the line.

For friendly, sensitive advice about writing or updating a will, contact Lydia McCaslin, Head of Wills, Probate and Trusts on probate@mincoffs.co.uk or visit www.mincoffs.co.uk/services/wills-probate-trusts

"On the first day of Christmas, my Solicitor said to me...": Sweeney Miller Law answers twelve business client FAQs

Sweeney Miller Law's Surbhi Vedhara responds to the 12 most asked questions the firm receives from business clients.

1. The lease on my business premises ends soon – what are my renewal options?

If both the landlord and tenant are happy to continue with the existing terms, these can be negotiated informally; if either side wishes to initiate formal renewal or make changes, a Section 25 or 26 notice should be served. For both sides, renewal is an opportunity to renegotiate the best terms. However, any renewals made under the Landlord and Tenant 1954 Act will be largely on the same terms as the current lease (other than the amount of rent).

2. Do I need a lawyer to go through and negotiate a business lease?

Whether you're a landlord or a tenant, a well drafted lease sets out the agreed terms for both. Leases are complex legal documents and a poorly written lease, or one with mistakes or that is unclear leading to a dispute, could cost you far more in the long run.

3. How do I sell the business I've owned for years?

Start by thinking about who is going to buy it – competitor, people already in the business, or a third-party investor? Will you be selling individual named assets of the business (asset sale) or will you be selling your shares in the company (share sale)? The business then needs to be prepared for sale - ensuring the company structure, financials and leases are all in order to maximise its value. Tax implications also need to be considered at an early stage.

4. What should I look out for when buying a business?

Do your research and get the best expert advice, be it from accountants, surveyors, funders, or lawyers. Examine the business' history, financial performance, projections, reasons for sale, disputes, regulatory implications, stock, goodwill, premises, and staffing. Having advised hundreds of businesses, we know what to look out for, the likely hurdles and how to deal with them.

5. How do I buy a freehold business premises instead of renting?

If you are looking to buy a commercial property, expert advice can ensure you negotiate the best terms, satisfy the lender's strict requirements and have the right paperwork. Be clear on the best strategy – for example, is it more beneficial for you or your company to buy it and what are the tax implications?

6. Can I use my pension to buy property?

Some pensions, such as SIPPs, can be used to buy commercial properties. It can be tax efficient to buy a property using your pension pot and lease it back to your company. Rental income paid by the operating company into your SIPP is over and above the annual pension cap leading to additional tax savings. As pensions are complex, it is important to get expert help from financial advisers, lawyers and surveyors.

7. If I retire, how can my employees buy the shares in my company?

A good option is a Management Buyout (MBO) - selling the business to management or key employees, after all they know the business better than anyone. The process varies widely depending on the business, so advice from experienced legal advisers and corporate finance specialists from the planning stage will give you the best chance of a seamless and positive outcome for you and the new owners.

8. Should I get help with changing my alcohol premises licence?

Depending on the change, you'll need to apply for a major or minor variation with the local council. Licensing laws are stringent, and an experienced licensing lawyer can ensure you make the right application with the right paperwork, reducing the risk of costly delays and appeals that impact your business.

9. How can I refinance my commercial property portfolio with a new lender?

Refinancing can be a sensible financial decision for business owners looking to grow, possibly by reducing mortgage payments or renegotiating terms to free up cash. Each bank has its own requirements and you need someone on your side who can navigate the complexities and jargon. Before refinancing, consider maximising any equity from your portfolio; for example, titles could be split, and individual units remortgaged rather than mortgaging a full block of properties to create more equity.

10. I'm acquiring a competitor but don't know where to begin!

Due diligence, both financial and legal, is vital to ensure you are getting the best value and the right paperwork needs to be in place for things like premises, directors and business ownership. There may also be financing implications. It is important to have a team of experts to look for and deal with problems you'd never thought of!

11. Can I forfeit my tenant's lease for not paying rent?

Generally, only if the existing lease includes a forfeiture clause; however, this should be a last resort. If this is a first-time occurrence, explore restructuring payments, or a 'payment holiday'. Once the property is empty the rental income will stop unless you have another tenant waiting. You may also be responsible for Council rates following repossession, timing is crucial to avoid an empty property rates bill.

12. Should I use a limited company when buying a property portfolio?

There are pros and cons – there may be tax and commercial benefits, however, lenders can be reluctant and may require personal guarantees. The end goal should often be the starting point. Are you acquiring properties for retirement income or to pass wealth to the next generation? Speak to a team of experienced tax advisers and property lawyers to advise on the best route and guide you through the process.

Expert advice

These are just a few examples and as each case is unique, they should not be taken as legal advice. If you are a busy business owner or property investor looking for answers to your business questions, call 0345 900 5401, email enquiries@sweeneymiller.co.uk or visit sweeneymiller.co.uk





Taking 'reasonable steps' to prevent discrimination in the workplace

By Sarah Furness, Partner in the specialist Employment Team at Hay & Kilner



Among the many responsibilities that employers have is a responsibility to do all they can to prevent discrimination in the workplace.

Discrimination happens when less favourable treatment occurs because of one of the nine 'protected characteristics' identified in the Equality Act 2010.

These are age, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, disability, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, and gender reassignment.

The key thing employers need to know - and for them to act on in advance - is the fact that any act of discrimination carried out by an employee in the course of their

employment is treated as having also been done by the employer, regardless of whether the employee's acts were done with the employer's knowledge or approval.

In a recent employment tribunal case, for example, the question of whether using a gendered swearword to insult a transgender staff member constituted discrimination was considered.

The tribunal found that the incident didn't actually occur, but in doing so, it provided some useful guidance on the 'reasonable

steps' an employer can take to prevent discrimination in the workplace and therefore defend discrimination claims. It is for the employer to provide that it did everything it could to prevent its employees committing discriminatory acts, which can often be difficult.

This particular tribunal found that the employer took the following 'reasonable steps' because:

- It had equal opportunities and harassment policies in place which were shared with agencies that supplied contract workers and included as part of the induction process.
- Staff were encouraged to report any concerns.
- The employee's manager had, to some degree, investigated the complaint she had made.

However, in order for the employer to have fully satisfied the 'reasonable steps' defence, the tribunal found that the following additional steps could have been taken:

- Regular reviews of policies should have taken place and it should have been made clear that they apply to agency workers as well as direct employees.
- A focus on equality and inclusion in workplace policies, rather than on equality alone.
- Policies should have been readily available to staff and the employer should have ensured they were understood.
- Employee representative groups could have been set up, for example an LGBTQ+ group.
- The employer should have raised awareness of equal opportunities generally, but especially transgender awareness.
- Training days and workshops on inclusive communications should have been held.

As with many employment law issues, full preparation for situations which might occur in the workplace is the key to avoiding issues in the future and all North East employers would be wise to take heed of the tribunal's guidance.

Getting expert advice in making sure that all your relevant workplace policies are fully up to date and holding regular equality, diversity and inclusion training are two key ways to minimise the risk of a business having to face an employment tribunal claim.

For further information and advice on all aspects of developing and implementing workplace policies, support with training, or any aspect of employment law, please contact Sarah Furness at sarah. furness@hay-kilner.co.uk or on 0191 232 8345.



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Lawyer of the month...

Victoria Walton

Partner and Head of the Commercial Property Team, Swinburne Maddison

What were your career ambitions growing up?

From an early age, I knew I wanted to be successful in my career. I briefly toyed with being a vet or an accountant, but I was always interested in being a solicitor.

I had my heart set on being a family lawyer and it wasn't until I started working at Swinburne Maddison, and my training contract was largely property focused, that I realised that I enjoyed it. I haven't considered doing anything else since.

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

I wear three hats! Partner, Lawyer and Head of the Commercial Property team.

As well as having my own caseload, I am responsible for overseeing a team working on a full range of commercial property and development matters. I take a huge amount of satisfaction from working collaboratively with clients to understand their commercial objectives and driving factors and putting a plan in place with them to achieve it.

It is also a pleasure to play a role in the development of the team and see them thrive in their careers. There is nothing better than seeing someone's excitement at their own success, particularly when you have seen the effort that has gone into achieving it.

What is your proudest business achievement?

I was appointed as a Partner in 2006 and I am proud that I have been able to play some part in helping the firm grow to the size and stature that it has today.

It goes without saying that winning Property Law Firm of the Year in 2022 was an incredible feeling as well as being recognised by The Legal 500 as a Top Tier firm for Commercial Property.

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

Technology has greatly advanced and that will absolutely continue. Artificial Intelligence will have a big part to play and as scary as change can be for some, we must embrace it to help our business and clients thrive.

What are you currently working on?

Currently, I am working with a number of clients on a variety of exciting projects.

We are ready to complete a third residential development site acquisition this year for a long-standing client, as well as working on several other development sites that had stalled due to nutrient neutrality considerations.

Tell us about the team you work with?

I'm very fortunate to work with a brilliant team of people at Swinburne Maddison. One of our Core Values is collaboration. This means that no matter how much we grow, we will continue to work across all departments of our business to ensure our clients receive the very best advice in a joined-up approach.

We have a mix of team members who have spent their entire career with us and those who have joined more recently, with new members being encouraged to bring different ideas and experiences to the firm. There is a real energy within the team. It is inspiring to see how much everyone genuinely cares about their clients, the work that they do and the effort that is put in to achieve great results.

What advice would you give to your 18-year-old self?

Firstly, lose the perm!

I would reassure myself that it is ok to not know everything from day one. Also, don't restrict your knowledge to purely legal matters – develop as a person beyond that so you can be a rounded professional adviser.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I have been at Swinburne Maddison for 24 years and I fully expect to be here in 10 years. If the past 10 years are anything to go by, I expect that we will have continued to grow and embrace change. It's truly exciting to even imagine where we could be.

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

Julie Andrews, Hugh Jackman (on condition he brings his tap shoes), Freddie Mercury and Sir Tim Rice.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I spend a lot of time doing crafty things with my daughter. She has also inherited my love of musicals, so we often go to the theatre or watch our favourites at home on repeat.

I also love being outside, usually walking, swimming or paddle boarding and have recently started scuba diving again.

Favourite book and box set?

My favourite book has to be *The Night Before Christmas*. My Dad used to read it to me and my brother and now I love reading it to my daughter. I don't have a favourite boxset, but I am currently rewatching *Motherland*. I can definitely see traits of myself in one of the characters, but I am not saying which one!

www.swinburnemaddison.co.uk





Cancern Network brings together key stakeholders to improve cancer care

Cancern North, a collaborative network comprising nearly 140 voluntary and community organisations involved in the treatment, care, and research into cancer, recently hosted its inaugural event, aimed at enhancing cancer care and support in the North East and North Cumbria. This landmark gathering saw the active participation of professionals from the NHS, MacMillan, and local government bodies, united by a shared commitment to improving holistic care for cancer patients and their families.

Chair of Cancern North, Maggie Bailey who is based at Annitsford, North Tyneside, said: "This was a very important conference for everyone who has been or will be touched by cancer. The UK faces an alarming increase in cancer rates, with the highest incidence in the entire UK. This is all about how we can get better at what we are doing. We're looking at the priorities for the future, what direction we need to go in and how can we work with the NHS to provide the community care that's needed for cancer patients. We're already planning next year's event and we need to make this event accessible to the public to show them what we do and share our findings with social prescribing link workers and GP's.

"We are committed to fostering collaboration and sharing resources to enhance the cancer care landscape in the North East and North Cumbria. As we reflect on the success of our inaugural event, we are grateful for the support of all participants and look forward to a brighter future for cancer care in our region," added Maggie.

Guest of honour at the conference was footballer Peter Beardsley who pledged his help to many of the charities attending.

Sporting Wallsend collects for community

Sporting Wallsend, the nearly opened community hub at Wallsend Boys Club is running a Christmas appeal to gather toys and food together for local charity Walking With - an organisation that works with refugees.

Throughout December members and the local community can drop off new, unwrapped toys, long life food, tins and toiletries to the Christmas tree in the lobby of the Peter Olsen Community Hub, Kirkley Park, Wallsend: Mon - Thurs 5:30 - 7:00, Sat 9:00 - 11:00 & Sun 9:00 - 11:00am

The new community hub (POCH) opened in September and is starting to fill up with a wide variety of community activities - primarily indoor sports like table tennis and judo. The space is also perfect for corporate functions weddings, funerals, sports dinners, and talk-ins! Theres also a dance/keep fit studio available for hire with adjoining kitchen and toilets.

John Percival, GM at the Hub commented: 'We hope people will get involved with our Christmas appeal- Sporting Wallsend is all about community and what better way to head into the festive period than to give back.

Our new hub means we can go back to reaching out to all the community young and old. Look out for all the activities and clubs in 2024. If you fancy running a yoga class, cards club or hosting your family party here-just give us a call!! Sporting Wallsend Community Hub • 0191 2639490



North East charity garners global support

North East charity The Children's Foundation has unveiled its new outdoor education space after worldwide volunteer support from global tech company, Turnitin.

Turnitin, a company headquartered in the US with offices in Newcastle, gifted The Children's Foundation \$10,000 as part of its UK ACTivate scheme, allowing the charity to invest in resources to regenerate their original allotment site, invest in a second allotment space to increase the capacity of projects, and give more young people access to this essential resource. The donation will also fund eight young people from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain a Level 1 qualification and become more engaged with education as a whole.

Colleagues from Turnitin's UK, USA, and Australian offices took on the challenge of turning the second site, an unloved allotment in Coxlodge, into an essential space where children and young people can be themselves, mix with peers, build confidence and hopefully step back into formal education. The new site was unveiled by Zemina Hasham, chief customer officer at Turnitin, alongside volunteers from the project team and staff from The Children's Foundation.

The charity now operates a series of projects from the allotment, including Roots to Health, a project designed to specifically engage and support disadvantaged young people, 14-18 years old who are not engaged in education or training or are young people less likely to achieve a level one qualification in more standard subjects. The sessions run every week and develop a young person's ability to mix socially, make friends and learn new practical skills, whilst acquiring an accredited qualification (City & Guilds Level 1 Practical Horticulture).

Union Jab Boxing Club boss aims to go 25 rounds for Christmas fundraiser

Christmas is a time for good will and cheer- but its also a time to do 25 rounds in a boxing ring... or so Charlie Cooke from Union Jab thinks!

Union Jab wanted to come up a quirky idea to raise vital funds for the club - what better way to shine the light on boxing and raise some money then for the Head Coach and founder to go 25 rounds in the ring with some of his students!

On Wednesday 20th December they will host their 'Christmas bash' at Greenside community centre to raise funds to provide more inclusive boxing classes in the New Year. Charlie will box 25 rounds against any member wanting revenge or who feels they need to let out a little bit of the pent up frustrations we can all feel at this time of the year! Members can book a round for £2 (or more) to take on the Christmas Cracker that is Charlie Cooke! There will also be a raffle and refreshments on the night. Who will throw their Christmas hat in the ring and go for the knockout...? Come down on the 20th December and find out!

Union Jab Christmas Fundraiser, 20th December, Greenside Community Centre, 5pm onwards



Charity of the month...

"I first came to Kids Kabin when I was eight. I enjoyed doing anything creative, especially cooking and woodwork, but I was a quiet and shy kid, so coming along really helped me meet new people. I got really confident with cookery and ended up doing it at GCSE. I got the second top grade which was amazing."

These are the words of Courteney Cartwright, who is now embarking on a career after completing an apprenticeship in youthwork with Kids Kabin, a growing charity that's been a fixture in Walker, and other areas of Newcastle, for almost 30 years.

Having recently recruited its next Youthwork Apprentice, Kids Kabin's pace of change over the last five years has been rapid. In 2018 it expanded into Middlesbrough, and three pilot projects are in the works for new North East locations in 2024.

Partnership is key

It's partnership from within the community that's been key to this growth, which enables the developing Kids Kabin team to offer creative and practical activities including pottery, bike repair, woodwork and cooking to more than 1,400 children from low-income neighbourhoods each year, with a plan to exceed 2,000 by 2026.

Chief Officer Will Benson said: "We're fortunate to be part of many amazing communities, and because we have strong relationships with other charities, businesses, and with the families of our members, sometimes chance conversations lead to incredible things."

Case in point is Thirteen Housing Group, a longtime ally that was immediately supportive when Kids Kabin began planning its expansion into Middlesbrough, suggesting the perfect spot for a series of street workshops.

Will continued: "We'd had some success with pilot activities in response to a need for more positive activities for young people in an area that had seen a few problems, and Thirteen's local knowledge meant they really knew where we could be most valuable."

Fast forward to 2023 and the Middlesbrough team, led by Sue McBride, has outgrown its original premises and will soon move into what was a three-bedroom house with a garden, meaning it can offer more outdoor activities and welcome more members.









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Jill Finnan is Thirteen Housing's Community Coordinator, She said:

"Calls to the Anti-Social Behaviour team have decreased since Kids Kabin has been on the estate.'

Always open to new ways of working, Kids Kabin has developed a partnership with the Bykerheadquartered N21 performance marketing group, which approached the charity to offer support. In return for assistance with website design, Kids Kabin has run fun, creative pottery workshops for the N21 team.

In addition to leveraging such backing, over the last year, as a Weston Charity Award-winner, Kids Kabin has been part of the Pilotlight 360 mentoring scheme, setting short and long-term goals that lead to greater efficiencies - and will ultimately result in better outcomes for Kids Kabin's young members and their families. Will said: "We firmly believe in the philosophy behind Pilotlight - that communities are stronger when different sectors work together. We collaborate every day, with private sector organisations, schools and universities, and other charities. For example, Courteney's apprenticeship was co-hosted with The Bostey

youth centre in Walker.

"Doing this expands our capacity and reach, helping us make things better for people living in some of our most under-resourced neighbourhoods."

360° Advocacy

Courteney isn't the first Kids Kabin's member to come back as a volunteer or employee. Many become whole-life advocates for the organisation, with one, Noor Amer becoming North East Young Charity Champion in 2019. At the same time Kids Kabin was named the region's Small Charity of

Will said: "Kids Kabin benefits hugely from the ideas, energy and passion of volunteers, so it was special to share that celebration with Noor, and we're proud her brother continues to volunteer. We'll also be watching Courteney's career with interest as she continues to build both skill and confidence. This is what our work is about!"

Support Kids Kabin's work via its website at kidskabin.org.uk, or if you'd like to volunteer, collaborate on a future project, or have a challenge you think Kids Kabin could help you meet, get in touch with the team at admin@kidskabin.org.uk



North East Travel Insurance provider scoops national award

Sunderland based Just Travel Cover scooped a national award at last week's coveted Insurance Choice awards, run by Smart Money People.

The broker, who works with multiple insurers to help people of all ages and those with medical conditions find cover, was named 'Best Travel Insurance provider 2023' at the gala reveal which took place at the Underglobe in London.

Now in their eighth year, the awards are solely based on customer feedback and this year more than 60,000 votes were left in the shape of reviews on the Smart Money People website, where Just Travel Cover amassed hundreds of five-star comments.

Having beaten off stiff competition from some of the UK's biggest providers to win this award, Dale Robinson, Head of Marketing and Communications at Just Travel Cover said, "winning this award is a fantastic way to mark the end of a great year for us, after bouncing back from the Covid pandemic. We put our customers at the heart of everything we do, so with these awards being based on feedback, it's rewarding to be recognised for that commitment to first-class service".

Jacqueline Dewey, CEO of Smart Money People said: "As the post-pandemic world opens again, more and more people are needing travel insurance, Just Travel Cover has impressed its customers with its straightforward processes and friendly and knowledgeable staff. Along with competitively priced policies, Just Travel Cover has made travel insurance simple but incredibly effective. Congratulations, this win is

Working with travel agents, tour operators, charities and insurance brokers, Just Travel Cover is headquartered in Toward Road in Sunderland and has relationships with some of the world's leading insurers to be able to provide high quality Travel Insurance for people of all ages, specialising in cover for hundreds of pre-existing medical conditions.



Girls' football team sets a fund raising goal

A team of young female footballers are showing their prowess off and on the pitch – after setting themselves a mammoth fundraising goal.

Leam Rangers U13 girls – which has players from both Gateshead and Sunderland – are planning ahead for the next two years.

And with that in mind they've put together an ambitious 18 month proposal to make money for the 18-strong group, to pay for kit, equipment and to take part in tournaments – including one in Europe in 2025.

Eight of the girls - plus eight parents - have set up a fundraising committee, with the youngsters coming up with a range of ideas covering everything from a sponsored walk from the Stadium of Light to St James Park to a whole host of sports-related events.

"The girls and the parents have worked together to create a really amazing fundraising plan with lots of different ideas," said Stuart Pearson, Head Coach.

"It's really impressive and more so because of how much the girls are willing to get stuck in and do this for themselves.

"It's a fantastic experience for them, showing they can work as a team both on and off the pitch and will be an impressive achievement to add to their CVs in the future."

The aim is to hold regular smaller fundraising events as well as more ambitious challenges through the rest of this year and throughout 2024.

To date they have raised £6000 – 20 per cent of the £30,000 target.

Anyone who would like to support them can do so by contacting Stuart Pearson at lrcu13girls@gmail.com

Volunteers brave Storm Ciara at Stadium of Light to raise over £34,000 at Sunderland CEO Sleepout



Tens of thousands of pounds has been raised to help Sunderland's homeless after business leaders braved Storm Ciara to sleep out at the Stadium of Light.

Notable local business leaders huddled in their

sleeping bags at the ground as the North East was battered with heavy wind and rain.

However, they have so far managed to raise over £34,000 for a string of local charities tasked with helping the homeless this winter. Organiser Bianca Robinson said the event was an "incredible success".

"The weather was awful but the spirt of the group shone through," said Bianca, Chief Executive of CEO Sleepout.

"They were determined not to let the rain put a dampener on their night, and their efforts have raised money that will help hundreds of the most vulnerable people in Sunderland during the darkest and coldest months.

"It also provided the group with a taste of the unforgiving hardship thousands of rough sleepers face every single night. While the event doesn't aim to replicate what the homeless face, it hopefully gave the business community a greater understanding and appreciation as to how hard life on the street can be."

And with the money continuing to she hopes the final fundraising tally will surpass £40,000 thanks to match funding from some of the businesses that took part.



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Newcastle hospitals charity celebrates unforgettable connections in important campaign



its powerful, new campaign.

Celebrating the unforgettable people and moments, that form unique personal bonds between everyday people and staff members across all job roles at the Freeman Hospital, **Royal Victoria Infirmary, Northern Centre for** Cancer Care and across the community, the new campaign stars real-life patients, their families and the doctors, nurses, porters, midwives, cleaners and maintenance staff who proudly cared for them during their time in one of our hospitals.

The charity aims for the campaign to raise awareness of the excellent care provided within Newcastle Hospitals and to celebrate the unparalleled spirit, compassion, and character in the wider hospital community and our region.

Newcastle Hospitals Charity acts to improve the overall experience of the entire hospital community through a number of initiatives. from supporting the funding of cutting-edge

research to improvements and enhancements to communal areas and, through this, creating an environment where the hospital community can focus on what matters most.

Commenting on the campaign, Newcastle Hospitals Charity's Director, Teri Bayliss, said: "It is a key aim of our Charity to support the communities around our hospitals. We understand that being a visitor to one of our hospitals can come very unexpectedly, and we have made it our mission to support patients, their families and staff during these times for many years now".

"It is important to celebrate the unforgettable bonds that give people hope, strength, happiness and compassion when they need it most, and this campaign is a powerful way to shed some light on how, under the right conditions, our regional identity serves to strengthen that." Added Teri.

Stefan Lepkowski, featured in the campaign,

added: "My family and I have greatly benefited from the absolutely brilliant care provided by NHS staff at the RVI, as well as from a number of initiatives funded by The Charity following our son's accident.

It is incredible to reflect on the unique relationship my family and I formed with Dr Asif Hasan and his team, who helped save my son's life. He will forever hold a special place in our family's hearts, and I am glad this campaign captured that unforgettable bond whilst raising important funds for Newcastle Hospitals Charity".

The campaign is currently live across out-ofhome advertising, print and various digital platforms, including the charity's social media channels.

For more information about Newcastle Hospital's Charity, visit: charity.newcastle-hospitals.nhs.uk

12 Days of Christmas with Percy Hedley



The Percy Hedley Foundation celebrated its 70 birthday in 2023 + and we wanted to showcase just 12 of the amazing things from around the Foundation this year.

Across two schools, two college campuses, an adult learning programme, and four residential homes, we support over 650 people every week and employ over 1000 staff

2024 is another year full of events, activities and fun, so if you or your business would like to get involved please scan this QR code and complete the short form for a visit!







Cycle To Space Fundraising Challenge













#teampercyhedley Great North Run

















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North East engineering firm accelerates RAF's Net Zero journey



Northern Engineering Solutions is helping the Royal Air Force (RAF) accelerate its journey to net zero by developing an innovative treatment system for waste jet fuel.

The process engineering firm based in North Shields is working with the RAF Innovation Fund and RAF Brize Norton on Project PICASSO - an effluent treatment system that uses bacteria to rapidly break down waste fuel for safe, sustainable and straightforward disposal or reuse.

Speaking about the project, Simon Taylor, Director of Northern Engineering Solutions, said: "One of the main challenges the RAF faces is the safe disposal of contaminated waste fuel, particularly during military operations overseas. The development and deployment of this new technology will ensure that waste fuel can

be treated safely and sustainably on airfields worldwide.

"As an SME, we are extremely proud to be at the forefront of supporting the RAF's journey to net zero. We are always looking at ways to create forward-thinking engineering solutions that can positively impact our planet."

The system will support the Ministry of Defence (MOD) in tackling climate change and reducing environmental pollution by using naturally occurring micro-organisms to break down unused and waste hydrocarbons. A common byproduct of this process is carbon dioxide (CO_2), which is typically released into the atmosphere, where it contributes to global warming. In this instance, the CO_2 is captured in a solid form that can be recycled.

Ultimately, the goal is to deploy the system to treat a range of waste oils and lubricants at the point of generation. This will simplify waste management during operations and enhance environmental stewardship.

Project PICASSO builds on a previous collaboration between Northern Engineering Solutions, Northumbria University and the RAF, which received funding from The Defence and

Security Accelerator (DASA).

Group Captain Maurice Dixon, RAF lead for Climate Change Adaptation and Sustainability, said: "Project PICASSO is a valuable technology innovation that will simplify waste management on deployed operations, and move towards the RAF reducing its environmental impacts, meeting Government Greening Commitment targets on waste reduction, and delivering our climate change adaptation aims. The RAF's Rapid Capability Office is a critical part, and excellent example, of how the RAF can work innovatively in collaboration with industry and academia, and the partnership with Northern Engineering and Northumbria University has been critical to Project PICASSO advancing in technology maturity."

Northern Engineering Solutions specialises in mechanical, electrical and process engineering (MEP) solutions, with a particular focus on effluent treatment systems, high and ultrahigh-purity process pipework, and cleanrooms. Clients include Pragmatic, CPI, Sterling Pharma, and De La Rue.

www.northernengineering.co.uk



Did your 2023 live up to all your expectations?

I am a massive advocate of reflecting and planning, and I really hope you are reflecting on a brilliant year both from a personal and business perspective.

If it's been less than ideal 12 months, what can you do to make 2024 a better, more productive, and successful year for you.

Here are a few things to reflect on and a reason why planning your goals in December (not January) might just help you.

What planning did you do and how well did it work?

Firstly, you did have a plan, didn't you?

A common challenge we see is people not stopping and investing time in a plan for themselves or their business, I really hope this wasn't you. If you had a plan skip to the next idea. If you didn't have a plan, please read on...

The process of planning involves weighing

up ideas and exploring alternatives. You can even consider the benefits or challenges that doing nothing might create in your plan. You can look at plan as a way of consolidating and documenting all of your thoughts, ideas and aspirations. This very process will help you create focus and clarity on what you really want to achieve.

Focus and clarity

These two simple words can really help you achieve your goals. Once you crystalise your thinking and identify the goals that are most important to you, have them written down and share them with someone who will keep you accountable. This process makes you far more likely to achieve them, rather than having a vague aspiration in the back of your mind. All elements are critical here, the thought, the written note and sharing with someone who will check in on you.

Reflect on your progress towards your goals

You need to get into a habit of being honest (but not modest) about what you have achieved. If you do some great things that move you closer to your goals spend a little time reflecting on this and congratulate yourself on your hard work. If you haven't made any significant progress, then spend time reflecting on what got in the way, what stopped you and how you might conquer these barriers. One of the biggest barriers I come across is people putting off working on their goals in the misguided belief that they will infinitely better tomorrow, next week or next month to take action and move towards their goals than they are today. The truth is, you are almost certainly best placed to start making progress against your goals right now. Even if

you do a tiny thing to move closer to your goal, that is progress and a brilliant place to start.

Why tie together personal and professional planning and goal setting?

This is simple if you think about it. Both personal and professional need to be considered and invested in. The danger and challenge of just planning one without the other can create an imbalance in your life that leads to friction and unwanted stress. Take a simple example: if your business goal is to open up an office in Australia, and your personal goal involves spending more time at home with friends and family, you better have a robust plan to help you achieve both by engaging others or working remotely. If you only have one of those goals identified and documented, pursuing the other will simply create that friction and stress. You are looking to create a well-balanced personal and professional plan.

Why December and not January?

Starting your reflection and planning in December is a great thing to do. There is no rule or benefit from waiting until January. Grab a mince pie, take some time to reflect on the year in December and start your 2024 plans. Give yourself an early Christmas present by getting in early and planning to make 2024 a brilliant year for you personally and professionally. When you do reflect, you might just find that the Christmas break a great opportunity to do this.

To get support in planning your ideal 2024 speak to Nevil: nevil@newresults.co.uk, connect with him on LinkedIn, or visit our website www.newresults.co.uk



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In conversation with...Dionne Watson and Angela Davies Founders & MDs of CSI Training and Events Ltd. and Creators of Crime Scene Assistant.



What led you to form CSI Training and Events?

We are ex-crime scene investigators who used to work for Northumbria Police. Whilst working together, we pondered what would we do if we weren't CSIs, we knew we were passionate about the subject, so wouldn't want to leave it behind entirely. During these conversations we came up with a business idea, it involved using our CSI skills and knowledge to run crime scene and forensic workshops in schools. We thought it would be a great way of engaging students with STEM subjects, showing them how these skills are used in real world jobs. In 2012 government funding cuts hit public services hard and our department was reduced by almost 50%. We decided then to jump ship and start our business. Despite loving the CSI role, we no longer enjoyed the environment we were working in, so decided to take the chance.

We originally started delivering school workshops and that is something we still do, but the business and what we offer in terms of training and events has expanded and developed over time.

Who do you work with?

Educational establishments, corporate businesses, and frontline responders.

Tell us about the range of events you host?

We run educational workshops at all levels of education. Our sessions are delivered over a half day, full day, or we run full programmes of work, which are delivered over a period of three days to a week. We deliver BTEC Crime Scene Investigation in colleges. We lecture at university, and we also carry out module development at college and university level. In addition, we run careers events.

We run corporate team building events for businesses of all sizes, which we have ran both nationally and internationally. We have a couple of different events that people can choose from, 'Clue Done It' and 'Who Done It' (forgive the names, all the creativity went into the events themselves!), a forensic trail and team bonding exercises. We run these over half or full days.

We run forensic awareness training for frontline responders. We also created an app 'Crime Scene Assistant' to support this training.

We love delivering all our events, we usually have as much fun as the participants! We receive fantastic feedback from our clients (which is always a great thing), they seem to have a lot of fun in the sessions but learn a lot too.

What are their duration?

They completely vary depending on the event type. They can be anything from one hour, up to a full programme of work, delivered over a week.

What topics are covered?

All things Crime Scene and Forensic Investigation, including careers in those fields.

Is there any required or recommended reading or preparation prior to?

No. We provide participants with the knowledge

and practical skills they will need for the event, on day.

Are resources and materials provided?

Yes, we provide all resources and materials for the day. In practical sessions, participants get to use the equipment that CSIs utilise in the field (after we teach them the skills to use them of course!).

In certain events, participants get to keep some items, including CSI coveralls, their own inked fingerprints and any fingerprints or footwear marks that they recover!

What are you currently working on?

We have just finished an extremely busy few months of running events. Now things have calmed down a little, it gives us time to focus on development.

As mentioned above, we have a forensic awareness app "crime scene assistant", we are currently working on updates and new sections.

We are also working on setting up additional online resources and creating video content.

What are your plans for 2024?

In 2024 we will continue to deliver our amazing events in person, but we are also going to have a real focus on growing/developing the business digitally.

csitrainingandevents.com crimesceneassist.com

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Looking forward...

At the end of a rather damp and turbulent 2023, Dr David Cliff of Gedanken, reflects on what we may see in the year ahead.

I'm not one for usual festive season platitudes. Those of you who know me, know I concentrate on real issues and real debate about what goes on in leadership, business, psychology and society at large.

The last few years have seen pandemics, crises in our public services, wars around the world and an intensification of the climate crisis. Without doubt, the damp, dreary times we have had in the last few months have been amplified this year by the action of El Nino, but the 'omnipresence' of changing climate cannot be dismissed from this, the science suggests that the acceleration factors around climate change are proving worse than even pessimistic climate scientists' predictions. This throws down the gauntlet that COP 28 in 2024, is something of a true watershed of change. If it is not, we are becoming too close to the edge to be able to retain the earth as we know it.

At home, there is undoubted political turbulence. The tribalistic warfare that is going on within political parties, wherein quasi-illuminati influence the internal selection of leaders and policies that are often at odds with the will of the majority of moderate people, will doubtless continue. David Cameron's presence may offer a steadying stabilising hand; however, our Premier may yet have an 'Ides of March' experience. We may yet see a Labour government that gets in, but because, as Jeremy Thorpe once put it, "not because Labour deserves to win, but the Conservatives deserve to lose".

The Middle East continues to fuel world tensions that have amplified the tensions between Russia and Ukraine and the sabre rattling of China towards Taiwan. Ceasefires and negotiations in the Middle East, are almost an inevitability in what is an intractable situation of enmeshed complex socio-political histories, tribalism, and sectarianism that has gone back for decades, if not millennia. Mediated by the simple plea of the world, that bombing babies, whatever the offence, is just not acceptable.

At home, we see reactions to that as the diaspora of world conflicts come together to make their own protest. This consumes huge amounts of police resources on things such as hate crime and other factors, when for many citizens who spend virtually all of their lives in a twenty-mile radius of where they were born, still seek to have the police respond to burglaries, minor road traffic offences, shoplifting etc. that remain real concerns despite their somewhat less "global" lifestyles.

With over 7.5 million people backed up in the NHS system and doctors haemorrhaging from the system, both with a combination of burnout and better prospects elsewhere, we have a health system that struggles to respond quickly, however much money is thrown at it. A bit like creating Nightingale hospitals as a knee-jerk reaction to a crisis, one needs staffing to run a system and AI and automation will only take you so far along the efficiency spectrum when it comes to the arts of healing, and dare I say, good leadership.

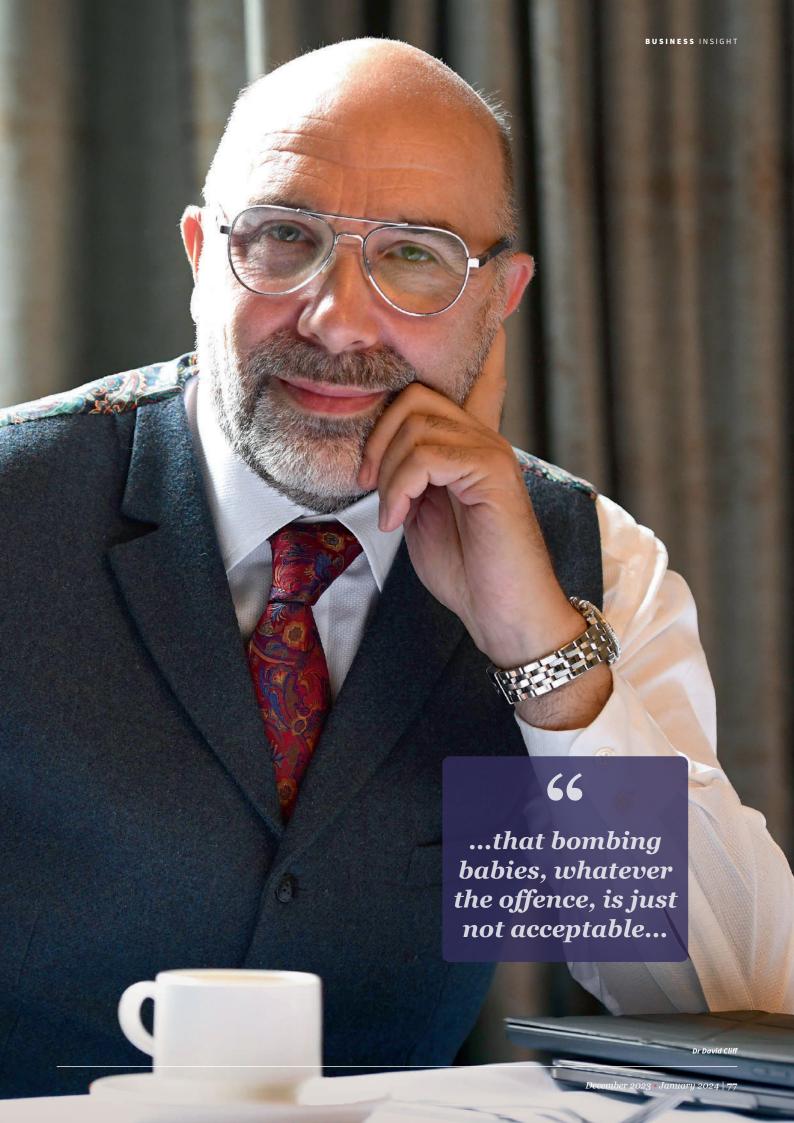
Returning to climate, we have a major value shift in terms of all our lifestyles. Without doubt, the desire for acquisition, and a better life must be tempered against the sustainability of the biosphere we all occupy if we are in any way to address the sustainability of the planet and fuel security in a harmonised way, rather than seeing these as opposites.

The recent increases in oil production in capacity by many of the major oil companies is projected to continue particularly in the US and we are seeing the awarding of more licenses for the North Sea at a time key parts of our green agenda in the UK have been 'kicked down the road' several years.

It's truly for all of us, as members of the electorate and, as members of the business community to look to how we represent our values in how we lobby organisations, how we work with our own companies and supply chains, our corporate and social responsibility. We must constantly re-visit our values and ethics as a real credo to how we lead, organise and develop our organisations and instil change that is productive, and sustainable. It is still for countries, such as Britain to lead on climate and in doing so we need to re-establish our position in that role, not from a position of fiscal might, but from a position of moral-centredness.

May 2024 be good for you and your organisation and may your contribution to the community, the business economy and indeed world sustainability in the year ahead, be equally so.

www.gedanken.co.uk



Talentheads: A year like no other



Talent acquisition firm Talentheads has enjoyed an incredible 12 months, with unprecedented growth and turnover – and a few major awards in the mix, too. Founder Sam Spoors discusses how an unwavering belief in her unique approach to talent and recruitment has allowed the Morpeth-based firm to flourish.

Here at Talentheads, we work tirelessly to help other businesses grow.

And we also want to ensure that our own business is blooming – and that's exactly what we've done throughout 2023.

You see, we've also grown a lot this year.

Our team has expanded. Our client list has ballooned. And our awards cabinet has some shiny new occupants.

They are all results of our talented and tenacious team's hard work, as well as the unwavering belief our people and clients have in our unique approach to talent and recruitment.

For far too long, the recruitment sector has been content with just putting bums on seats and some firms have been willing to fill job vacancies with anyone in possession of a half-decent CV.

However, I launched Talentheads with the aim of flipping the sector on its head.

We instead embed ourselves within our clients' business to understand their culture and talent and recruitment needs. We match and develop the right candidates with the right firms, based not just on their CV but also their values and how well they will fit in with the team.

That approach is paying off. This year, Talentheads recorded a 51 per cent increase in year-on-year turnover.

That growth has enabled us to bolster our ranks

with some fabulous fresh faces.

We've added seven new team members, while demand for our bespoke service has resulted in three of our team being awarded well-earned promotions

And like any family that grows, sometimes you find your home is suddenly too small.

Having snowballed in size since we were founded three years ago, we simply outgrew our old HQ – so we kicked off 2023 by setting up base at Austin House, in Morpeth's Sanderson Arcade.

Given how proud we are of our Northumberland roots, there was never any intention of upping sticks and leaving Morpeth. Our fantastic new base has been the perfect spot to continue towards our goal of doubling the size of our team over the next couple of years.

But our growth isn't all about turnover and new hires. To grow as a business, we also need to develop ourselves – and to give back.

That's why charity, community and philanthropy have been at the core of Talentheads throughout 2023.

We sponsored three local youngsters, selected by Swim England, to help them fulfil their dream of competing at the World School Games in Brazil.

Our team laced up their walking boots and racked up the steps to support Alzheimer

research, sponsored a fantastic ladies day event for the same cause, and participated in a fashion show for the wonderful Stockton-based charity Daisy Chain, whilst we also opened our doors to local businesses and held wellbeing events.

These special events enabled us to meet some extraordinary people. However, they also reinforced the extraordinary culture that exists at Talentheads.

As professional recruiters and talent experts, we pride ourselves in finding staff that fit into that company' culture.

So, it is vital we do the same – that's why we were delighted to this year be awarded the People's Platform Award.

The award recognises forward-thinking businesses that operate on the forefront of workplace culture. Firms that embrace employee innovation and are committed to their people's wellbeing and satisfaction.

We were ranked in the top 50 companies in the UK. And that wasn't the only major success we enjoyed.

I was also overwhelmed to be named 2023 Entrepreneur of the Year by the North East Chamber of Commerce. It was an emotional moment, and capped off a rollercoaster few years for both the business and myself.

However, it was only made possible by those around me.

And it reinforced my unwavering belief that here at Talentheads, we are all doing big things and changing the recruitment industry for the better – forever.

Here's to 2024.

For more information on Talentheads and our service offering, visit talentheads.co.uk

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Is your New Year's Resolution going to include volunteering for a worthy cause? Yes? Then The Three Tumours needs you!



VOLUNTEERS Volunteering for this noble cause becomes not just an act of generosity but a powerful weapon

in the fight against a rising tide of brain tumour-related deaths. With brain tumour fatalities now representing 2.6% of all cancer deaths, it is imperative that we stand united to reverse this ominous trend.

In the relentless battle against cancer, one enemy often overlooked is the silent assailant that preys on the very essence of our beingthe brain tumour. Alarming statistics reveal a stark reality: brain tumours claim more lives among children and adults under 40 than any other cancer, a fact that demands our immediate attention and collective action.

The first line of defence lies in the gift of time. Volunteering offers a unique opportunity to directly impact the lives of those affected by brain tumours. Whether lending a listening ear to patients, providing practical assistance, or offering emotional support to families, every moment dedicated to this cause is a step towards brighter tomorrows.

Financial contributions are another crucial aspect of support. The Three Tumours charity relies on the generosity of donors to fund

vital research, treatment options, and support services. By donating, individuals become catalysts for change, helping bridge the gap between despair and hope for the 16,000 individuals diagnosed with a brain tumour each year in the UK.

The grim reality of brain tumour survival rates emphasizes the critical need for action. While less than 20% of patients survive beyond five years, against the 86% survival rate for breast cancer and 51% for leukaemia, the urgency of The Three Tumours charity's mission cannot be overstated.

This is a call to arms, an invitation to stand shoulder to shoulder against an adversary. By giving time, donating generously, and actively participating in events, everyone becomes a vital force in the battle against brain tumours.

Together, we can rewrite the narrative and pave the way for a future where survival triumphs over despair.

For more information on volunteering for The Three Tumours Charity, email: support@thethreetumours.com, or simply message us on Facebook.



Awareness of Brain Cancer

Recruitment Trends for 2024 in the world of accountancy

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares predictions for the recruitment trends we are likely to see in the next twelve months.

Another year has passed at lightning speed. Older? Definitely. Wiser? I hope so. It's certainly been another unpredictable and challenging year in recruitment but, as it draws to a close, I have been reflecting on what I've learned and what the next twelve months could hold in the world of accountancy and finance.

Skills Shortages

There is no end in sight for the skills shortages that are driving an increase in outsourcing services overseas. Firms are also expanding their advisory offerings to provide businesses with greater management information, so they become much more than the traditional oncea-year annual audit and accounts service. Both areas of growth will heighten pressure to attract and retain talent and it could be a challenging time for businesses trying to keep salary demands under control.

Employee Wellbeing

Businesses that embrace people's desire for a better work-life balance will fare well. According to ACCA, 83% of accountants would like to work remotely at least one day per week. In a candidate-driven market, embracing hybrid working and demonstrating that you can deliver on personal development plans will appeal to a wider talent pool.

Advancing Technology

Continuing to shape the future, technology already plays a big role in the accounting sector. Moving at a relentless pace, according to the ACCA, 63% of us would like more technology training. To stay relevant, businesses need to adopt a culture of technological innovation, which includes upskilling and valuing those skills in the recruitment process.



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Employers will continue to place a greater emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion in their recruitment strategies. With the benefits well documented, it is important to recognise the need for this in the accounting and finance sectors. A survey by Skills, Retention, and Attraction confirmed that 57% of UK businesses regard this as a strategic priority as it opens a wider candidate market and draws talent from all backgrounds.

Training and Skills

The ongoing impact of the pandemic and the training and skills gaps created means that while some professional roles will continue to call for college degrees, recruiters will be casting their net wider. Larger employers already target candidates in education, with entry-level recruits requiring lower salaries. Increasingly, it's your talent rather than the pedigree of your institution or past employer that counts.

Relocate or Resign

For those not keen on hybrid working, 2024 will see a resurgence in the expectation that people head back into the office four or five days a week, meaning there are tough choices ahead. In the accounting profession, as a result, we expect to see more people choosing to move or simply resigning to find something closer to home that offers the flexibility they seek.

Generation Z

Set to become a significant part of the workforce, successful recruiters need to adapt to the distinct values, traits, and preferences of this generation. To attract and retain Gen-Z talent, companies need to leverage digital recruitment platforms, bring a focus to their social responsibility efforts, offer clear pathways for career progress and skill development, and provide a flexible working environment.

While I don't profess to see the future clearly, I believe it will be bright for those who leverage technology, nurture inclusivity, and meet the needs and expectations of candidates and employees.

Embracing a better work-life balance and remote work preferences will widen your talent pool. Technological innovation remains key, with a strong call for more training in advancing technologies.

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are rightly gaining prominence in recruitment strategies and, with the evolving landscape moving toward valuing talent over institutional pedigree, Generation Z could be ready to take centre stage.

Despite skills shortages driving outsourcing and the pressure to balance well-being with business demands, I remain optimistic in my outlook for 2024 as, however we see it, the journey will continue marked by challenges and buoyed by the resilience and adaptability of the accounting and finance industry.

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

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Whilst previous trusts experience is advantageous, interest is welcomed from those with an accountancy practice background, competent with the preparation of statutory year end accounts and personal tax returns.

With an interest in working with high wealth individuals this is a great position to utilise your accounts and tax experience whilst adding a further element to your knowledge. You will have responsibility for the complete client service from engagement letters to billing and aftercare.

A firm with a strong reputation and generous welfare and benefits package awaits the successful applicant who will be part or fully qualified in either AAT/ACA/ACCA and/or ATT/CTA .Quote Ref: 2215

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A successful North East accountancy and tax firm are seeking an experienced Senior Tax Manager/Director to support the Partners with their advisory portfolio. The appointment is the start of succession planning whereby you will share the portfolio workload with a view to taking on these clients at Partner retirement.

With an interesting portfolio of planning work the role has the flexibility to accommodate those with either corporate and/ or private client experience, having both would be an advantage but not essential. As a varied role working with SME clients, Partnerships and some Trusts this is a rare and attractive opportunity, especially for those keen to step away from day to day politics and immerse yourself in tax advisory.

Offered on a full or part-time basis with flexible working, applicants will be CTA/ACA qualified with a strong ability to form close working relationships with clients. **Quote Ref: 2213**

QUALIFIED ACCOUNTANT

Gateshead, Upto £50,000pa

An opportunity for a commercially astute and ambitious Accountant from the profession who is hungry to work more closely with clients in a non-traditional firm are keen to welcome a qualified ACA/ACCA to manage a portfolio of client relationships.

As Client Manager you will play a pivotal role in providing not only year end statutory accounts, but monthly management accounts information that will help your clients make the best decisions for their business, with your advice.

As a firm who recognises the value of engagement, this role suits those who enjoy interaction with business owners, providing an advisory service rather than pure compliance. You will be an outgoing and confident individual who loves fresh ideas and embracing change for the better. **Quote Ref: 2208**

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The Recruiter

Gillespie Recruitment – It's about people not numbers

It's very easy to assume that recruitment is just about square pegs in square holes. However, there is also a suspicion that in some cases it'll be a case of not being too fussed about the shape of the peg but it'll be put into a hole no matter what.

"And that is why I decided to set up my own recruitment business," says Laura Gillespie, the founder and managing director of Gillespie Recruitment. "I've worked in everything from large agencies to small independent firms, and it's always been about the bottom line. People are seen as a number. It was all about volume, not quality. It wasn't about getting the right person for the right job.

And that is wrong. It's wrong for the company who are looking to fill a vacancy and it's wrong for the person you're recommending.

Changing your job is a massive decision...it can often be life changing...so it's vitally important to get it right. It's not JUST about filling the vacancy...it's finding whether the person is right for the company and whether the company is right for the

Which we think is a refreshing approach to recruitment. Laura doesn't see it as a numbers game. She wants to do the right thing because, in effect, she is playing with people's lives.

And it should also be remembered that filling a vacancy is seriously important for any business, especially if it's a smaller one because it is not only critical that the new person will be able to do the job, but they also need to fit in with the company ethos. They are investing in the person.

Oh, and let's not forget that appointing a new member of staff doesn't come cheap.

"We need to ensure that any appointment will work for both parties. If we can't find the right person we'll admit it... and we'd never recommend a candidate for a job which we felt wasn't a good fit. That's why we don't work on retainers because it puts pressure on us to find a candidate no matter what happens.

I work closely with lots of firms...it's all about trust. They come to Gillespie Recruitment because they know we'll work hard to find the right sort of candidate and that we wouldn't recommend someone if we felt that they weren't suitable. We also have the sort of relationship that allows us to help businesses plan for the future. We want to avoid someone joining a firm and then only staying for four or five months...it's not right for the candidate and it's not financially viable for the business. We work closely with firms, discover what they are generally looking for and how often.

We also get to know the candidate for the simple reason that a CV might look good and shows what they've achieved, but it doesn't show what sort of person they are. I'm sure that a lot of businesses that do their own recruitment in-house will have invited a candidate to attend an interview purely on the person's CV, but know within minutes of meeting the interviewee that they wouldn't fit in. We aim to help firms avoid that waste of time and money."



Laura has got the sort of experience that other recruiters can only dream about. She has worked extensively in healthcare and commercial recruitment, and also within media and the third sector for many years.

She's also a North East person through and through and has built an extensive network of contacts.

"One of the reasons I started my own recruitment business is because I was regularly approached by business colleagues who were asking whether I knew of a suitable person to fill a particular role. I could invariably point them in the right direction. My diverse background also means that I've got a broad range of experience which allows me to quickly fill a vacancy with the right sort of person."

If you are thinking of changing your career or are currently looking for a job, we'd point you in the direction of Laura's website...www.gillespierecruitment.co.uk. You'll also find some helpful tips about CVs and how to prepare for an interview.

And if you are a business looking to fill a vacancy, the best idea is to speak to Laura and her team. You can contact them on 0191 516 6146 or email enquiries@gillespierecruitment.co.uk



December – Time to Pause, Reflect and Plan

Where did the year go? Some of you will now be counting the days until you take a break for the holidays, whilst others will be in your busiest period.

This was me and my partner for 20 years. I worked in retail and he worked for Royal Mail, so December was a our busiest month. For us, Christmas was celebrated with the family in November, as at best, we got two days off. Christmas day was guaranteed; anything else was a bonus. It was exhausting! So if you are taking a break this year, please spare a thought for the millions of workers who won't be.

Now though, we relish the one to two weeks we can spend with family and friends, though it took five years to get used to it! For me the holiday season, with it's hibernating darkness, is a time to take a breath, to pause, and to reflect on the last year. To notice what gives me energy that I want to harness and continue, and also those things that need to be put on my 'Not to do' list.

I therefore invite you to book 30-60 minutes with yourself over the next couple of weeks, to reflect on the year end and to review the questions below.

I'm not here to give you the answers, I can't even begin to do that – I don't know you, your circumstances, job role, personal challenges, work life, industry anything – that, I'm afraid starts with you. I can though give you some questions to get you thinking.

They might not give you all the answers, but they will start you on the exploratory journey to decide what happens next. Let's then start with what we know, and on a positive.

What went well?

- **1.** Reflecting on the past 12 months, what has gone well for you? For your team, and for your business?
- **2.** What contributed to this success? Think about your habits, patterns, support you received, lucky breaks and opportunities, and your wider life?
- **3.** What would you like to build on further this year?
- **4.** Who do you want to be with you, supporting you on the journey?
- **5.** What will resource you and aid you on that journey?
- **6.** What skillsets, knowledge sets and mindsets do you need to employ as you go?

Next - what was a bit crap?

7. What didn't go as well as you would have wished? Again think personally, team, business and also your wider home life environment as this will have contributed.

- **8.** What impacted you that you need to be conscious of as you move forward into 2024/5?
- **9.** What patterns did you notice repeating that you need to hold in your awareness?
- **10.** What triggers do you need to notice and manage?
- **11.** What derails you and what nourishes you? This can be people.
- **12.** What needs to be on your stop doing list for you personally, your team or business?

The Future

- 13. By the end of 2024 (or 2025 If you like) what would you like to have happen?
- **14.** When this happens, what will you see, feel, hear and experience?
- **15.** Who will be around you supporting you, helping you, giving you feedback and cheering you on?
- **16.** What do you need to learn, change or adapt to enable this to happen?
- **17.** Who do you need to reach out to for support or step back from to make this happen?
- **18.** When this happens, what will this give you?
- **19.** If you don't do this what will happen?

Finally I have three questions – which may or may not link to those above.

- What do you want freedom from?
- What do you want freedom for?
- If you were to sum up your intention for the year in one word or phrase, what would it be?

This is your intention, your north star to come back to when you make decisions. Hold it lightly, follow its guidance, and dance in the moment when things are uncertain. Trust you know what your intention means – as you probably do.

No matter what your circumstances this holiday season, I wish you space for you, time with those important to you, and space to gain clarity for your next steps forward from here.

If an executive reflection session with the support of a coach would be useful for you, then contact Annabel via LinkedIn, annabel@successfultraining.co.uk, or visit www.successfultraining.co.uk



Are environmental buzz words killing the bees?

Climate Change, Sustainability, Carbon Neutral, Net Zero, Biodiversity.

These are all terms that we hear a lot, but probably have limited understanding of. For many of us the concept of our individual impact on the global climate is so difficult to grasp that we ignore it, or in some cases deny its existence completely.

I am guilty – I drive a petrol car, I eat meat, I have a gas boiler, I own a company which designs roads!

Over my career as a Civil Engineer the consideration for the environmental impact of infrastructure projects has become more important, however, the requirement for it to be a key consideration has never been greater. Weather patterns are changing on a global scale; and in the UK we are seeing more and more high intensity rainfall events; what was once a one in 20-year rainfall event is now a one in two year, or even one in one year event.

It is well documented that being surrounded

by the natural environment is beneficial to people's mental wellbeing; this inevitably leads to happier, more productive people. The introduction of trees and green open spaces in developments increases house prices. It improves the natural habitats for our diverse eco system too. It doesn't have to cost a fortune, and if done correctly can save money; reducing the grass cutting on verges and in roundabouts, and the introduction of wildflowers can have a massive benefit to biodiversity, and reduce maintenance costs for the highway authority – as well as supporting the bees our ecological system relies upon!

Our impact on the environment is something we are acutely aware of at Lynas Engineers, and we have been lucky to work on some projects which have given us the opportunity to incorporate some innovative solutions. We push our clients to consider solutions which ensure that the project has a minimal effect on the environment, and ideally has a positive impact.

Unfortunately, as with most parts of our lives, people will generally tend towards the easy option, the cheaper option, the way they've 'always done it'. To reinforce the need to incorporate change we need strong environmental legislation, and a strong government that is willing to listen to the evidence and promote truly sustainable development.

The Environment Act comes into effect in England in 2024 which mandates a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain for developments falling under the planning regulations; but what does that mean? Developers will need to avoid loss of habitat within their site; or if that is not possible then they must create habitat either within the site or at another site that they own. But we have recently been told that the government is scrapping legislation that would

protect watercourses from chemicals generated by new developments; at a time when our rivers are being overwhelmed with sewage from water networks that can't cope - it is a dangerous and regressive move.

One of the ways we can contribute to the aims of the Environment Act is by providing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS); capturing and using surface water run-off within the development to improve biodiversity. We have recently seen the introduction of new design standards for surface water drainage, which encourages developers, and their designers, to consider how the SuDS features connect with local habitats to promote connectivity.

We need to stop seeing environmental considerations in projects as a problem and looking at them as an opportunity. A real chance to challenge traditional, often outdated thinking, around sustainability and bring new, innovative solutions into our schemes and projects. By engaging in innovative ways to improve sustainability, increase biodiversity and generally improve access to green spaces in communities, not only are we able to promote a healthier way to live - with improved mental health through access to nature - we are also able to help shape a future community that respects its surroundings, working and living closer to our natural environment and inspiring generations that have true sustainability at the heart of everything they do.

lynasengineers.com

Eothen Care Homes Compassion, comfort and companionship





Eothen Care Homes enhances the lives of older people by providing experienced and specialist care at our three North East care homes

Living in Eothen Care Homes







We offer permanent, high-quality 24-hour residential care, short-term respite and day care places at our purpose-built homes in Whitley Bay, Gosforth and Wallsend. Each home provides our happy residents with spacious, en-suite rooms, as well as gorgeous, landscaped gardens and a range of events and activities, and are close to local transport links and shops. Our Wallsend home has been designed to enhance the lives of people living with dementia, with specially-trained staff seeing to their specific needs.

Our kind and caring staff are there at all of our homes to help residents live fuller, more rewarding lives. **'We are here with a place to call home'**.

"We laugh together, we comfort one another.

It's absolutely amazing." A resident at Eothen Whitley Bay

Working in our homes

Our compassionate carers are dedicated to providing the best care to amazing residents. Can you help us make a difference?

Benefits include:

- Work with friendly and caring staff in a relaxed 'home-from-home' atmosphere
- Earn the living wage
- Full training provided
- Long service awards
- BUPA cash-back scheme
- Company sick pay programme
- Paid breaks
- Have your birthday off work

Asbestos testing laboratory stimulates growth



Rapidly expanding Asbestos Audit Ltd, has appointed Kieran Hunt as laboratory manager of its new asbestos laboratory, located at its headquarters in Peterlee, County Durham. He is joined by another new recruit, Keren Hague, who takes up an asbestos analyst role, working closely with Kieran.

Asbestos Audit operates from 13 offices across the UK, providing UKAS accredited asbestos surveys, inspections, removal and testing. The company also has a rapidly growing demolition department that includes soft strip out and salvage.

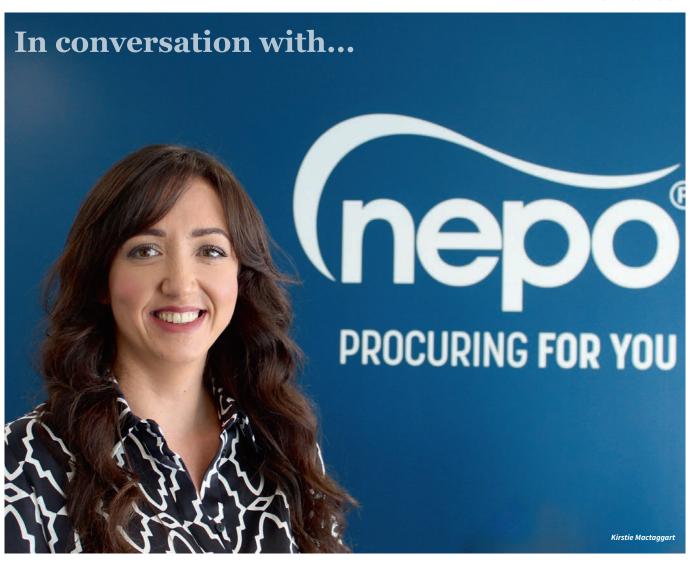
The laboratory will be capable of handling all types of suspect asbestos materials, with capacity to expand as demand grows. It will examine and test samples to identify if asbestos is present and also carry out analysis to determine the type of asbestos fibre within the material.

Asbestos Audit currently offers asbestos surveys working to UKAS ISO:17020 accreditation with additional planned services for 2024 including bulk sample analysis testing, asbestos air monitoring and clearance air monitoring working to UKAS ISO:17025.

Kieran, said: "Demand for asbestos testing continues to grow rapidly amongst Asbestos Audit's growing, national customer base. The laboratory will give us the capacity to identify asbestos containing materials urgently and provide the analysis results the same day. This will significantly reduce the waiting times associated with independent laboratories, enable us to provide a more efficient service and add an additional layer of quality control to the business."

Ben Pickard, director at Asbestos Audit, said: "We're excited to welcome Kieran and Keren to our team, who bring the level of expertise we need as we embark on a rapid scale-up of asbestos testing via the new laboratory. The investment is in line with strategic growth plans in place to enable Asbestos Audit to become a national consultancy over the next four years."

www.asbestosaudit.co



Kirstie Mactaggart

Relationships and Partnerships Specialist, NEPO

Can you tell us about your role at NEPO?

I'm very new to my role here at NEPO, as a relationships and partnerships specialist on our construction team.

So far, I've been linking up with our associate members to find out how they use the NEPO solutions and what more we can do to benefit their business in the future. I've absolutely loved meeting people from such a range of backgrounds and finding new and innovative ways to partner.

Why did you want to work at NEPO?

I've spent the last 16 years working for a North East charity and, in recent years, predominantly working within engagement roles. I had heard of NEPO but wasn't aware of just how easily accessible it was to smaller charities or how wide the range of frameworks were. Procurement was never an area I'd

considered but when I saw the role advertised, I realised the transferable skills I'd learnt, were exactly what were needed for this role. I was excited for a new challenge and to see how I could mould my knowledge and experience to support the aims of NEPO. Now that I'm in the role, I'm even more keen to link with charities and smaller businesses to show them that NEPO is for everyone.

Who is in your team?

The construction team at NEPO is expertly lead by Jane Turner (construction lead) and we have two fabulous procurement coordinators, Andrea Cellini and Claire Darling Cooper, as well as Callum Thompson, our solutions performance coordinator and go-to for all contract management queries. Together, there doesn't seem to be anything they don't have an answer to and they all excel in driving the culture of NEPO within all they do.

What do you think are the opportunities going forward?

We are one of the leading construction framework providers in the North East and we have a fantastic opportunity to develop outside of the region. Our wide range of frameworks have the very best suppliers and our route to market is quick, easy and reliable. We are building our excellent reputation every

single day and we have a huge opportunity to push this further through networking, events and social media to reach a wider market.

There is a huge gap in the market for smaller VCSEs to access our solutions and I see this as an opportunity to create a better partnership with all our existing, as well as potential, member associates, to bridge the gap and support them. There are relationships to be made, money to be saved and work to be given to our North East suppliers and I'm looking forward to taking the opportunity to make that

How do you like to unwind outside of work?

I'm a believer in a well-balanced lifestyle, so I love taking part in all types of exercise (as much as possible) but I also have a love of food (again, as much as possible) - see, balanced! I love boxing and running and I'm currently organising a Coast-2-Coast bike ride with the NEPO team next year. I love to motivate others to become more active as I know the huge benefit this has both mentally and physically. On the flip side of that, I'm an absolute feeder and enjoy nothing more than baking an 'artery-clogging' (as the most recent staff review described it) cornflake tart!

NEPO.org



Advice on property with combined value of £1 billion

Newcastle-based, JK Property Consultants, has experienced significant demand during 2023, having advised clients on a record-breaking variety of projects worth an estimated total value of £1 billion.

This is a significant uplift for the firm on total property values of £350 million for the previous 12 months.

The £1 billion is broken down as £500,000,00 consultancy, £300,000.000 litigation and £200,000.000 agency.

During the year the firm has advised on a vast range of projects including regional

infrastructure masterplans, received instructions to sell a high-profile national headquarters, provided advice for a city centre listed building and advised a range of landowners on settlement costs for housing development.

JK Property Consultants assists investors, developers and occupiers, applying its local market knowledge with a national perspective, whether for development, acquisitions, lease renewals, reviews and resolving issues through dispute resolution.

Jennifer Welch, who co-founded JK Property Consultants, alongside Kevan Carrick, said: "The property market, through the impact of the economy and government intervention, continues to be disrupted greatly and going through a period of turbulence and change, which can make investors nervous.

"While 2023 has brought its challenges, developments during 2024 are set to impact on the regional economy for years to come, with Mayoral elections at the region's two combined authorities, a General Election and far-reaching legislation to enable levelling up.

"Despite the complexities, there is always a way forward and our aim has always been to advise clients how to manage change within the property market, while standing by our culture and values, which are based on responsible and ethical business. We believe it is for this reason that, despite how the market is performing, new legislation or political

change, we have always retained existing clients and gained new instructions.

"This, of course, has to be backed by an ability to deliver and, in that respect, we offer unparalleled insight of the regional market with a national perspective, deep knowledge and understanding of government policy and its relevance to the local market, exceptional negotiating skills and a fantastic list of influential contacts who assist us on projects and can open doors. Our team has won many individual awards and, as recently as 2020 and 2021 we were shortlisted for Commercial Mediator of the year in the National Mediation Awards.

Jennifer Welch worked for the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) in the North East and became director for North and Midlands. She then took on a global role with the RICS and spent time operating in Asia and, latterly, as the director for Sub Saharan Africa, promoting business ethics and international standards.

Kevan Carrick, is a chartered surveyor with over 50 years' experience in the property sector. He is a director at North East Business Innovation Centre, an ambassador for the Open North Foundation and ambassador for North East Initiative on Business Ethics, where he's recently retired as co-founder and chair.

jkpropertyconsultants.com



Kathryn **Rodgers**

face2faceHR, talks face2face with Jackie Marston

So, Kathryn, five years in business what has been the hardest obstacle you've had to overcome, during this time and how did you overcome it?

There have been a couple of things - learning to ask for help, and relocating my business in 2022.

When I started out, I tried to do everything myself – I was worried that admitting I didn't know how to do something would make me less credible. However, as my business grew, I soon realised I just couldn't do everything, and that there were people out there who were far better qualified and much more efficient at handling things like accounting and Marketing. One of the best pieces of advice I've received is to delegate imperfectly.

When I relocated my business to Newcastle in 2022, I think I forgot some of the lessons learned during the launch in 2018 - I had an existing client base, so I didn't put as much effort into visibility in Newcastle as I had done in my early days in Nottingham, and it wasn't long before that started to show in my lead pipeline. Over the last 12 months, I've invested significantly in raising the profile of the business locally by attending networking events, exhibiting, contributing to local publications and maintaining a consistent social media presence. I think it's really important to be your own cheerleader - no one is going to knock on my front door asking for HR support!

What made you start your own business?

After I had my little boy in 2018, I thought carefully about what I wanted from work. I was no less ambitious than I had been before. but I knew I didn't want to screech into the nursery car park at 17:55 every night or have to apologise for attending his school events - so the best way to have more control over my time was to be my own boss. It was never about working less, it was about choosing when to work, although how does the saying go - running your own business means you get flexibility about which 24 hours a day you

From a professional point of view, my experience as Head of HR for a start-up in Dubai gave me insight into working in a high-growth business environment, and making HR decisions which were commercially viable, ethical and showed empathy for our team. I wanted to use this knowledge to help small businesses in my home town get better results for them and their people. Plus, I'm nosy and I like knowing all the secrets...

You have a loyal client base, who constantly sing the praises of your company, what differentiates you from other HR companies?

I think it's the balance of commerciality and compassion. HR has a reputation for being all about compliance and box-ticking, and some of the bigger HR outsourcing firms out there still follow that traditional "personnel" approach. I prefer to advise my clients based on my understanding of their business and their team and to help them reach outcomes which (as far as possible) work for both parties.

HR isn't rocket science – it's mostly about communication and common sense. I can throw legislative references and jargon around with the best of them, but I'd rather avoid that and

focus on helping my clients get better people results. A happy team equals happy customers which equals a more successful, profitable business. Who doesn't want that?

I know you're currently doing podcasts, who is your dream podcaster, who you'd like to appear alongside?

Oooh, great question! I'd love to have a chat with Brené Brown on *Unlocking Us* or, closer to home, Sarah Pittendreigh's Formidable Over

We're just heading into Christmas, so what plans does face2faceHR have for 2024?

2024 for me is all about being a better business owner, and getting the right structures in place so I can continue to grow. I've been loving the NatWest Accelerator programme, and that prompted me to work with a business coach to get a proper business plan in place and to appoint an advisory board to keep me on track. Making the jump from owner-manager to director is a big mindset shift, but I'm getting

What single piece of advice would you give to business owners in regards to hiring an HR professional?

Find someone you click with and who shares your values. Getting the right HR advice hinges on being open about how your business runs, your relationships with your team, your people management capability and your attitude to risk, so you need an HR contact who you trust, and who makes you feel reassured and supported.

face2faceHR 07946 330 025

Transform your health and safety in work with shineCompliance



The Health and Safety at Work Act etc (HSWA) has been part of the UK legal system since 1974, supporting the development of a wide range of practices and policies that are designed to prevent accidents and injuries, and protect the physical and mental health of workers, customers, and the public.

The importance of health and safety in the UK modern day workplace simply cannot be underestimated and underpins every aspect of what we do.

Many sectors are striving to move away from antiquated health and safety management systems to a more dynamic way of working that modernises the vital role that health and safety plays in their day to day operations.

The dreaded clunky file storage that would be a renowned dumping ground for all historical records and an overly complicated spreadsheet which would control live incidents and periodic property inspections that undermined the genuine efforts of team members that care deeply about the welfare of others, simply had to go.

This is where the **shine**Compliance software comes to the forefront of digital solutions. The health and safety module is imbedded within the golden thread of **shine**Compliance, providing managers a holistic cloud-based view of all activity.

Live fast data recall from the golden thread supports evidence-based decisions through trend analysis, improves sharing and collaboration amongst stakeholders and resolves any potential conflict, duplication of effort or budget resource.

An intuitive mobile surveying app provides a capture-all platform for periodic inspections and investigations with simple write up and approval. The reactive element of software enables anyone to report issues, anonymously if required, including RIDDOR within the social housing provider's territory and surrounding areas.

Health and safety managers and their external supply chain can then utilise the dedicated workflow within the software to raise projects to assist in action close out of identified issues.

Implementation is quick and simple, with

support from the **shine**Vision team. Whilst the product is being used far and wide and is therefore fit for purpose straight away, the team appreciate that every organisation's requirements may be slightly different, and therefore it can be tailored for specific use. Lee Taylor, managing director of **shine**Vision concludes with: "Success in health and safety compliance is all about having a roadmap, with everyone invested in the same journey. Our app means that you can keep the people at the front of wellbeing. Put simply, **shine**Compliance delivers Prevention, Compliance, Efficiency and Positive Cultural Change within duty holders and their accredited external supply chain."

For an initial conversation on how shineVision can help your organisation, contact Lee Taylor on enquiries@shinevision.co.uk





Mincoffs Solicitors welcomes Marketing Manager

Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors has strengthened its marketing department with the promotion of Bronia McGregor to marketing manager.

Moving into the role from senior marketing and PR executive, she will take the lead on the firm's marketing and communications strategy including managing PR, events, social media, award and tender submissions, and raising the profile of the firm across the region and further

Prior to joining Mincoffs, Bronia spent four years at a leading Newcastle PR agency where she worked with clients across a diverse range of sectors, including professional services, retail, hospitality and events.

As marketing manager, she will continue to work closely with commercial director, Matthew Flinders, and digital marketing executive, Chelzi Graham, with plans to expand the marketing team further in the future.



New CEO for Tyne Theatre and Opera House

The Tyne Theatre and Opera House has announced the appointment of Jonathan Higgins in the brand-new Chief Executive Officer role at the historic entertainment

The Tyne Theatre & Opera House is a Grade I listed, Victorian theatre in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, delivering a varied programme of entertainment including comedy, music, theatre, 'in conversation' events and more.

The theatre has been operating independently, on a not-for-profit basis, since 2015 and is known for its lavish auditorium, outstanding acoustics, and full set of Victorian under-stage

Jonathan moves to Tyne Theatre and Opera House from Croydon's Fairfield Halls, where he was Venue Director for operators BH Live. Prior to his role in South London Jonathan was Head of Events for Your Trust in Greater Manchester, and from 2007, spent twelve years heading up the arts and events team at The Sands Centre in



Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch **Newcastle welcome** new Research and **Engagement Manager**

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle proudly announce the appointment of Afsana Begum as their new Research and Engagement Manager. Armed with an impressive degree in Public Health, Afsana brings a wealth of knowledge and experience that will further invigorate the organisations' commitment to enhancing the health and well-being of individuals accessing health and social care services in Newcastle and Gateshead.

Afsana, honed her passion for research and data analysis during her academic journey. These skills are now at the core of her role as Research and Engagement Manager. She possesses an exceptional ability to extract patterns in data and statistics, a talent she harnesses to elevate the quality of service she delivers to the organisation.

Prior to joining Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle her career kick-started by assisting individuals in Gateshead facing various challenges, including mental health issues. Her unwavering dedication to aiding others naturally led her to focus on health improvement, where she has made a significant impact.

In her new role, Afsana champions the voices of service users in Gateshead and Newcastle. She spearheads initiatives to listen to their needs, transform them into comprehensive reports, and ensure the findings reach the desks of commissioners and stakeholders. Her mission is to pave the way for a future where health and social care service gaps are promptly identified and actioned on to offer unparalleled support to the

"This role is tailor-made for me. It combines my passion for research with my academic qualifications in public health. I am eager to create meaningful change," said Afsana.



Resource Management Solutions (RMS) has **Executive and Employee Experience** Coordinator as the organisation enters a new era of growth.

The Darlington-based business has hired Dionne Kingsley to drive growth across the North and Tanice Jackson to enhance the employee journey - the first role of its kind.





30 years of tailoring recruitment solutions to support businesses through start-up, relocation, growth, change, and transformation.



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Ascent Homes – building for the future in Northumberland

From supporting regeneration and creating job opportunities to bringing new homes to communities, Ascent Homes – the housebuilding arm of Advance Northumberland – is active across the region. Here, we learn about its developments, its contribution to Northumberland's economy and its vision for the future.

From the coast of South East Northumberland to the Scottish border, from the heart of a famous market town to the edge of a national park, Ascent Homes is having a major impact on the county.

And that impact goes beyond just bricks and mortar.

"Certain parts of Northumberland have seen limited development in recent years from national housebuilders, but Ascent Homes is supporting those areas by providing more homes for people who are local to those locations," says Paul Errington, Director of Ascent Homes, on the role the company is playing in the region.

"It gives those people the chance to own a home in the place they are from, rather than having to move away.

"We are also seeing people from all over the UK showing an interest in our developments. These range from people who were born within Northumberland and moved away who are now looking to return, to those buyers wanting to relocate to call Northumberland their home."

Ascent Homes' developments include Commissioners Quay on Blyth waterfront, and the Kingsmead site in Wooler, where it has provided 72 detached and semi-detached houses, and bungalows.

In Ellington, Ascent Homes is completing the final properties within phases one and two of Wayside Point, which comprises 196 homes. It has commenced on the third phase of 34 homes, with the showhomes opening



in January 2024. There will be a further 116 properties across phase four.

There's also Willow Farm in Choppington, which will feature 327 homes when finished, and a smaller scale development is Allerburn Manor in Alnwick, which includes the conversion of a historic manor house.

On many developments, Ascent Homes has reduced the housing density to give residents more open spaces and larger gardens. The company also feels that it is important to create a sense of community, for instance through incorporating communal greens where people can gather.

Providing affordable housing to residents in Northumberland is also a big priority. For example, at Wayside Point Ascent Homes built 28 homes for affordable rent for Northumberland-based housing association Bernicia, a strategic partner.

And at Willow Farm, it voluntarily provided 27 properties to be offered for either shared ownership or rent via Bernicia.

Sustainability, Paul says, is also high on the Ascent Homes agenda.

He explains: "We'll keep looking at how we can help people to lower their energy costs by building more energy efficient homes, and how new technology can support us in doing this."

Ascent Homes is also supporting the regional economy in a number of ways.





Paul says: "We always try to employ people from Northumberland at our sites and use local labour and trades people for more than 80% of our work. We also use local contractors and SMEs where possible."

Ascent Homes is currently engaged in a major recruitment drive and is bringing trainees and apprentices into the business

It is also helping to improve local amenities. For instance, at Wayside Point, Ascent Homes' planning application included space for a Co-op store to be built at the site – an amenity that the wider Ellington community could benefit from.

There is much more to come...

The company's strategy centres on both providing new homes and investing in people, and it has created an internal design team – including two architects – to support its aims.

"We're expecting significant growth in the number of homes we'll be building over the next two years," says Paul. "At East Ord Vale in East Ord, a village near Berwick-upon-Tweed, we will be building 30 homes. Work is due to commence on that site in the New Year.

"And a new development, Hareshaw Fall, will also be coming soon at a beautiful location in Bellingham – it will feature 26 homes."

Paul sums up the Ascent Homes approach: "We are dedicated to providing the right housing, in the right areas, at the right price for the people of Northumberland.

"We want people to be proud to say they live in our houses...and we want to be proud to hand over the keys!"

To find out more about Ascent Homes' developments visit ascent-homes.co.uk



NE1 looks ahead to Christmas and 2024

By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive NE1

As I write this, the team at NE1 are in a celebratory mood. We came out of our successful BID ballot in October, which secured our future for the next five years and ringfenced £11.5 million of investment for the city centre, straight into Newcastle's Christmas and New Year festivities.

Newcastle does Christmas well. The unveiling of Fenwick's famous Christmas window kickstarts the celebrations and the excitement and festive energy builds from there. The Christmas markets led by Newcastle City Council, festive lights, and NE1's events add up to a packed seasonal programme which will continue into the New Year with a newly refocused Laser Light City celebration. We are proud of the show we put on, but recognise that more needs to be done to enhance Newcastle's Christmas appeal and to attract a larger audience from farther afield.

Over the last few years, we have worked hard and closely with Newcastle City Council to develop Newcastle's Christmas offer and to put the city on the festive map.

Christmas is big business and can deliver a major boost for the economy and local businesses; it will be a key focus for us in the coming years. A strong and compelling Christmas offer brings visitors, from near and far, and generates revenue, both in the festive markets and in the city's businesses.

There is so much more we can do to attract more Christmas tourists who are on the search for somewhere to visit. Newcastle should be considered amongst the top festive destinations in Europe, not just the UK. It is not unreasonable for Newcastle to aspire to be competing with the likes of Manchester, York and Edinburgh, and Berlin, Copenhagen and Budapest on the continent, who are streets ahead of us in the festive stakes.

Newcastle already has many of the elements to make a great Christmas destination; expanding markets, a pop-up festive-themed bar, an ice-rink and other seasonal fun, not to mention the city's picture postcard iconic locations, stunning architecture, walkability, and our world-renowned all-year-round leisure and hospitality scene. To increase our appeal as a Christmas destination we need to increase the quantity and scale of our festive offer as well as increase our visibility. Newcastle needs to be on the radar when people are planning their next seasonal adventure.

Since 2021 and the first Christmas post-pandemic, Newcastle City Council has run the Christmas Market with help and support from NE1. 2022 was a year of real growth, helped by the addition of Old Eldon Square as a new area, and more stalls, which increased visitor numbers and spending. An additional 700,000 visitors came to the market against the previous year generating an on-site and in-city spend of £47 million, by those visiting specifically to go to the markets.

This year the market has more stalls and has managed to retain its local focus. A lot of hard work has gone into keeping the event local. Two-thirds of all the stalls are occupied by businesses from within just 10 miles of the city centre, and 84% are occupied by those within 20 miles, ensuring the city's Christmas Market has a distinct North East flavour.

NE1 has also worked with Newcastle City Council and with BAFTA award-winning artist, Seb-Lee Delisle to deliver a revamped Laser Light City show for this year's New Year's Eve celebrations. To return the attention and focus to New Year's Eve itself, Laser Light City has

been condensed into a one-night-only extravaganza. Three shows will be celebrated at 6pm, 9pm and midnight on the 31st December providing a major fanfare and restoring the sense of occasion and celebration. Tens of thousands of visitors are expected to descend on the city to ring in the New Year.

When all the festive celebrations are over comes a renewed focus on the year ahead and the exciting opportunities that await the city. 2023 was a year of much change within the city centre and we expect 2024 to follow the same exciting course.

Huge sections of Newcastle are either in the throes of redevelopment or are primed and ready for work to start. Building continues on Pilgrim Street with the construction of Pilgrim's Quarter, the impressive new North-East headquarters for HMRC. Hailed as the largest office development in Newcastle's city centre's history and thought to be one of the largest single-occupier building projects in the UK, the complex is rapidly taking shape with the newly installed curved glass façade marking a major milestone in this landmark development. Neighbouring Bank House, another newcomer to Pilgrim Street, officially opened this year and welcomed its first occupants. The building has set the bar high for quality office space within this new commercial district.

2024 promises to be another year of major developments across the city with work continuing at the Helix, and at the Gateshead International Conference Centre, as well as at sites around Central Station and the Utilita Arena. For the next five to ten years, investment and growth will be hard-wired into Newcastle's DNA with cranes visible on the horizon, and the fabric of the city changing before our eyes, it's an exciting time.

It is fantastic to be starting the year in this position but it needs to be matched by a collective plan and vision for the city's long-term success. A growing city will inevitably experience growing pains. Bringing more people into Newcastle whether for festive fun or long-term work and living will bring with it more problems. On the upside, more people means more economic growth and spending, but on the downside means more litter and other potential problems.

Recent transport issues with road, rail and public services have highlighted the need for a well-thought-out transport plan that addresses the city's growth and the need for quality and efficiency to match the wider investment.

Major efforts have been made to attract people, investment and business to the city but this is just the start of the story, not the end. 2024 will be the year to focus on the next chapter, and with our destiny in our own hands, we will continue to drive for further success.

newcastlene1ltd.com



A year in the life of...

Peter Moore

Executive Director, T3 Security

What did you set out to achieve this year?

We set out to expand our area of operations into further regions of the UK and also expand our management structure to enable us to continue to deliver high quality results to our clients.

Has everything went according to plan?

2023 has produced better results than we had hoped for, we have successfully expanded into a number of regions in the UK and also added some fantastic members to our management team who have really raised the bar in terms of our service delivery.

What are you most proud of this year?

I am most proud of the work we have done to strengthen and grow our management team, we have always had the most passionate team in the industry but sometimes what we lacked was the experience necessary to handle growth. This year we have added some real talent to the team and we have also seen other longer serving members take on additional responsibility and develop their skillset due to the mentoring of our leadership.

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

To take the opportunity to celebrate the wins no matter how big or small, in an industry like security that never stops moving its easy to just jump straight onto the next challenge and before you know it each day blends into the next, its great to be able to sometimes take time out to celebrate a win with your team and show them that what they are doing really matters.



Tell us about your team?

I think our team is now the strongest it has ever been, we have made some key changes this year which has paid dividends and also raised the performance of our existing team.

What has been the most enjoyable deal you've been involved with?

Theres been some fantastic deals I have been involved with this year but the one that sticks in my memory is rolling out multiple venue security contracts across 4 different cities for Stonegate pub company over the first three months of the year, this added some brilliant new Stonegate brands to our client list.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

I have learnt that im never happy staying still in business im always looking for the next

challenge, since we have expanded our team my job role has become much less intense, it would be easy these days to sit back and let them do all the work but as ive found I get bored pretty fast and I actually thrive in that intense environment.

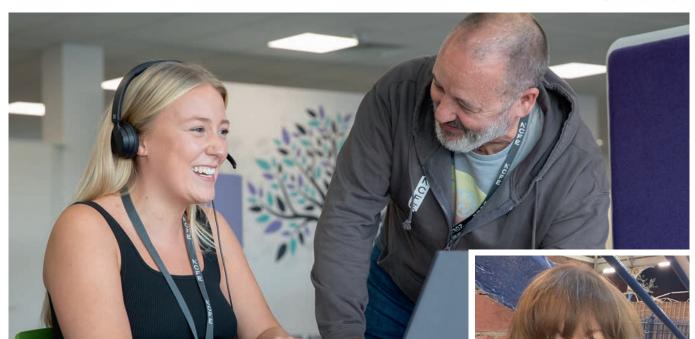
Describe 2023 in 3 words...

Expansion, Development, Stronger.

What are your aims for 2024?

Things are already looking up for 2024, we have some exciting new contracts starting with new and existing clients so its looking like further expansion is on the cards. Our target is to expand into regions further into the North West and up into Scotland.

www.t3security.co.uk



Connecting with a purpose: life as an educational charity

Celebrating its 175th anniversary year, NCFE is an awarding organisation, leader in technical and vocational education, and also a registered educational charity.

Emma Hoare, Head of Governance at NCFE, explains more about the organisation, the work they're doing that is having a social impact, and the benefits of working for a charity.

What makes NCFE a charity?

To be registered as a charity, an organisation must be established exclusively for public benefit and have aims that fall into a predefined category that the law says are charitable. Here at NCFE, our aim is the advancement of education – our core purpose is promoting and advancing learning to create a fairer society, and our beneficiaries are our learners.

As well as being a charity, we're also a registered company limited by guarantee, which means we don't have shareholder returns to satisfy, but we do have a Board of Trustees and Directors.

What does NCFE do as an educational charity?

NCFE was first born in 1848 from the belief that no learner should be left behind - a cause which continues to drive our people today.

We believe that through shaping smarter learning, we can empower a fairer society, facilitate excellent learning experiences, create opportunities to progress and change lives for the better. We exist to help individuals to realise their true potential - whatever their starting point, and whatever their destination.

So how do we do this? From world-class qualifications and content to new innovative assessment methodologies, from technology platforms to effective partnerships - we seek to develop and invest in solutions which provide the highest learning quality experiences for all.

For example, our £1 million Assessment Innovation Fund is helping to break boundaries in assessment through investment to support and pilot new ideas. One such pilot has just been run by The Sheffield College, which has been testing the effects of how virtual reality (VR) can be used effectively in summative and formative assessment.

Further investments and partnerships that we're proud to have established include our work with the unique social impact project Good for ME Good for FE, our project with the Greater Manchester Learning Provider Network (GMLPN) to increase apprenticeship opportunities for young autistic people, and our Centre of Excellence programme which develops worldclass educators in partnership with WorldSkills UK.

What are the benefits of working for a charity?

Charities have a very clear sense of purpose and aim to make society better, which can bring much stronger motivation and job satisfaction than working in a commercial sector.

They can also bring together people who care deeply about a cause and who feel a connection to the purpose - for us here at NCFE, that means making a difference to learners and ultimately, society.

This was the case for our People Product Manager, Holly Ferdinando, who explains the importance of working at a charitable organisation with a clear

She said: "Having originally started my HR career in the charity sector by chance, I quickly realised the importance for me personally in working for an organisation whose purpose and values strongly align with my own, and who aims to make a real difference through what they do.

"Since then, I have specifically sought out roles just within the charity sector, and it was a key reason for applying to work at NCFE. Working at a charity in a support function such as HR has enabled me to meaningfully make a wider contribution to an overall purpose and feel connected to this through my work."

How is the culture at NCFE impacted by being a charity?

By having a clearly defined purpose, our colleagues understand how they can contribute and make a difference through the work they do, and this is something we're proud of. Our People Services team runs quarterly engagement surveys and one of the most consistently highestscoring responses is - 'I understand how my work contributes to our core purpose.'

As a charity we want all our people to connect deeply with our purpose and to feel inspired by our vision for the future, which impacts how we set organisational goals and objectives so that colleagues can feel fulfilled and valued by their contributions.

To find out more about life at NCFE and explore the current career opportunities that are available, visit our careers page www.ncfe.org.uk/careers



Saward Marketing & Events... they're a bunch of show offs!

And what they're showing off is you, your products, your services and your company.



Jack Saward has been involved with events and marketing for over 25 years. His father was in the same line of business, so Jack has seen everything there is to see when it comes to making an event or a display hit the target.

And of course, the target is to promote the client's products or services to the right market and help generate sales and contacts.

One of his clients is Sam Haygarth, Sales Director for Con Mech Engineers in Stanley. Con Mech specialise in the production of ground engaging tools...they're the blades and cutting equipment you see on earthmoving equipment.

Sam commented. "I've been with the company for over 10 years and one of the first things I realised was that we were relying heavily on existing clients. We needed to publicise who we were and what we did because, up to that point, companies and individuals outside of the region didn't know who we were and what we offered.

Consequently, I got in touch with Jack Saward nine years ago and he's been with us ever since. He's very creative and quickly pointed us in the right direction of how we should promote ourselves and which events he felt would work for us. He does a lot of research... gets to know the company and the products...and then designs everything. He creates and provides the stands; they erect them, advise on layout and assists with potential stand locations to make sure that we are situated in the best possible place for our company. He even suggested alternatives during the COVID pandemic.

As well as here in the UK, we now exhibit internationally and I can honestly say, that without Jack and his events and marketing team, we certainly wouldn't have been able to attract the wide spread of companies we now work with. We see Saward Marketing & Events as an extension to our company...they really are that important to us."

Which is precisely how Jack would want every client to view his company. They manage all things event related so that the client doesn't have to take on that responsibility in-house.

Saward Marketing and Events work extensively on projects here in the UK, but also internationally. This year has seen them in the USA, Holland, Italy, Germany...and when we caught up with Jack he was packing his bags to head off to Dubai for a global event, having just returned from an international trade show in Germany where they were working for Canadian and Australian clients.

Which means he's going to miss a couple of events he'd love to have attended because Saward Marketing and Events are now a sponsor of the women's basketball team at the Newcastle Eagles.

"We're not a huge organisation, but we want to try and put as much back into our community and region as possible," said Jack. "I'm a father of three daughters and I want to encourage our female role models, so what better way to do it than via sport. It's all part of our social responsibility and I would encourage other firms to play their part. The Eagles do a great job engaging with the community and we're doing our bit to help them."

And that's something the Newcastle Eagles Managing Director, Paul Blake, is really appreciative of.

"Without the backing of companies like Saward Marketing & Events, we wouldn't be able to fulfil as many community programmes as we do," said Paul. "We are part of the North East sporting landscape and are fully aware of the influence we have on people...especially young people...and we want to use our club as a role model. I've known Jack for many years, too many too mention. He has been a staunch supporter of the Club and Foundation going back to the late 90's and his industry insight, particularly with regard to his vast experience in the events sector, has been invaluable over the years."

In other words, Saward Marketing & Events can make a huge difference to you, your business or the services you provide. They get you noticed. They become part of your business...they'll sort your events, your marketing and your PR, and let you concentrate on everything else.

So, do you fancy showing off a bit?

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

Have a chat with Jack Saward. Give him a call on 07788 660996 or email jack@saward-me.com. We'd also point you in the direction of his website...www.saward-me.com and we'd certainly encourage you to check out Jack's LinkedIn profile which has regular updates. www.linkedin.com/in/jacksaward





A year in the life of...

Steven Johnson

Director, Johnson Procurement Solutions.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

At the beginning of the year the main aim was to continue growing on the same trajectory we had done during the previous year. That was a significant achievement and milestone for JPS as a business.

To build on this we needed to first retain our existing client relationships as well as securing opportunities with new clients' targets identified in our business development strategy. We have successfully done this and we look forward to the New Year.

Has everything went according to plan?

In business when does it ever go according to plan!?

But in the most part, yes, this was effectively achieved through securing additional works with our existing clients and in addition we were also successful in securing contracts with both Centrica and Johnson Matthey going forward. These are exciting times for us

What are you most proud of this year?

At JPS we celebrated our seven-year anniversary this year. I am very proud of what we have achieved to reach that milestone.

What I am most proud of is the way the team has performed for our clients, especially the younger members who have gained some real industry experience over the past few years. They have been able to demonstrate their capability supporting our clients project requirements.

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

I think, for me, it would be: 'Don't worry about the things you can't control.'

If you have put the work in to the best of your ability and been clear on what you can offer, that's all you can do so don't sweat it.

Some things will happen and some things will not. If it doesn't happen, then move on to the next opportunity.

Tell us about your team?

At JPS we have some great talent. I am lucky to have a dedicated team who understand what we are trying to achieve as a business and they have all fully bought into the vision of where we are going as a business.

The team is quite diverse with experience ranging from just a few years up to 40+ years in the procurement and commercial sector.



What has been the most enjoyable deal you've been involved with?

With running a procurement and commercial consultancy, me and the JPS team are constantly involved in procurement or commercial deals in one shape or another.

Whether it's live major project procurement or agreeing a contractor final account, every deal is important as we need to ensure we are getting the best possible solution for our clients.

Personally, the most enjoyable deals are when all parties agree 'this is best solution for the overall project' with contractual risk clearly apportioned to ensure the project is set up for success.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

The key thing this year is learning to delegate more to the team. This not only takes some of the pressure off me but also empowers the team to take full responsibility and deliver in full on their tasks. For a control freak this has been hard for me.

Describe 2023 in three words...

Busy. Fantastic. Exciting.

What are your aims for 2024?

Our aim for 2024 is to continue with our current business growth strategy to achieve a turnover target of £2m as well as continue to develop new client relationships. We also want to increase the size of our team to support new business and most importantly have fun doing it.

jps-procurementsolutions.com

ACEDA completes headquarters relocation as business growth soars

Technology provider – ACEDA, who offer network infrastructure and electronic security solutions, has recently relocated to a new headquarters at Tees House in Stockton.

The move comes after ACEDA has significantly grown its sales revenue consistently over the past three years and has increased its workforce significantly, as it aims to ensure the ISO accredited quality of service is maintained across the business.

To align with long-term business plans, the expansion will optimise current operations allowing the business to continue servicing its growing nationwide client base, including British Land, Northumbrian Water, Teesside University, Durham County Council and Tees, Esk & Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust.

Aiding their growth journey, ACEDA have secured a major public sector contract for ESPO and several planned preventative maintenance and support contracts for top northeast universities and local NHS Health trusts.

The new premises will enable ACEDA to provide the highest level of service across all disciplines, including electronic security services such as CCTV, access control, intruder detection and intercom systems and network infrastructure solutions such as fibre optic cabling, network cabling, wireless LAN and IT managed services.

Following extensive renovation to benefit its employees, the new first floor location includes state-of-the-art office space for collaborative working, a staff breakout room and training and conference facilities.

Speaking on the move Michael Lynch, Technical Accounts Director said: "Our new premises represents an important step for ACEDA to facilitate future growth. The first floor of Tees House is the perfect location to service our current customer base and offer solutions to new potential clients.

"We have created an inspiring workspace for our employees that aligns with our overall business, social and sustainability values and the more centralised location means we will also be significantly lowering our carbon footprint by reducing vehicle mileage. We look forward to a bright future ahead in our new HQ."

Revolutionary tech platform lands first adopter

AV Dawson, owner and operator of the Port of Middlesbrough, has become the first business to adopt an innovative new piece of software to support talent acquisition and opportunities around UK Freeports.

Described as a digital gateway and a central hub for all employment, career and development opportunities associated with the UK Freeports, Freeport is open to businesses looking for talent within the Freeport sector and for individuals interested in working within the industry.

The website is powered by brand new and innovative software – KLIK UK (Saas) or 'KLIK'. This technology is used to power Freeport along with other community platforms. KLIK has been created to disrupt and transform the recruitment sector.

Freeport is the first 'Careers & Community' SaaS platform powered by KLIK. It was created to provide a one-stop, wholly immersive and engaging community – to promote all business, career and development opportunities in and around each freeport in the UK.

KLIK is the first socially driven platform of its kind. It is designed to bridge the divide between education, aspiration, careers, training and



employment, one industry at a time.

Kelly M. Whitfield, founder and CEO of KLIK UK (SaaS) Ltd, said: "We are absolutely delighted to welcome AV Dawson as the first adopter of our Freeport community platform, powered by KLIK.

"For an eminent business such as AV Dawson to recognise and believe in our innovation, marks an exciting milestone in KLIK's development.

"This partnership demonstrates the huge potential of what we have created and the mission we are on; to provide the technology to power wholly immersive, connected and engaging communities online"

AV Dawson is the first ever business to adopt the platform, with more names due to utilise the platform soon.



North East industrial technology business – Tracerco - celebrates 65th anniversary

North East industrial technology solutions provider, Tracerco, is celebrating a significant anniversary as it marks 65 years in business.

What began as a scientific research team in 1958 has now evolved into a business operating across all six continents and with a global team of over 400 staff.

Specialists in detection, diagnostic, and measurement solutions for the global oil, gas, and process industries, the company prides itself on driving technological advancements, innovation, and cutting-edge solutions that enhance safety, efficiency, and cost savings.

Reflecting on the milestone, Tracerco's Managing Director, Jon Tate, said: "As we reflect on our remarkable history of innovation and excellence, we are grateful for the unwavering commitment and expertise of our team members and our global customers who have contributed to our success.

"Together, we have overcome challenges, embraced new technologies, and exceeded expectations. With our deep-rooted passion for delivering cutting-edge solutions, Tracerco continues to revolutionise the industry and shape the future of industrial technology. I am very much looking forward to many more years of pushing boundaries.

"With a reputation for ingenuity, professionalism, and expertise, our global teams operate seamlessly in the most challenging environments, working with hazardous materials to deliver unparalleled results across the globe".



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What sets us apart is not just the certification itself, but the tangible benefits it brings to your business. With our Managed IT Services, you'll experience a seamless integration of ISO 27001 best practices into your IT infrastructure. This translates to a proactive and robust defence against cyber threats, ensuring that your business is always one step ahead of potential risks.

Our team of skilled IT professionals is dedicated to providing round-the-clock support, monitoring, and maintenance. We don't just fix issues; we prevent them from occurring in the first place. This proactive approach to IT management means that you can focus on your core business activities while we handle the complexities of your IT

environment.

Cost efficiency is another compelling advantage of our Managed IT Services. By outsourcing your IT needs to us, you eliminate the need for expensive in-house IT teams and the associated overhead costs. No holiday pay, no absence to worry about – just service. Our subscription-based model ensures that you pay only for the services you need, optimising your IT budget and freeing up resources for strategic initiatives.

But it's not just about cost savings; it's about future-proofing your business. Our Managed IT Services are designed to scale alongside your growth, ensuring that your IT infrastructure remains agile and adaptable. Whether you're expanding your operations or embracing new technologies, our services provide the flexibility to accommodate your evolving business needs.

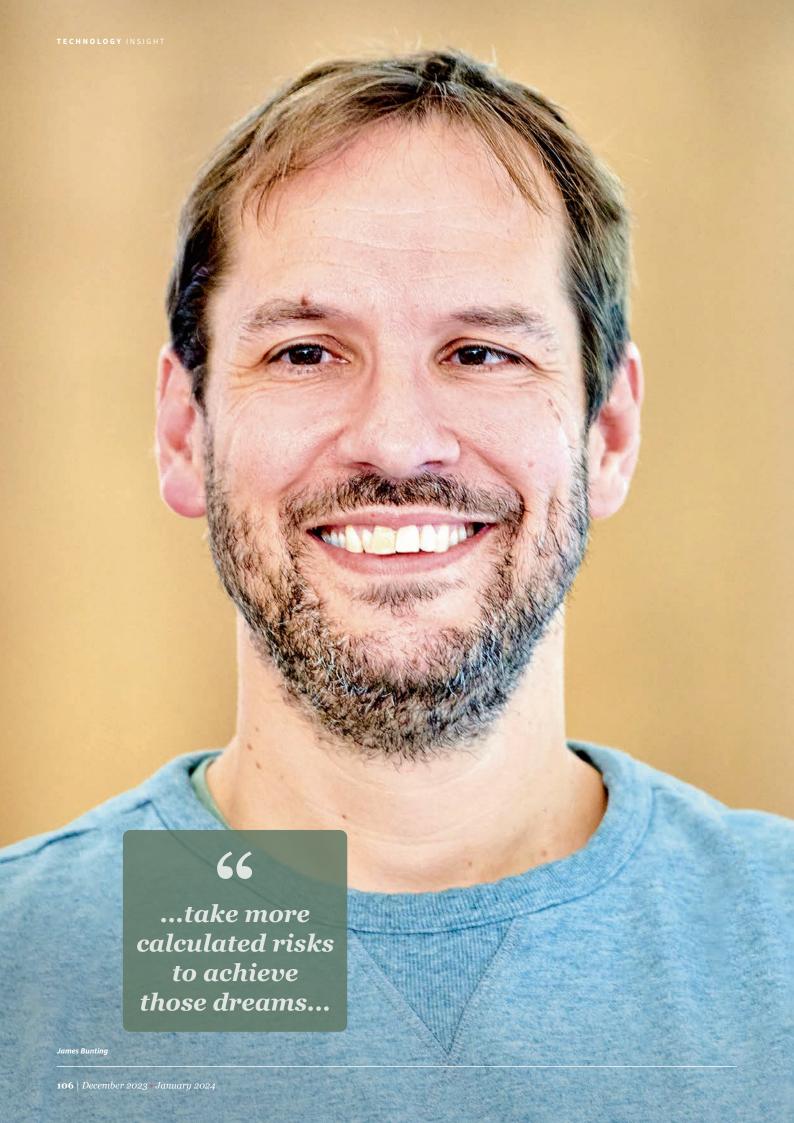
In conclusion, choosing our Managed IT Services with ISO 27001 certification is not just a smart business decision; it's a transformative one.

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A year of growth, challenges, and collaboration: Reflecting on Leighton's journey in 2023

By James Bunting, CEO, Leighton

As the year draws to a close, it's a time for reflection and celebration at Leighton. In this article, Leighton's CEO, James Bunting shares the highlights, challenges, and personal growth experienced as he's led the North's leading AWS software development business over the past year.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

Along with continuing to grow our business and a number of other key initiatives, at the beginning of the year, we set out to attain AWS Advanced Partner status. Achieving this milestone required a multifaceted approach involving team training so colleagues could gain AWS certifications, delivering more AWS solutions to customers to demonstrate our expertise, and ensuring high customer satisfaction scores. I'm thrilled to announce that in October, Leighton successfully became an AWS Advanced Partner, which is a testament to the dedication of the entire team.

Has everything gone according to plan?

Of course not! I suspect we're not the only business that can't say that everything has gone to plan either. What I will say is that whilst we have delivered on most of our key initiatives for this year, a couple have fallen short of our expectations. This has typically been as a result of resource constraints. Personally, I think it is one of the more important roles of a CEO to ensure the team have the resources they need to be successful, so it's really frustrating when I don't achieve that for them.

What are you most proud of this year?

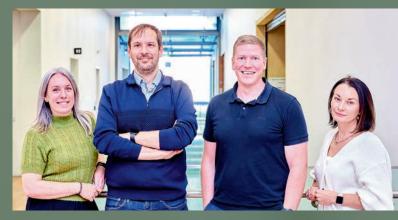
Reflecting on the year, several achievements stand out that I'm really proud of. This year Leighton was officially recognised as "A Great Place to Work" and one of the "Best Places to Work in Tech" by Great Place To Work® acknowledging our commitment to nurturing top talent. We also received recognition from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for the work we do with British Airways in ensuring its digital products are accessible for all – it's always a proud moment when our customers receive recognition.

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

One piece of advice that has stuck with me this year is that not everything needs to be perfect. If I lead the team to focus on achieving perfection, we will be slow, things won't get done and tasks and work will build up. Focusing on making sure everything is the best it can be in the time we have, helps us achieve momentum and is empowering for our teams. We can always come back and improve in the future.

Tell us about your team...

Where do I start? The team at Leighton is now nearly 100 colleagues strong! We've got experts who cover the entire software development lifecycle from analysts and architects to software and quality engineers and UX/UI designers. Our entire team embody our values. Everyone is so nurturing, naturally curious, super transparent and accountable, passionate about their profession and incredibly collaborative. They really challenge and encourage me to be the best version of myself, every day.



What have you learned about yourself this year?

There are two big takeaways for me this year. Firstly, I think I've learnt a lot about my resilience. As I said earlier, not everything has gone according to plan professionally. At the same time, my wife and I, our three kids and our dog have lived in a caravan for six months while we have developed our house. Another project that hasn't gone entirely to plan. But despite the setbacks along the way, I've found that I've always been able to pick myself up (and others) and find alternative ways to achieve our goals. Secondly, I've learnt that I can dream big again! The pandemic very much knocked my confidence professionally. I found that as we were building back up, I was very risk-adverse. I think that probably stunted our growth, as I delayed making decisions. Now a couple of years on, I feel that I'm starting to dream bigger again and take more calculated risks to achieve those dreams.

Describe 2023 in three words...

Growth. Challenge. Collaboration.

What are your aims for 2024?

Looking ahead, the focus for 2024 is to bring Leighton's expertise to two or three new customers in the North East. We'd love to bring a few more AWS-based solutions to market next year, whether it be a proof of concept or enterprise application. So, if you're looking for a custom software solution, you know where to find us.

leighton.com



How AI is supercharging learning & development

By Richard Coates, MD & Co-Founder, Lumanorth

Online training and learning has entered a new realm with the integration of AI in learning technologies; expanding what is possible, elevating the benefits of technology-delivered training, and enhancing the learner experience. We detail some of the benefits it offers below:

Personalised Learning Experiences

L&D practitioners can very quickly develop personalised learning courses and programmes that can be tailored to the needs of each team or individual. For example, depending on how the learner engages and responds to interactive training (for example, formative and summative assessment through the course, such as quizzes), the content presented may vary, adapting accordingly to address areas requiring more training, leading to better engagement and learning. This is very different to traditional eLearning, which tends to follow a linear progression and is much less effective.

Identifying Learning Gaps and Closing Them

Addressing skill gaps is one of the top priorities for L&D practitioners in order to improve the learner performance. Ascertaining knowledge gaps manually without AI can be a much more resource-intensive and drawn-out exercise, and potentially much less accurate. Conversely, with AI integrated learning platforms, skills gaps can be identified much faster and addressed much more efficiently.

Addressing Learning Styles

With the flexibility enabled through AI, content can be selected and presented to best suit different learners (and their differing needs) and different learning styles. This is based on how they perform to different training formats and the learning outcomes achieved.

Targeted suggested content

Much like the Amazon e-commerce format whereby suggested items you may like to buy are shown based on past shopping habits, AI can do similar in a learning environment. With AI, there is the ability to provide highly relevant content suggestions, as well as give recommendations. This can be based on profile criteria, such as an employee's job title, core duties, interests, and, of course, the content they've already engaged with and content that would serve to plug knowledge gaps.

Learner Autonomy

Following on from the above, as with the ability to present more relevant and more personalised training content comes increased learner autonomy — and potentially the freeing up R&D practitioners' time by reducing the need to prescribe courses. This will in turn promote self-directed learning, allowing the individual to be more empowered.

Support Learners Proactively

As Al-powered technology gathers more user data and is fed more content it continuously evolves, becoming increasingly better at spotting patterns in activity (with both content and the performance of the learner).

Subsequently, with AI, learner profiles can be created providing data-informed training programmes that are more likely to have the desired learning outcome.

Increasing Productivity

Al improves the overall efficacy of learning programmes, increasing course completion duration and rates. As learning content is targeted, knowledge acquisition is often greater, upskilling learners better and quicker, improving their productivity.

Immediate Feedback

Al tools can mark, measure and evaluate learners' performance, aiding with reporting and learner insights and returning feedback more quickly.

Improve User Experience (UX)

From a very practical point of view, AI can make learning content easier to find, can simplify technology-based workflows, and make the learning experience a more enjoyable one (for example, by not presenting irrelevant content or duplicating training where learning outcomes have been achieved).

Modify Learner Behaviour

As AI enables learning technology platforms to fast-track training, learners can more effectively complete courses, providing the individual with a sense of achievement and encouraging future use of the platform. It can also mean that training content need not be as long and repetitive, and so bite-sized learning is better supported, helping to encourage learning and knowledge building on a more regular basis.

BentoBot Al

Our own learning platform, BentoBot, draws upon AI as part of a hybrid technology suite to provide a new-age, bite-sized, multi-modal platform that can be used anywhere and anytime.

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The Power of Collaboration: Enhancing Wellbeing with Gosforth Family Chiropractic and The Alnwick Garden

Gosforth Family Chiropractic (GFC) and The Alnwick Garden have collaborated to offer an innovative solution as part of the Wellbeing program. The Activator Method chiropractic technique, used by GFC, is a gentle alternative to traditional manipulation techniques. It provides a comfortable and efficient adjustment for patients of all ages, making it beneficial for babies, the elderly, and individuals sensitive to touch.

Alnwick Garden has embraced this collaboration by offering monthly Activator Method chiropractic treatment. This has improved the health and comfort of its older members of staff and volunteers. The technique not only targets physical pain but also promotes overall wellness, improving mobility and quality of life.

The partnership between GFC and The Alnwick Garden showcases the power of collaboration in reaching a wider audience and positively impacting lives. By investing in innovative approaches to wellbeing, they are setting a new standard for holistic care.

This collaboration between Gosforth Family Chiropractic and The Alnwick Garden is transforming lives, one gentle adjustment at a time.

"Through our collaboration with Gosforth



Family Chiropractic, we have witnessed the remarkable impact of the Activator Method on the wellbeing of our volunteers and staff. It has truly transformed their lives, providing them with a gentle and effective solution to address their physical discomfort. We are proud to be part of this innovative partnership that

is setting a new standard for holistic care. This partnership allows attending for treatment to be more manageable for all at The Alnwick Garden and we are very appreciative of this." Tracey Graham, Alnwick Garden.

www.gosforthfamilychiropractic.com



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A year of growth for Integrity as they welcome two new members of staff



South Tyneside based IT support provider, Integrity Technology, are celebrating a year of success as they welcome two new members of staff to their team.

Providing flexible IT support services to organisations throughout the North East, the business has gained several new clients this year, working on projects from complete network installations, IT support and Microsoft 365 cloud services.

Launched by owner Jon Place in 2010, the company has continued to grow its range of services, earlier this year launching their cloud hosted VoIP telephone systems which has been a huge success with many clients benefiting from the packages.

Following the increase in demand for their flexible, contract free services, the company decided to invest in an IT apprentice and a business administration executive to further support their team.

Daniel, who joined the company in September is currently studying his apprenticeship whilst gaining valuable experience from the knowledgeable Integrity team. With a vast customer service background, Liz has recently joined the company to support clients with their IT requests and manage the internal office.

Reflecting on their successful year, Jon commented, 'What a year 2023 has been. We've experienced a huge demand for our services and have onboarded several new clients throughout the year, this has enabled us to invest in the business further, employing two new members of staff and also undergo extensive refurbishments to our office and workshop in Boldon.

I've always appreciated the value in training the younger generation and giving them

opportunities within the sector which is why we decided to employ Daniel as our IT apprentice. Once he completes his training, he will be joining our experienced team of engineers, one of which actually started his career at Integrity as an apprentice himself. This demonstrates how investing in young people can make a positive long-term impact on the business.

I'm delighted that Liz has also joined us, she will be a great addition to ensure continued excellent customer service for our clients and I'm sure will also bring new ideas and opportunities within the business.

With lots of plans already in place for 2024, we're looking forward to another successful year and continuing our expansion of services and support, a huge well done has to go to the whole team for their commitment to the business, hard work certainly does pay off!"

integritytechnology.co.uk

Make your organisation fit for the future: Technology advances you must be ready for in 2024

Synergi is helping businesses in the North East become fitter for the future, guiding organisations to invest in the right technology that will support their growth, reduce risk and deliver measurable results. Here, Synergi put the spotlight on four key technology advances that organisations can't afford to ignore.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Organisations of all sizes across our region have the passion and vision to grow and innovate but face many challenges and limitations when it comes to harnessing the potential that our data and technology is able to provide; that's where Al comes in.

As one example, Generative AI has exploded onto the scene in recent months, sending people and businesses into a whirlwind of questions over its uses and potential benefits. This technology can take a simple set of data and use it to create something new - like an image, an email to client, or a PowerPoint presentation - when prompted by a human. This capability is surfacing in everyday cloud platforms and has the potential to improve operations, customer experiences and much more.

Al will also play a crucial role in enhancing security and reducing risks, mitigating the potential threats posed by enhanced malware, misinformation and cyberattacks. Al Trust, Risk and Security Management (Al TRISM) is emerging strongly to ensure the ethical, transparent and accountable use of Al in business applications.



Low code/no-code

Low code/no code (LCNC) is a trend in software that enables users to create applications with little or no coding; its already mainstream within cloud platforms such as Microsoft 365. 2024 will see a significant growth and maturity in these technologies (which are predicted to reach a global market of \$26.9 billion).

Being able to use low code no code tools means that non-IT professionals can create and maintain assets such as automated documents, e-signature solutions, custom workflow and mobile applications. Gartner predict that by next year, 65% of application development will be delivered this way and that represents a huge opportunity to power digital transformation,

innovation and collaboration like never before. Microsoft's Power Platform is one of the most powerful examples of just how far low code/no code technologies have come; enabling users to create secure apps, workflows, chatbots and dashboards for web and mobile devices, using pre-built templates, drag-and-drop components and data connectors.

Cyber Security Posture

A Cyber Security Posture simply describes an organisations readiness to deal with Cyber security threats. Typically it will cover People, Services, Hardware, Software and Policies. Some simple questions relating to Cyber Security that you should consider:



- People Is your workforce appropriately and regularly trained?
- Services Are they implemented correctly and reviewed regularly? (Think about Cloud technologies like Microsoft 365, this should be regularly reviewed and improved)
- Hardware/Software Are systems appropriate and vendor supported for security updates and firmware patches?
- Policies Are they comprehensive, appropriate, up to date and visible to your

Cyber Security Risk Management

Most businesses have a regularly updated risk register, but many will not have a Cyber Risk

Register. Understanding todays risks, likelihood of an attack and the potential impact is extremely important. In many cases this can be the most significant risk for a business.

Risk Rating - There are excellent tools to help you understand your own Cyber risk status rating and identify supply chain risk. These are widely used in large Enterprise businesses today and will become more mainstream with prospects using them to assess the risk of trading with you.

Risk Frameworks - Most cover broadly similar key themes from three to eight steps, typically in line with risk management;

1. Identify – Find the potential risks or new risks since the last assessment

- Assess Review the potential impact and likelihood of these risks having an impact on the organisation
- Remediate Implement changes, procedures or technical controls to remove or minimise the risk
- 4. Monitor & Report Communicate changes, check remediations had the desired impact and monitor for further issues

If you need guidance to understand your Cyber Risks and where investment will add value, the team at Synergi are here to help.

www.teamsynergi.co.uk

Famous Spennymoor mining artist's son gets first look at showhomes created in Dad's honour

A new development created by leading housebuilder Lovell Homes has been named in honour of Spennymoor legendary mining artist Norman Cornish.

In recognition of the local artist's legacy some of the street names have been named after his most famous works which have also gone on to inspire the names of the new show homes. The three-bedroom show home, The Cornish and the four-bedroom show home, The Ramsey, feature plenty of references to Norman's work too, including displays of some of his works on the walls.

To celebrate, his son John Cornish was invited to view the new show homes at the Cornish Park development for the first time.

John Cornish said: "This is certainly a unique way of recognising my father's legacy and his contribution to the history of Spennymoor and its people. We're so pleased that Lovell has not only named the development in his honour, but also featured some of his work in the new show homes too."





Miller Homes North East raises £26,000 for hospice

Miller Homes picked St Oswald's Hospice as its chosen charity in 2021 and since then has been involved in a whirl of fundraising activities to help support the hospice in its vital work.

And that dedication and commitment from the Miller Home staff has led to the substantial donation, with the hope of raising even more money in the future.

Staff at Miller Homes were asked to choose a charity and St Oswald's Hospice received the most nominations.

Trudy Alexander, charity ambassador for Miller Homes, has helped kick start the activities which included events such as Walk-tober, where every mile covered during October generated a £1 donation from the company.

That was followed by Miller Miles in 2022 and Active April earlier this year, where 9999 miles were clocked up – leading to a donation of £9999.

Coffee mornings, bake sales and challenges such as the Kielder Marathon, the Great North Run and the 3 Peaks Challenge – where participants race to scale the three highest mountains in the British Isles in 24 hours – were all carried out by staff to help raise more funds.

For Trudy choosing St Oswald's Hospice as Miller Homes' North East charity was particularly special, as she has had her own family member looked after there.

"It's a special place and it mean a lot to all of us at Miller Homes to support somewhere local and to know the difference it makes," she said.

Earlier this year Trudy became one of the hospice's Giving Day Champions, joining forces with other companies and supporters to raise more than £330,000 in 33 hours.

Along with the partnership, Miller Homes is also part of St Oswald's Hospice Better Together Business Club, which supports hospice nurses and aims to fully fund two nursing roles through membership.



North East property firm's hiring spree as company aims to become a 'major force'

Just two years ago, Horizon Sales and Lettings compromised of just the three current directors. Now, after a bumper 12 months, it now boasts 20 staff following rapid growth which shows no sign of slowing down.

The new hires are all in key management roles and have grown the Middlesbrough-based firm's workforce by over a third.

However, there's plenty of work to go around, amid feverish interest in the Teesside property market.

"Three years ago, we set a target to sell 60 units a year, but now we are selling significantly more," said Denis Shail, one of the company's directors who is also an experienced mortgage advisor.

"We are consistently achieving high rankings on Rightmove, while enquiries and valuation requests are at record levels."

And co-director Chris Bunn added: "Business is booming, as is the Teesside property market, and that's why we knew that the time was right to expand our talent pool.

"And it comes as no surprise that our staff have absolutely hit the ground running in their new roles."

Launched in 2019, Horizon Sales and Lettings boasts a wealth of experience in the buy to let market, and the firm's success has been built in part on repeat custom from investors keen to utilise the firm's superb local knowledge.

And with the firm's letting management book approaching 500 units, prior to the new hires, the company added two other staff members to that team.

The new staff will take up various roles across the company, in either the estate agency or refurbishment aspects of the blossoming business.



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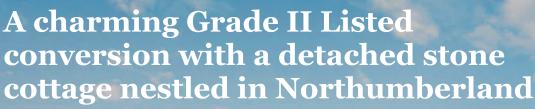
Funding is available to construction companies and property developers* looking to build projects in the seven local authority areas of the North East:

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.

www.fwcapital/property info@fwcapital.co.uk 0191 269 6969











youngsRPS residential property team: Pioneers of change



In the dynamic realm of the property market, change is not just inevitable but often a catalyst for success. With a fresh perspective, a bolstered team, and a renewed commitment to excellence, the revamped residential team is not just adapting to change but thriving in it.

William Thornton, Head of Residential Agency comments, "success is not just measured in transactions but in the ability to redefine industry standards, foster client satisfaction, and adapt to changing landscapes. The team, here in Hexham and Northallerton, stands as a testament to this ethos, emerging as pioneers of success in the real estate sector."

So, what's new?

Strategic Revamp

The journey of the youngsRPS Residential Property Team to success begins with a strategic revamp that breathed new life into

its operations. Recognizing the evolving needs of clients and the ever-shifting dynamics of the property market, youngsRPS underwent a transformation aimed at enhancing services within their residential property offering.

Client-Centric Approach

At the core of the team's triumph is a resolute commitment to a client-centric approach. Every member of the youngsRPS Residential Property Team understands that real estate is not merely about transactions but about fulfilling dreams and aspirations. This ethos has cultivated a culture where clients and their satisfaction is the ultimate barometer of success.

Local Expertise, Wider Vision

One of the key pillars of the team's success is its ability to seamlessly blend local expertise with a wider vision. Understanding the nuances of the North of England property market, they provide clients with insights that go beyond the transactional, creating a holistic and informed property experience.

Exceptional Team Dynamics

Success is often a collective effort, and the youngsRPS Residential Property Team exemplifies the power of exceptional team dynamics. Each member brings a unique set of skills and experiences, creating a synergy that propels the team forward. Collaborative efforts

ensure that clients benefit from a diverse range of perspectives and expertise.

Adaptability in Changing Seasons

Navigating the property market involves adapting to changing seasons, both literally and metaphorically. The youngsRPS team excels in this aspect, displaying agility and foresight to capitalize on market trends. Whether it's the brisk winter market or the blossoming opportunities of spring, they navigate each season with finesse.

Client Success Stories

The true measure of success lies in the stories of satisfied clients. The youngsRPS Residential Property Team has garnered a collection of success stories that underscore their ability to turn clients' visions into reality. Whether it's a first-time homebuyer or a seasoned investor, the team's track record speaks volumes about their dedication to excellence.

As the Property Team continues to flourish, their unwavering commitment to growth symbolises not just a trajectory in success but a promise to continually exceed expectations and pioneer new horizons in the ever-expanding realm of property excellence.

www.youngsrps.com













Contingency costs – planning ahead for a 'rainy day'

By Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield

Each month I ponder on what I should write about, and often the topic picks itself. This last week, many of my clients, on a variety of projects, have been considering how to achieve cost certainty.

I have been expressing the importance and benefits of forward planning, whilst working with them to estimate the right amount of contingency cost for their projects.

I have previously written about the value of quantity surveyors and estimators, and in a

period of continuous high inflation and volatile building rates, their job is tough at the moment.

I took a break last weekend and watched an episode of Grand Designs, featuring a family whose project costs spiralled upwards. Their project became far longer than planned, and stress grew. Great television, but I really felt for the poor family.

It is unproductive to go into a project with unrealistic project cost estimates. The last four years have seen a steep rise in material and labour costs. At each stage of a project, there should be a cost plan prepared. This promotes decision-making at early stages. If difficult conclusions need to be made, it's better that they are made at the start of a project.

Once you have your cost plan for your dream house or new factory, adding contingency costs is wise. These are often added at a minimal level, so are completely ineffective. A sufficient amount of money needs to be budgeted for contingencies, as it is better to have some left over, than not enough to complete the project.

There are many words used in the industry for contingency: provisional sum, optimum bias, risk pot, reserve costs, etc. In simple terms, it is 'rainy day money'; a sum of money allowed in the project for aspects that are unforeseen. A project development team should be able to design out the risks and advise you on a realistic amount.

At the moment, clients often have several types of contingencies: one allowing for the

inflationary impact over the coming months, others for unpredictable factors on their project. So, when planning a project, budget an extra sum and take advice from your team on the amount. This will depend uniquely on the complexity of your project. It doesn't have to be spent, but you will thank yourself later if you need to draw upon it.

As ever, getting the advice of a good architect, project manager and QS, will help you plan through these difficult concepts and convert them into real budgets that reflect the current market conditions. I would encourage everyone to ask about this element of projects.

Contractors also want every project to have an affordable plan. They will always assist in finding more economic solutions, alternative methods of construction and different materials. However, if a project has no reserve or contingency, then problems are almost inevitable. Therefore, seeking their advice on the level of contingency is also essential.

As to the unlucky family on Grand Designs, they were left with a part-finished house, a larger bill than planned and an unenjoyable experience. Early contingency cost planning would have saved a great deal of heartache and debt to pay off.

Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 3849470 or email n.turner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com



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 - Saturday : 9am 5pm •
 - Sunday 10am 4pm •







Hi everyone,

Time is flying, here's another month closer to the holidays. So looking forward to the presents and treats!

I feel like I would have been better wearing my swimming costume, we have had so much rain! Naughty Kinnie comes on a Thursday and Friday, but she is in the doghouse for chewing things.

Expecting Dexter next week - he is good! See ya!

Q. Several years ago I had my windows replaced with double glazing. After a few years, the south-facing ones became subject to occasional, unsightly internal misting. As there was a ten-year guarantee I claimed for renewal of the windows. The insurance company claimed that the condensation was normal and therefore refused the claim.

A. One of the great unspoken truths of sealed double-glazed units (SGUs) is that eventually they will all mist up. The time scale should

be twenty-ish years in a perfectly made and installed window. But in poorly made ones it can be a lot less. Five months has been reported.

So, in a way, the condensation is 'normal', in that it will happen eventually in all windows. But I would have thought you could expect that a ten-year guarantee would reasonably cover you against misting within that time. It depends on the insurers' small print, I suppose.



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

Housing scheme underway at Beauford Park in County Durham



Regional housebuilder Homes by Carlton has started work on a housing development on land at sought-after Witton Gilbert, County Durham.

The County Durham-based company intends to build 29 homes on the site, which will now be known as Beauford Park. The development will be a mix of three, four and five-bedroom detached and semi-detached homes designed to appeal to families.

Among these, Homes by Carlton is delivering a number of homes available to first-time buyers through the First Homes scheme.

Beauford Park represents an £8 million investment and forms part of a £60 million commitment from Homes by Carlton to deliver high quality homes throughout the North East, creating hundreds of jobs over the coming years.

Simon Walker, managing director of Homes by Carlton, said: "Thanks to its perfect location on the outskirts of bustling and historic Durham City and the clear demand for beautiful and practical homes that meet the needs of the local area, the interest we've had in Beauford Park has been exceptional.

"I'm excited to now be one step closer to bringing these luxury homes to market. We're looking forward to showcasing our bespoke designs and high specification to prospective buyers in the area. As a growing regional housebuilder, we pride ourselves in building highly bespoke homes that consider the local community and environment.

"The development of Beauford Park will deliver much-needed housing to the area, allowing for a wealth of attractive options for home movers." Beauford Park is the latest Homes by Carlton scheme with a focus on luxury family homes.

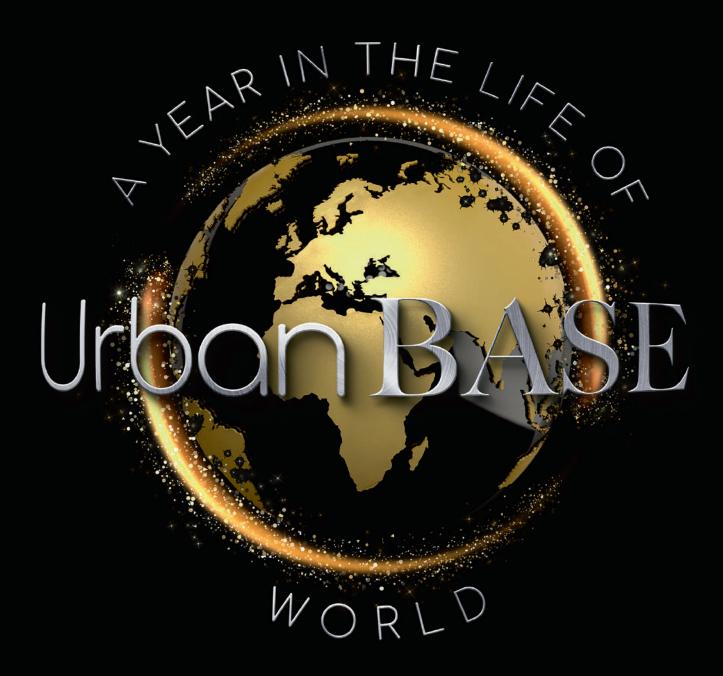
The award-winning housebuilder has a series of sites already well under development including Thorpe Paddocks at Thorpe Thewles; Middleton Waters at Middleton St George; The Langtons in Redmarshall; and Eastfields in Whitton.

Having delivered five schemes across the North East, Homes by Carlton is entering its next phase of growth.

Emma Worth, development manager at Homes by Carlton, said: "We are committed to continuing to build upon our reputation of delivering high quality, distinctly designed family homes in sought-after locations. Beauford Park is set to be another example of this commitment."

"As we move through 2023 and beyond, we will deliver our pipeline of 500 new homes, and continue to add to it through strategic land acquisition."

More details on current and future sites can be found by visiting - www.homesbycarlton.com



Jan Dale

Owner, Urban Base

What did you set out to achieve this year?

2023 has been a challenging year for everyone and almost all businesses have had to commercially adjust to the current climate. From the off-set of 2023 we had to ensure we maintained the ability to continue with the usual strong dynamics of running a specialist property business with our valued clients at the forefront of our business, and retaining our clients loyalty was critical to us.

Has everything gone according to plan?

We actually didn't have a plan as such. In such a volatile market our aim remains for continuous communication, working with vigour within an industry that is in challenging, and fast changing times. However, did everything go as we expected, in a very short word – no! Resilience kicks in, we pick ourselves up and march forward with true grit spirit and determination to meet clients' needs at this unprecedented global time.

What are you most proud of this year?

In business, the team make me proud of the agency every day. We are an incredible happy bunch of hard-working dedicated property experts, and the team make me proud of everything we have achieved, not just this year but the past eighteen years. We are guilty of being the "nice" kids on the block, and long-term relationships are an absolute reflection of the whole team's approach to our business. To give a shout-out to one special client in 2023, being appointed by Jim McIver to source a whole block of tenants for the stunning Ouseburn Quays development, pushed the team to their limits in regards to sales pace in this market, and the power of the team's dynamics kicked in – and we did it, still smilling and a wonderful new client as a result 'Urban McIver' a winning team was the result.

Being on the boards of Lumiere Durham, and the Dunelm Foundation were both special events in the calendar. Supporting the wider community and raising valuable funds for those in need at this time, including the CDCF Poverty Hurts campaign whose ambition was to raise one million in funds for our local families in need. We are proud and privileged to be able to support these amazing fundraising teams.

Monty Python probably had it right; always look on the bright side of life. However having the absolute pleasure of Sir John Hall, DR launching a new residential scheme in Newcastle, Sir John gave a most inspiring speech to our guests about working hard in business, pressing for what you believe in and treating everyone as a family and with respect along the way.

Tell us about your team?

The URBANISTAS, as we call ourselves, are a family. We don't always agree, and some leave the nest (...and return), and we like to challenge each other – this is good for our clients and business, as we are constantly aiming to improve, we are very good at pushing boundaries: good, better, best – never let it rest - til your good is better and your better is best...some say 'she's never happy'!

What has been the most enjoyable deal you've been involved with?

This is impossible to answer. I am so incredibly lucky to work in a world of luxury property, along with truly exceptional clients. However a happy day was meeting Mr Harry Banks, OBE DL of



BANKS Group, what an honour, and the Urban BASE team are now part of the BANKS Group family taking the new business BANKS Homes forward with passion and genuine desire to be the best in the industry. Rekindling a long-lost business relationship with lan Baggett, CEO of Adderstone Group, was a genuine unexpected delight, as we present Hanover Point, the finest luxury apartments on the toon. Supporting Expo Sunderland's Future Cities event and working with the VAUX development sites has been incredibly rewarding to be having impact to the future housing opportunities across our region.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

The current climate is tough, and I have realised I have a natural half-full glass resilience allowing my emotions to survive the ups and downs in business which you don't see coming, and have no control over. Business is not full of friends, however I am gifted to have so many wonderful clients, many of whom have become lifelong friends. However, some pass you by – my personal approach to everything I do in business doesn't allow for the "don't take it personally" approach to be an option.

Describe Your 2023 in three words....

Tough. Resilient. Driven (always).

What are your aims for 2024?

Genuine success, contentment and happiness with everyone we work with. Along with some great sales and friendships along the way.

However, the personal ambition for 2024 has to be... a hole in one!

Wishing everyone very best wishes for the year ahead!

www.urban-base.com

Here in the North East we know County Durham has far more to offer than just its beautiful city and cathedral - and now word is spreading...



From its heritage coastline to the rolling landscape of the Derwent Valley, County Durham offers a breadth of variety and landscapes few other counties can match.

And now it's revealing some of its hidden corners to house buyers from across the UK.

While Durham itself routinely attracts visitors from around the world, keen to explore its cathedral and castle – both UNESCO World Heritage sites – the wider county often goes unexplored.

But now the spotlight is falling on some of its lesser known towns and villages as house hunters seek dream homes in country and coastal settings.

Major building developments in the county have highlighted the charms that can be found in towns such as Chester-le-Street – which not only boasts the historical kudos of being a former Roman settlement but even comes with its own fairytale castle in the shape of nearby Lumley.

Then there's the stunning coastline of Seaham –one of the most beautiful stretches of coastline in the North East, along which the "mad, bad and dangerous to know" early 19th century

poet, Lord Byron, would walk from his marital home, Seaham Hall.

This former mining town is enjoying a renaissance at the moment and is even attracting tourists keen to admire Tommy; the unbelievably poignant statue of a First World War soldier by artist Ray Lonsdale, displayed close to Seaham war memorial, on Terrace Green by the seafront.

Then, further west, there is Tanfield - the home of the world's oldest railway - and the scattering of villages to the west of the county, in the shadow of the Pennines.

And Consett, whose Derwent Valley location is finding favour with buyers keen to experience a semi-rural lifestyle, which combines outdoor living with all the facilities and infrastructure you might expect from a thriving town.

Changing work habits, too, mean commuters have more scope than ever before when choosing a new home, as long as good transport links and reliable internet connectivity are in place

"Here in the North East we've long been aware of County Durham's hidden gems," said Patrick Arkle, regional managing director at Miller Homes North East, which is spearheading a number of developments in the county.

"But now people from outside the area are discovering that there's far more to County Durham than meets the eye.

"It offers the holy trinity of city, country and

coast and that gives it enormous appeal."

Miller Homes current developments include Lambton Park and Trinity Green at Chester-le-Street and Station Fields at Tanfield.

It has also begun selling at its new £250m Seaham Garden Village development, delivering 375 homes.

In addition, future projects include the Bishops Walk development, on the outskirts of Durham city centre and Fellside Gardens at Consett – bringing a total of 898 new homes to the county.

"One of the most appealing aspects of living in County Durham is that it meets so many different requirements," said Patrick.

"It's awash with very good private and state schools and there is still a strong sense of community life in its smaller towns and villages, which are often well equipped with facilities, from supermarkets to sports clubs.

"And, of course, its transport network is superb. It's on the main East Coast rail line so not only are three cities of Durham, Sunderland and Newcastle easily accessible but you can be in the centre of London in just over two and a half hours.

"We've always known it was God's own county and now people from all over the UK are finding that out for themselves."

For more information on Miller Homes' North East developments visit: www.millerhomes.co.uk

Christmas is just around the corner! Are you using your loft space to the best of its ability?

If not, then Access 4 Lofts is your quick, easy, and affordable solution. Don't take out word for it, see what our clients say...



lan 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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Contact us on 0191 933 0780









An iconic Grade II listed property on the North East coast has made a rare appearance on the property market.

The Tynemouth Watchtower in North
Tyneside was built towards the end of World
War One and established as a command tower
for The Tyne Turrets, two guns situated at
Seaton Delaval and South Shields that were
taken from battle cruisers, to defend the coast
from the approaching German enemy.

Owned originally by the War Office, the sevenstorey tower is one of the tallest of its kind and was extensively used during World War Two, playing a vital role in the UK's defence as a strategic lookout.

The tower is beautifully engineered and built primarily of reinforced steel and concrete, and retains a distinctive character amidst its robust design. Boasting three bedrooms, it has many notable decorative features and offers a highly unique residence with unparalleled views of the North East coastline.

Michael Mortimer, managing director of Hive Estates, which is marketing the property, said: "It's not every day that you get to introduce such







a unique and historical property to potential homeowners - we're extremely excited to market this one.

"The Tynemouth Watchtower isn't just a house; it tells an important narrative and is part of the North East's history in two world wars.

"For those looking to make a statement with their next property purchase, or simply seeking a home with character and history, the watch tower is an unmissable opportunity."

Following the Second World War, the tower was sold by the Ministry of Defence as a private residence in 1967. It was sold again in 2000 and now, 23 years later, it's back on the market with Hive Estates. The current selling price has been set at £500,000.

For further details about the tower and to arrange a viewing, please contact Hive Estates on 0191 261 8500 or visit www.hiveestates.com



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DESIGNERS FOR:





Celebrating 25 years of being Wright!

Local letting and estate agents, Wright Residential, are proud to celebrate their 25th anniversary this month. This remarkable milestone is a testament to the dedication and commitment of their loyal team, many of whom have been with the company for years.

As a trusted letting agency, Wright Residential is widely recognised in the industry for its focus on convenience and simplicity for its clients. Their expertise in the property market has solidified their position as one of the most progressive and effective letting agencies in the region. Their longevity and success can be attributed to their unwavering commitment to their clients, and tenants, proactivity, and integrity, setting them apart from their competitors.

The company's motto, "If it isn't what we'd be prepared to rent ourselves, then we won't take it on our books," reflects their high standards and dedication to providing quality service.

Reflecting on the journey, owner Paul Buamah shared, "Although we've had our ups and downs over the last 25 years, we are extremely proud to have reached this prestigious milestone. I am personally grateful to my excellent team for their support, which has played a vital role in making Wright Residential the business it is today."

To mark this special occasion, Wright Residential will be hosting a celebration at their Chillingham Road premises. They will be inviting business



neighbours, landlords, tenants, and visitors to join them for a glass of wine and celebrate this significant achievement.

Paul concluded, "We genuinely couldn't have accomplished this without the support we've received over the years. We would like to express

our heartfelt gratitude to every tenant, landlord, supplier, and business that has made this possible. We are proud to be associated with all of you. Here's to the next 25 years!"

wrightresidential.co.uk

Why Silk Route Spirits?

Well, we really liked the name but in truth it was much more than that, it was an idea inspired by the cultures, empires and peoples who have lived along this ancient trading route for almost 3000 years.

Throughout history, Europeans have traded with Asia and the far east creating routes on land and sea where ideas, knowledge and precious commodities were shared.

When we decided to set up Silk Route Spirits, we wanted to draw on this rich history as the inspiration for our gins so decided to use specially selected botanicals that were introduced to the west along this ancient trade route.

We have selected liquorice, and cassia bark from China that provide an earthy note, orris root which is found in middle eastern cuisine and helps bind our flavours together as well as juniper berries that provide the dominant flavour to or gins.

The second question we get asked is why are you making "London Dry Gin" in Newcastle? Well, during the 18th Century gin became



particularly popular when the government allowed unlicensed gin production and imposed heavy duty on French brandy. As a result, between 1695 and 1735 thousands of gin shops grew up across England in what was known as the "Gin Craze".

The invention of the "Column Still" in 1826 enabled the distillation of natural spirits and the creation of "London Dry Gin" which is a process that ensures the highest quality distilled spirit. This process means no additional ingredients, other than water are added to the spirit after distillation and we are proud to meet this quality measure when we present to you our London

Dry Gins

Having launched our gins, with more flavours to come next year, we have now developed a range of rums that continue with the practice of using specially selected botanicals. A spiced rum will be our first offer using botanicals such as fresh Madagascan vanilla as well as green pepper corns from Asia. So, why don't you join us on our "Journey of Taste" and follow us as we take you from the ancient cities of China, across the steppes of Mongolia, to cities with names such as Samarkand, across ancient Persia and Anatolia to the shores of Europe.

Stay tuned for more tales from our journey!



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A Hartlepool-based business with global interests has continued its expansion with a key appointment



Paul Gough Media has appointed Nick Loughlin as PR and Publishing Manager.

The operation, which also has an office in Florida overlooking Walt Disney World, provides marketing support and business coaching to private practice owners.

Owned by Paul Gough, who also has the wellestablished Physio Rooms under his name across the North East, the media business has clients across the UK, USA, Spain, Canada and Australia.

Nick has returned to the company as part

of its continuous growth – he is the 22nd new employee this year - and coincides with Paul launching his new book: Extraordinary Achievement, How To Get To The Next Level Of Success In Business And Life. He spent almost 27 years as Sports Editor and Teesside Editor at The Northern Echo.

Paul said: "Nick has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to writing and using the media and he is well respected for his time in mainstream journalism and sports writing. Ironically, I used to write a health and fitness column for him back in the day, so we have long enjoyed a good relationship.

"To have him back here after a year is a big plus not only for us, but also our clients who will benefit from his experience."

Nick added: "It's great to be back at a place I know well. The company has grown and developed immensely in the 16 months I've been away and it will only keep progressing globally under Paul's leadership.

"There's lots happening here – not many businesses have offices in both Hartlepool and Florida do they!"

Wigwam Holidays unveils the newest episode of their At Home Outdoors Campaign: "The Stoma Swimmer"

Wigwam Holidays, a leading name in the outdoor glamping and adventure sector, is thrilled to announce the launch of the latest episode in their acclaimed At Home Outdoors campaign. The new episode, titled "The Stoma Swimmer," brings to light the inspiring journey of Gill Castle - the first person to swim the English Channel solo with a stoma.

As part of Wigwam Holidays' commitment to celebrating the diverse ways in which people engage with the great outdoors, "The Stoma Swimmer" tells a compelling story of resilience, courage, and the transformative power of nature. The film sheds light on Gill Castle's remarkable journey, from a life-changing surgery to becoming a beacon of inspiration for individuals living with stomas.

Wigwam Holidays' At Home Outdoors campaign is dedicated to highlighting extraordinary stories that showcase the profound impact of the great outdoors on people's lives. The campaign has already resonated with audiences worldwide,



inspiring countless individuals to embark on their own outdoor adventures.

"We are immensely proud to share Gill Castle's inspiring story as part of our At Home Outdoors campaign," said Helen Burt, Video Producer for Wigwam Holidays. "Gill's journey reminds us that nature has the power to heal, empower, and inspire us all, regardless of the challenges we face. We hope that this episode will motivate many to embrace the great outdoors."

In October 2025, Gill will lead an empowering expedition up Kilimanjaro tailored for women with a connection to birth trauma, injury, or stomas. This adventure will be an incredible opportunity for women to embark on a journey of resilience, self-discovery, and shared triumph.

From January 2024, individuals interested in joining can find more information and register on the Chameleon Buddies website: www.chameleonbuddies.org.uk

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Let's

Talk!



The Tree Appeal appoints JAM Marketing as their Official PR Company

Tree Appeal, a prominent organisation dedicated to tree planting and environmental conservation, is excited to announce its collaboration with JAM Marketing, a national marketing company, based in the North East as their official public relations (PR) partner.

JAM Marketing is a dynamic and creative team of professionals with a shared passion for PR and marketing. With a collective skill set that covers various aspects of PR and marketing, the team works closely on every client account, ensuring a high level of familiarity and expertise. They have a reputation for delivering exceptional results for their clients and are committed to creating innovative campaigns and strategies that generate visibility and engagement.

Jackie Marston, the Managing Director of JAM Marketing, expressed her enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "We're delighted to be working with Ken Whitley and his team at The Tree Appeal and Eco Media Marketing on this very important project, nationally. It's a purpose close to all our hearts here at JAM, and we look forward to helping spread the word about the wonderful work that The Tree Appeal carries out."

Tree Appeal is an organisation focused on planting trees to promote biodiversity, create habitats, combat climate change and enhance the environment for people. Their tree planting initiatives are made possible through sponsorships from businesses and individuals who are eager to make a positive contribution to the environment. Most of the trees planted by Tree Appeal are directed toward schools in the UK and Ireland, supporting the growth of woodland habitats and enhancing biodiversity.

Jackie Marston concluded: "As we approach our 20th anniversary as a company, there is no more fitting way to celebrate than for JAM Marketing to join forces with this noble of causes."

Leading media planner returns to the North East

Newcastle-based media agency, Route, has announced the appointment of high-profile media planner Greg Paterson, as Head of Client Planning.

Greg is well respected in the media planning world, with over twenty years' experience working with major brands on their media strategy, with his past client portfolio including Kellogg's, HSBC, Vauxhall and Microsoft.

A Geordie by birth, Greg has been lured back to the region to lead client planning at fast-growing and multi award-winning agency Route. Within his new role, Greg, whose previous experience includes time spent at Dentsu, Total Media, Manning Gottlieb OMD, PHD and MediaCom, will be responsible for all client strategy and planning, while also cementing the team's knowledge and skillset across all media.

Announcing the appointment, co-founder Darren Davidson said: "I've known Greg for around 20 years and have kept track of his impressive career, stellar track record and



multiple award wins. Having him join us in the North East is a huge coup - in our view there is no-one in the region who can match Greg's level of experience or capability. We're thrilled that he recognises the huge opportunity we have here at Route to continue our growth.

"His experience leading on major accounts across multiple, fast-moving sectors, from retail to technology, finance and automotive make him an invaluable addition to our team.

"As well as supporting the team to deliver exceptional results, Greg's in-depth industry knowledge and expertise will further develop our understanding of the ever-changing media landscape, ensuring both our team and clients stay ahead of the curve."

Newcastle-Based Media Agency welcomes six new faces

Newcastle-based digital media agency Bonded, whose client portfolio includes the Rugby League World Cup, NE1, Fused Bills, and CEF, has celebrated another exceptional year of growth.

In the last 12 months, the agency has had a string of new client wins, added several awards to its trophy cabinet and expanded into the Scottish media landscape with the opening of its new Edinburgh office.

To help accommodate this growth, the agency has welcomed six new faces to the team in August and September alone - with further hires planned early next year. These new roles include that of Client Director, Senior Paid Search Manager, Paid Social Manager, as well as Marketing, SEO and Content Executives.

These new hires are aligned with Bonded's core belief of investing in senior client-facing consultants and channel specialists to help lead the agency's connected approach - cementing Bonded's reputation as a trusted partner in the world of digital and media.

"As we expand our team with six exceptional new talents, we reinforce our commitment to weaving human connection into the very fabric of our agency's growth" shares Steve



Underwood, Managing Director at Bonded.

"In an era dominated by digital advancements, fostering meaningful connections not only strengthens our services to our clients, but it also nurtures a culture of collaboration, empathy and creativity that we are keen to uphold here at Bonded".

In addition to its new hires, Bonded is also celebrating 100% year-on-year growth - a testament to the team's dedication and client-centric approach.

The agency has also recently been named as one of Prolific North's Independent Agencies to Watch and has been shortlisted for an impressive 8 awards at the upcoming North East Marketing Awards 2023.

With its recent recruits, expanding client base and new Edinburgh office, the growing agency shows no signs of slowing down as it looks ahead to 2024 and beyond.

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Digital Marketing agency Wriggle see's continued growth whilst providing exceptional results for their clients

Wriggle Marketing, a Gosforth based digital marketing agency, will be celebrating its 10th year in business next year.

Starting in the spare room of CEO/Founder Nick Gianfreda, Wriggle Marketing had humble beginnings, but has seen significant growth since its inception and is now run by both Nick and Wriggle's Managing Director, Mitchell Harrison. Now, with a strong team of 10 individuals and clients in varying sectors across the UK and Europe, they're showing no signs of stopping.

So, we asked what the secret was to their success...

From the outset, I knew the vision and knew what the business needed to achieve. I wanted to create a marketing agency which provided honest and transparent digital advice. I wanted to create a working environment which allowed both collaboration and flexibility for our staff and I wanted the clients to know every month the impact Wriggle had on their business. If you adhere to these three things, you retain clients and retain staff. Whilst it doesn't sound tough, at times, it can feel impossible.

Whilst we market ourselves as a marketing 'agency', we are a mixture between agency and consultancy; we work hand in hand with our clients to ensure results are delivered and operate as an extension of our client's marketing team. Each and every one of our clients is very different and that is why bespoke data driven strategies are put into place. Following this, not only are these strategies tracked by the team to ensure we are having an impact but the management team ensures that results are being generated for the clients and that they are being communicated to key stakeholders within the business. As I say to all clients, and as they say on our video testimonials (which are on our website), we are not a volume business, we like and want to work hand in hand with our clients. With 10 - 12 team members and with 30 or so high-value clients, we know we have the time required to make a significant impact on the businesses we work with.

What market and sectors do you work in?

If you had asked this two years ago. My answer would have been ANY. But, now 95% of our client base operates on a B2B basis and are in industrious sectors such as engineering, print, construction, demolition, machinery & print.

Favourite clients

All of them!! We are very fortunate as a business that we can pick and choose who we work with and as a result of this, all our clients are our favourite. We have solid relationships with all of them and say from the outset, communication is

key. Clients will always get more out of the team the more they communicate with them; the more communication and feedback the team get, the more motivated the team becomes. When a client is engaged in the process and buys into what we are doing, we provide exceptional results. We aim to understand how each of our clients works best and we then adapt to that. This means that when we're hit with a barrier such as items not being signed off, we create a solution that resonates best with our client's working style. As a team, we will always favour a proactive approach, and this is essential to the delivery of results.

What are the biggest challenges you face?

All businesses have different pressures, and in my mind, our biggest struggles all form part of the fun. I would say that hiring in this sector is particularly challenging. We're dedicated to building a high-performing, passionate team of individuals (something we're proud to have achieved so far) and this can make sourcing new hires a challenge. When operating a business where our success is measured on leads, enquiries, or website transactions, it's essential that new team members understand the importance of combining their expertise with a strong focus on commerciality.

Mitchell and I put a huge amount of time into training amongst the whole team, especially around commerciality.

What's the outlook for Wriggle?

Particularly in the last couple of years, the business has changed massively. We've expanded our office, and have just taken the opportunity to fully rebrand the business. The new brand now represents who we are as a business. It's 'more grown up' as some clients and suppliers have commented, and I'm really proud of the team for all of the work that's gone into it. I hope the rebrand will help us achieve our business objectives over the next few years. We are looking to onboard 8-10 clients per year. This seems to be the optimum number and ensures we retain our existing clients while growing and ensure we employ the right individuals to execute the work required for our clients.

It's been an exciting few years of growth and change for Wriggle Marketing, and we're looking forward to continuing to build on that over the next 12 months.

www.wrigglemarketing.co.uk

Nikki Alcorn: Life as a Client Director

Bonded is the digital and media agency that prioritises connection. Join us as we connect with a different member of the team each month to get their take on all things digital media.

Bonded's recent recruit and lead of the agency's new Scotland branch, Nikki Alcorn, shares with us the day-to-day life of a Client Director, the importance of always looking ahead and her dream client.



What is the day-to-day role of a Client Director?

It sounds cheesy but no two days are the same working in digital marketing. My week consists of checking in on the performance of our clients' campaigns with our channel specialists, connecting with clients on performance, and work in progress as well as any up and coming campaigns and opportunities.

My role is to immerse myself in the clients' business so I become an extension of their marketing team. I should hold considerable client knowledge and a deep understanding of the business' goals and objectives, enabling myself and the wider team to identify opportunities for growth.

What do you wish more people knew about the digital media industry?

Working in media is super fast paced and dynamic and there is a real need to be agile and very attention to detail focused.

Change occurs constantly, so it's also vital to continue learning and keep up to date with

industry and channel developments that can benefit our clients' business. I utilise our weekly Bonded Bitesize blog of all the latest updates in the media world, as a means of keeping abreast of developments and spotting opportunities and conversation starters with clients.

Are there any upcoming developments to be aware of?

Opportunities to buy programmatically at scale continue to develop which is a really exciting space to be in as a marketer and for brands.

We also have our first Future Trends report in the pipeline, in which we are working with media owners to break down the upcoming developments in each specialism of digital media, and what these are likely to mean for businesses. Keep an eye on Bonded's socials for this being released - it will be well worth a read!

What does 'connection' mean to you?

Connection is fundamental to developing and growing relationships with clients, colleagues and media owners. Relationships are at the heart of everything that I do and that cannot be underestimated.

Hybrid working is great but nothing beats a good face to face chat - great opportunities come from informal chats as opposed to agenda-based teams meetings.

And finally, who would your dream client be?

TikTok - the way they have reshaped the social media landscape and the old ideas we had around video production quality / polished creative have completely changed the goalposts and really challenged brands and agencies.





Rephrase owner Paul Fraser has spent more than 20 years working in the media for a variety of titles regionally and nationally, including a long stint at The Northern Echo

Rephrase's range of services can be on a pay-as-you-go basis or as part of a longer-term package

We will do all we can to advise and produce the best possible solution for your needs

We aim to maintain long-term relationships to achieve goals



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...Deck the halls - It's a busy Christmas for Highlights PR...

Christmas is a busy time for Highlights PR. Here Keith Newman tells us what some of his clients are doing over this festive period.



Our "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign helps bring some much-needed festive cheer this Christmas to vulnerable people in the North East.

The demand for The People's Kitchen services has dramatically increased. Behind the scenes, over 300 volunteers prepare and cook meals, manage supplies and most importantly, offer a friendly listening ear to our Friends. Around 250-300 meals are prepared and served every day, with Christmas Day being no exception.

We rely entirely on the generosity and good will of the public, local businesses and communities, who donate both food and money. No government funding is received, and we are exclusively volunteer led. Every penny you give goes to helping others. www.justgiving.com/campaign

Maggie Pavlou, The Peoples Kitchen







I'm a singer songwriter from Durham with a lot of passion and hope. I know the idea of becoming number one may seem far-fetched to many but everyone who has heard the song smiles and sings along. Hitting the top spot would be the best Christmas present ever."

Paul Martin #karma open.spotify.com



We are always on the lookout for more mentors to support the young people and families we work with so if you can spare a few hours a week to help just get in touch with us for more details!

Paul Kirkpatrick, paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk





Over the festive period, we focus on Christmas for All, helping with the digital support and logistics! Last year we helped over 2,000 children within the North East receive Christmas presents and helped deliver over 8,000 presents around the local area. We expect this year to be busier so we're currently working on the digital platforms to help the referral process.

Dan Wilkinson, www.thedwmedia.co.uk



Christmas at the Cathedral is a festive night of carols, popular music and sketches all delivered in the wonderful setting of Newcastle Cathedral. Performed in front of a sell-out audience, the event raises much needed funds for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. Christmas at the Cathedral is on 14th December.

Tickets are available from the Theatre Royal box office, 0844 811 2121.

At Christmas we tend to take a break in our French classes. But a lot of my students have signed up to extend and challenge their listening skills. Listening can be a difficult skill to master and is the second most used of our senses when communicating (after reading) and it's important to keep practising, even over the Christmas break. This year the learners will find out all about Christmas traditions around food in France and they'll also learn about the traditional New Year's eve parties (la Ste. Sylvestre). So I'll make sure they keep their listening skills up to scratch so that they can hit the ground running in the new year - le nouvel an!

Barbara Allen, www.linguaforme.co.uk





Northumberland Holiday Provision will be at the heart of Leading Link this coming Christmas as the team continue to offer children and their families a range of exciting and enriching opportunities over the school holidays. Whether it be activities at the local leisure centre, to cinema trips and visits from Seaton Delaval Hall to Alnwick Gardens they won't be put off by the weather, showcasing some of the fantastic businesses across Northumberland and helping to share the festive sparkle of Christmas. Our Young Leaders are also gearing up to support a touring panto across selected sites in Northumberland as the "Justin Credible Super Show" comes to town. It's time to dig out the Christmas jumper, try to find the end of the Sellotape, make up the words to the verses of Christmas Carols and brace ourselves for a busy few weeks.

Chris Johnson, www.leadinglink.co.uk



At MINT Business Club, I'm looking forward to my first Christmas as a new director at the helm of day-today operations. I've run businesses since I was 16 including the hugely successful The Tea Enthusiasts which I co-founded with my mum, and I'm incredibly honoured to have been asked to join Nicola and her growing MINT Business Club team, having been a member myself since the start.

info@mintbusinessclub.co.uk

Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact keith@highlightspr.co.uk or call Keith on 07814 397951



To keep moving forward, you've got to keep moving!

Natalina has recently graduated with the prestigious CIM Marketing Leadership Programme. Veronica Swindale, nesma MD, asked her about her career journey and her key responsibilities and to share what motivates her to succeed.

'As the Senior Brand Marketing Manager for Lookers Motor Group, a leading automotive retailer with 160 dealerships encompassing 35 brands, navigating the ever-evolving marketing landscape is both an exciting challenge and a rewarding experience'. Natalina Sutherland

My role involves implementing strategic marketing initiatives to strengthen our Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) brand partners' market presence, drive profitability and increase market share. This journey has enriched my recent completion of the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme.

My career route in this dynamic industry began as a Brand Manager position eight years ago, after experience in the Property and the Third Sector. After progressing to my current position, I've been presented with opportunities to deepen my understanding of the industry, fine-tune my strategic thinking skills, and adapt to the rapid changes in the automotive market.

As a marketing team leader in a regulated finance environment, I ensure efficient and timely delivery of financial promotions. I oversee resource coordination, closely monitor progress, and proactively mitigate risks to ensure unparalleled success. I also leverage analytical skills to provide budget and martech recommendations rooted in marketing performance measures.



The key highlights of my job revolve around the constant evolution of the automotive industry, influenced by technological advancements, changing consumer preferences, and competitive pressures. With the rise of digital marketing and consumer communication saturation, the importance of personalised brand-building strategies using AI and data science are just a few trends shaping the 2023 automotive marketing landscape. Witnessing these changes first-hand, creating strategies that resonate with our target audiences, and seeing them translate into tangible business results are some of the most rewarding aspects of my role.

However, the pace of change in the automotive industry can be challenging. Adapting to shifts in consumer behaviour, maintaining direct-to-consumer business models that remain competitive in an increasingly digital marketplace, and navigating the rise of alternative fuel in automotive retailing are constant challenges. Yet, these challenges also spur innovation, pushing us to explore new approaches like leveraging the growth of automotive eCommerce.

Motivated by the need to stay ahead in this fast-paced industry, I embarked on the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme through nesma. The programme offered a comprehensive overview of contemporary marketing practices and leadership skills necessary for strategic decision-making. The modules I covered enabled the development of strategies to ensure success in navigating the shift towards alternative fuels, foster diversity and inclusion in the workforce, and successfully launch new-tomarket EV brands in the UK.



This journey has enhanced my knowledge base and equipped me with the tools to approach marketing challenges from a more informed perspective. It has underscored the importance of aligning marketing strategies with business objectives and highlighted the value of data-driven decision-making.

After completing my CIM graduation, my dedication to lifelong learning remains unwavering. The ever-evolving automotive industry necessitates a constant pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, I plan to stay updated on industry trends and enhance my skillset by attending seminars, webinars, and relevant courses. Of particular interest is the CIM specialist award in AI, which I aim to pursue. I strive to remain at the forefront of the marketing discipline by embracing continuous

In conclusion, working as a Senior Brand Marketing Manager in the automotive retail industry is a journey filled with strategic planning, creativity, and continuous learning. It presents a challenging yet rewarding landscape to navigate. As I look ahead, I am excited to hone my skills further, drive growth and market share for our OEM brand partners, and embrace the opportunities that come my way.

If you want to learn more about this Masters equivalent qualification, contact Veronica Swindale at 07734 222 254 or email hello@nesma.co.uk

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The Culture Review

Connect with empathy, lead with compassion – how doing both can drive your business forward

In 'traditional' leadership, empathy and compassion were often seen as weaknesses, an overly emotional approach that simply wasn't appropriate in an office environment. Not so in 2023. Showing empathy and compassion for your team allows you to connect with others, build stronger relationships and creates a supportive and inclusive environment that allows people to thrive.

But does everyone have the capability of empathetic, compassionate leadership?

It's important to remember that having empathy and demonstrating empathy is not the same thing, some people may struggle to express the feeling externally, but in the workplace, it is important to outwardly demonstrate that you acknowledge how your team is feeling if you want them to feel valued and supported. Empathy can certainly be learned, and research supports this, however the way that we show empathy can be due to our emotional wiring or the environment in which we were brought up. There will be some people who choose not to have empathy and have no interest in changing - but if a leader has the will to explore new ways of doing things, then we need to support them to do that.

We should be supporting leaders to connect with empathy and lead with compassion.



Compassion is where there is action and can even mitigate the risk of burnout for the leader, while empathy shows an awareness and understanding of the problem, compassion goes that one step further to try to alleviate the pain and suffering of the other person. While it is much more active, it is not soft. A compassionate leader understands that sometimes hard decisions need to be made to meet the organisation's values, but compassion still allows you to make these decisions kindly. According to research, employees who experience a compassionate leader have 34% higher job satisfaction, 36% higher organisational commitment, are 54% happier with their leader, and 22% less likely to suffer humout

Empathetic and compassionate leadership is more important than ever, as businesses try to navigate uncertainty, the current economic climate, and shifting staff priorities. We have to create environments where empathy and compassion are the norm if we want to mitigate against negative stress in the workplace. If our teams are in a constant state of stress then they shut down part of their brain, the part that can rationalize, solve complex problems, and innovate.

Here are my recommended reads this month if you're looking to learn more about what empathy and compassion means in practice.

Compassionate Leadership

by Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter
As founder and CEO of Potential Project,
Rasmus Hougaard and his longtime co-author,

Jacqueline Carter, show the importance of balancing caring for your people with leadership wisdom and effectiveness. Using data from thousands of leaders, employees, and companies in nearly a hundred countries, the authors find that when leaders bring the right balance of compassion and wisdom to the job, they foster much higher levels of employee engagement, performance, loyalty, and wellbeing in their people.

Dare to Lead by Brené Brown

Brené Brown spent the past two decades researching the emotions that give meaning to our lives. How do you cultivate braver, more daring leaders? And, how do you embed the value of courage in your culture? Dare to Lead answers these questions and gives us actionable strategies and real examples from her new research-based, courage-building programme.

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.

For more insights on what company culture truly means, and how to implement change across your business follow Centric Consultants on LinkedIn or email Ivan directly at ivan@centric-consultants.com

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My learning journey with nesma has enhanced my knowledge base and equipped me with the tools to approach marketing challenges from a more informed perspective. It has underscored the importance of aligning marketing strategies with business objectives and highlighted the value of data-driven decision-making.

Natalina Sutherland

Senior Brand Marketing Manager Lookers Motor Group







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A unique interview...



Andy Greener

Founder Managing Director, Komodo Digital

How did you end up building a creative digital product studio company?

Back in the late nineties, the North East didn't boast a bustling creative scene. Set on a career in design but averse to the idea of uprooting to London, I took matters into my own hands and started my first business from my spare room to create the job I needed.

Fast forward 24 years, and I'm lucky to work with a team of 30 skilled professionals who, together design and create amazing digital products and services for a diverse range of clients from across the UK and beyond.

Who or what inspires you?

I'm drawn to the complexities that are part and parcel of running a small business. The constant challenges push me to expand my knowledge and skill set continually.

Applying creativity to solve complex problems is interesting and exciting for me. I rarely get bored.

What advice would you give to anyone interested in getting into digital creative role?

In the early stage of your creative career in the digital industry, I think it's preferable to join a team that you actively want to be part of. A team that will challenge you and give you that great first exposure to the industry.

Working with peers who inspire and on projects that capture the imagination provides the best foundation for a successful creative career.

Be highly selective (and determined), spend time researching the sector for the agencies that are in the area you want to work in and target those that meet your criteria.

Try not to take roles just because the salary is good. Better to get the experience. The money will follow later.

In the early years, expose yourself to as many disciplines as possible to build an understanding of what areas particularly interest you. Over time, the area of specialism will naturally reveal itself.

What is your favourite part of your job?

Working with a talented and committed team of people in a fascinating industry that is constantly evolving.

What has been your most memorable business moment thus far?

To single out one moment from nearly a quarter of a century in business is difficult, and the most memorable moments have been both really good and really bad and far too numerous to detail.

All of these moments collectively have created a truly unique journey and a business that continues to surprise and challenge me daily.

So, I have to choose the moment I decided to be selfemployed. It changed everything.

What are your favourite magazines?

I rarely buy newspapers on a Sunday but when I do I really enjoy the supplements you get in the broadsheets. Reading these, purely for pleasure, after a big lunch is a real treat. A great user experience.

What's the future hold for Andrew Greener?

Growing the Komodo team. Tackling bigger challenges. Constantly learning.

komododigital.co.uk uniquemagazines.co.uk







Company directors Sarah Walker and Sarah Dale chose the moniker for their business based on their shared first name – and the definition of SASS as lively, spirited and bold!

SASS is what the dynamic duo brings to a project in bucketloads. Sarah and Sarah are both qualified, experienced journalists and public relations specialists with a keen eye for spotting the story in every business. Their services include journalism, public relations, communications and copywriting.

Passionate Teessiders, the two Sarahs have earned a wealth of retainer and returning clients thanks to their warmth, strong work ethic and loyalty. SASS media has successfully achieved media coverage across a range of platforms – TV, radio, websites, magazines and newspapers – including a BBC Radio 4 documentary, Yorkshire Life magazine, BBC Look North, ITV Tyne Tees, Teesside Live, Northern Echo, Sunderland Echo, The Mirror, Shields Gazette as well as, of course, Northern Insight magazine.

"We passionately believe that every business has a story to tell – and our role is to help you tell it," said Sarah D.

"We bring enthusiasm, creativity, ideas and action to all our projects. We're also seasoned journalists, which sets us apart from many of our competitors as we have been on both sides of the story and know how to write for the media." added Sarah W.

"We have a wide range of clients including sole traders, charities, B2B magazine publishers and SMEs. We offer tailor-made public relations support to businesses of all sizes and cater for every budget, essentially acting as an extension to your team through our retained monthly services, which enables us to continuously identify opportunities for positive publicity for your business."

And it is that passion and commitment to their clients which has seen them follow an impressive growth trajectory for their first year, secure a wealth of retained clients and be shortlisted for three awards: Small Business of the



Year and Best New Business at the Tees Business Businesswomen Awards and Standout Achievement at the Tees Business Best New Tees Business Awards.

"Being recognised by successful professionals who have been in business a lot longer than us has absolutely blown us away; it's a fantastic achievement," said Sarah D.

They recently moved into their first office at Fast Track House in Thornaby, where they proudly display their awards finalists' certificates and Sarah D's Tomy Tutor Typer, her very first laptop, to remind them of their why.

"We love writing and we love telling people's stories, that is what we were born to do," added Sarah D. "We wanted to create a business based on our values of warmth, integrity and the ability to connect with people whilst also maintaining a positive work/life balance."

Although, the Sarahs admit that with a business that has grown quicker than anticipated, that can prove tricky at times.

In the autumn, it was clear that SASS needed some SASSettes to join them

and the Sarahs are thrilled to have three part-time writers on board with plans to extend their team further in 2024.

"We know them well, both professionally and personally, and knew they would be the perfect fit for SASS," said Sarah D. "They hold the same values as us and we know we can trust them to deliver high quality, accurate and engaging copy every time."

As well as expanding the team, the Sarahs are actively engaging with businesses and individuals who can widen the business's services offering.

"We have had some exciting conversations with other communications and digital marketing specialists on how we can collaborate on projects together," added Sarah W. "We can't wait for what 2024 brings."

www.sassmedialtd.co.uk

Can words regenerate your business?

If the issues of staff retention, disengaged employees and unfulfilled business potential have you frustrated, you might want to look to your internal communications for some answers...

That isn't as daft as it sounds. And here's why.

Internal communication (IC) is the most powerful management tool at your disposal. It sells the story, it connects people, it encourages, persuades and compels action.

But when it's misaligned and poorly written it leads only to burning day to day questions like 'Why won't people do what we want them to do?' 'Why are so many mistakes being made?' 'Why do people keep leaving?'.

Then there are deeper questions like 'How do we communicate in a way that inspires trust?' 'How do we talk about change and uncertainty and still keep people engaged and onboard?'

These are the things that Liz Atkin tackles head on in her book Refreshing Comms: Internal Communication for a better connected, feelgood, goal achieving workplace.

'With the best will in the world many leaders, managers and HR professionals find themselves just too busy with operational planning, departmental responsibilities and compliance to step into the role of strategic communicator. And many SMEs simply don't have the benefit of their own dedicated HR department, let alone an IC team.'

'I want to help organisations have the best employer-employee relationships they possibly can by giving them the understanding and tools they need to write authentic internal comms that deliver on both employee needs and business strategy.'

Liz believes that like any tool, internal communication needs to be used intentionally.

'At the very least, communicators need to be clear about what they're saying to who and



why. If a message or request is dismissed as irrelevant, gets misunderstood or fails to achieve the desired response, then the tool has fallen short of its potential. It's simply being used poorly.'

So what can you do if you're short on resources but want to power up your internal comms to rebalance relationships, nurture the right culture, get more collaboration and cooperation, and get the best out of people?

Well the good news is there are lots of simple, practical and smart things you can start to do with your workplace communication that will make a real and positive difference. But just in summary, Liz shares these key points:

'Change and uncertainty lead to stress and anxiety; lack of clear information grows fear and distrust; and a job with no apparent meaning or purpose is at best dissatisfying and at worst demoralising. People's behaviour will always mirror their emotions. So ditch the notion that feelings aren't important. Emotion trumps logic in decision making, even at work - that's a psychological fact - therefore how you communicate is key.

Use communication to help your employees understand where they fit into the bigger picture. If you want them to do something tell them why so they have a sense of purpose and belonging. Think about your content, the point of your messaging. Make sure you're coming across as relatable by using the right tone and word choice, and don't shy away from showing some personality. They want to know you're human!

Let your internal comms do the heavy lifting for you - it's strategically savvy and feels good!

About Liz: As co-director of Blonde Creative and author of Refreshing Comms, Liz combines her business experience, communication know-how and creative thinking to help organisations of all types engage successfully with their target audiences.

You can pre-order Refreshing Comms now from Amazon, Waterstones or any good bookstore. Or get in touch with Liz for workshops, coaching and support at www.refreshingcomms.co.uk

North East marketing award finalists Novo Cabelo celebrate record growth



Seaham based Novo Cabelo is one of the UK's fastest growing Hair System companies and the team are making history and disrupting the hair industry with their innovative, non-invasive approach which is quite literally changing lives.

Following a transformative and targeted relaunch campaign earlier in the year the company has seen a substantial growth trajectory for the heavily rooted North East brand, with a 50% increase in revenue, alongside high growth across their social media platforms, prestigious award nominations and collaborations with key industry players.

With over 26 million TikTok views for the emotional and game-changing non-surgical hair transformations, the trend-setting hair system company with Hair Stylist and TikTok Star, Rod Wood at the helm is on a mission to shine the spotlight on and to normalise hair systems.

Voted 7th Top 100 Influencers 2022 and Social Stylist of the Year finalist at the British Hairdressing Business Awards 2022 and 2023, the company has racked up over 200k followers across their social media platforms for the inspiring hair transformation reveals, with clients travelling from across the world for the treatment.

Rob Wood, Founder and Creative Director, Novo Cabelo said: "We are overjoyed with the growth and the direction of the company since our relaunch, which has seen the whole team have worked in unison to ensure maximum impact. We want to utilise our platforms to spread positive messages and to normalise hair systems and tell the story of clients from different backgrounds and make hair replacement seen as common place for men to have these treatments, just like women have hair extensions. I really think over the last few months we've turned a corner and made an impact on the industry.

We have seen a high volume of traction and brand awareness through our platforms in particular social media, and this intrinsically fits alongside regional and national media coverage, a live national TV hair system reveal, and addressing the subject of mental health with a collaboration with the team at The Lions Barber Collective."

January 2023 saw the company relaunch and intensify their mission. With funding support from the North East Business Support Fund Rob brought in the services of Sunderland based PR agency, House of Hype & Co. and Gary Groom

as a Strategic Consultant. The overall aim of the relaunch campaign was to build awareness of/and to get the industry talking about and normalising the concept of hair systems.

As the team celebrate their exciting growth, news has also landed that the team are finalists in the North East Marketing Awards 2023 for Campaign of the Year (In-House).

Claire Pickersgill, PR & Marketing Director, Novo Cabelo and Owner at House of Hype & Co. said: "We are absolutely delighted to be a finalist in the prestigious North East Marketing Awards for the relaunch campaign. The passion and ethos behind the brand is immense and the team are on a mission to change perceptions and are in turn making history.

After working on the intensive relaunch campaign, it's fantastic to wear my 'in-house hat' with the team to support in driving the brand and its reputation to even greater heights, with all eyes on international expansion.

Consistency is key and working side by side with the fabulous team is a really exciting other 'hat' for me alongside my growing PR agency."

International expansion is also on the radar for the team and with a surge in demand from Irish followers the team hit Dublin last month to set up base in the city to train local salon owners in their sought-after hair system techniques which will see the stylists trained as 'Novo Pros', marking the first step in international expansion.

To find out more: novocabelo.co.uk

Heritage venue appoints Newcastle marketing consultants to support its business plan



The Newcastle charity, The Common Room of the Great North Limited (The Common Room), has appointed a marketing consultancy to put in place an updated marketing strategy to support the delivery of its business plan.

Following a successful competitive tender, the long-established Newcastle-based marketing and PR consultancy, Clothier Lacey & Co, was awarded the commission.

After a massive redevelopment programme, The Common Room reopened in 2021. The Grade II* Listed building faced all the challenges of the post-COVID hospitality sector, compounded by the subsequent cost-of-living crisis. Chief executive, Liz Mayes, explains the impact of these difficulties:

"The timing of our refurbishment could not have been more challenging. The building was obviously closed to visitors throughout the pandemic and was ineligible for much of the government grant support available to hospitality and venues. Therefore, ensuring a profitable trading income to our charity, to support our mission and programme, has been a recurring challenge since we reopened in early 2021 when the world was still suffering the last throes of the pandemic.

"Nonetheless, we have established a positive reputation for the quality of our STEM engagement activities, work on diversity in engineering, our meeting space, events calendar, candlelit concerts programme and 5 Quarter Café Bar.

"More recently we have seen several couples tie the knot here and have forward wedding bookings over the next year too, but there is still a need for a refocusing on income generation and fundraising activities – a plan which fully maximises the potential of this amazing heritage building to ensure we have a bright and sustainable future.

"Given the economic circumstances we have been trading through over the last two years, our performance has not been too disheartening, but we can do so much more, which is where Clothier Lacey will be assisting

"Their proposals were very detailed and showed a clear understanding of the issues surrounding the brief and our charitable purpose. They are very well connected with the region's decision makers and we liked the team's enthusiasm. We are enjoying working with them and will have a new plan in place by the end of October, so watch this space!"

Commenting on her firm's appointment, Philippa Clothier, added: "We were thrilled to have secured this commission. It is a perfect fit for my personal marketing experience, having worked in the sector all my career, as well as our digital skills, which will play a huge role in the marketing of The Common Room's events and facilities going forward.

"This is a marvellous building, which represents such a huge part of the industrial and engineering heritage of North East England. It is an accessible, inspiring, high-quality space with a mission to use its unique heritage to inspire the next generation of innovators and engineers, so it is vital that its future is secured for the common good.

"It is an exciting piece of work and we are full of ideas, so we are working closely with Liz and Philippa King-Williams, head of trading, with the aim of getting all our thoughts and creativity into one coherent and deliverable marketing plan for implementation by The Common Room's inhouse team in time for the Christmas season."

The work has been supported through a Grant Increase from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

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A year in the life of...

Samuel Marriott-Dowding ACIM

Founder & CEO, Marriott Communications

What did you set out to achieve this year?

This year was all about growth and identifying new opportunities.

2022 was so up and down, I was still getting to grips of not only working within an agency but also leading one.

I knew that for 2023 I wanted to be strategic, cultivate new collaborations and ultimately grow the agency financially. So I entered into 2023 almost a little bit ruthless, I wasn't taking no for an answer, I was strategic about who we worked with, and for the first time ever I felt comfortable enough to be able to reject potential projects and clients when I didn't feel like they were a good 'fit' for the agency - either because we didn't have a passion for their vision, or because our value wasn't being recognised.

Ultimately this strategy worked. We developed new services, expanded to the US market in August, received industry recognition and commendations, and have consistently grown throughout the year.

Has everything went according to plan?

Of course not! Like with anything in life, when does anything ever truly 'go to plan'?

Entrepreneurship is no different. We have had our challenges, made mistakes, and things have gone wrong - but we do what we do best: adapt, overcome, and thrive

What are you most proud of this year?

Three things top the list.

Firstly, Marriott Communications was able to expand our Reputation Management services to a portion of the US market. A lot of people talk about the achievement of 'cracking America' and we are moons away from doing anything quite like that; however, to be able to expand internationally into a previously unexplored market was absolutely thrilling.

Secondly, I am incredibly proud of our growth - in terms of our financial and client growth, as well as our pro bono third sector support. As Marriott Communications financially grows we are able to offer more pro bono services to charities and organisations who not only need this support to further their work, but they also deserve access to high quality marketing and public relations services. To date we have donated over 625 hours of pro bono support across the UK, something of which I am thrilled Marriott Communications is able

Third was winning FSB North East's Young Entrepreneur of the Year. I was shortlisted in 2022, didn't win, but true to form I persevered, gave it another go and won! What made that achievement even more special was that I had my parents at the ceremony with me, and they were able to see me accept the award in person.

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

It's easy to say yes, but hard to say no. Learn to slow the 'yes' and quicken the 'no'.

What has been the most enjoyable deal you've been involved with?

I have really loved working with The Eagle Bar Newcastle on their World AIDS Day Fundraising campaign for North East charity Blue Sky Trust, as well as supporting the launch of Korma - a national franchise of fusion Indian restaurants.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That there is nothing that I can't achieve or overcome with the right mindset.

People doubted me when I started an agency, we are now going into our third year of business. I doubted myself when I didn't think I could run an agency, and now we are an international award-winning Marketing and PR agency working with an incredible array of clients.

My mindset this year went from trying to prove other people wrong about me, to proving to myself that I can do anything.

Describe 2023 in three words

Grit. Determination. Creative.

What are your aims for 2024?

Developing new agency services, launching our range of Ecommerce guides, growing further internationally, and of course the exciting rebrand that we are having in January!

www.marriottcommunications.com







Nicola Halse

Owner, Riverside Marketing Solutions.

What did you set out to achieve this year?

On a personal level, I wanted to expand my knowledge within certain aspects of media, analytics and marketing this year. With everincreasing changes to video, AI, social media etc, it's important for me to keep up to date with new software, trends and sales techniques not only for my own business but to enable me to utilise these skills for my clients too.

Has everything went according to plan?

Just about! I'm a stickler for 12 month plans but as frequently happens, things often get in the way and you have to be flexible and adapt, whether that's for my own business or for that of my clients, it's all part of running a small company. I did manage to attend several training courses and update my knowledge on certain skills so that was definitely something I stuck to the plan for.

What are you most proud of this year?

I was shortlisted in the StartUp Awards for the second year running which was just amazing. I'm always extremely proud (and if not a little humble) to be included in awards alongside brilliant businesses. I give my full commitment to the businesses I work with so to get

recognition for that really is a lovely feeling and the awards night itself was fab!

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

'Just go and get stuff done.' It may sound obvious but many businesses think they have to plan for months or years before they actually start to sell or promote their services. Yes, you have to get the correct marketing and sales strategies in place, but essentially you need to go out, show potential clients the benefits of your products or services and start making money. Sometimes, too much talking results in not enough action!

What has been the most enjoyable business event you've been to this year?

I love a good factory tour so it was brilliant to go behind the scenes at north east food manufacturer, Dicksons. Representing a client, I went along with the Advanced Manufacturing Forum and not only was it really interesting but we got to taste their gorgeous food including curried beef slices, quiche, sausage rolls and more. What's better than a factory tour with fantastic local food too!

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

I can be tough when I want to be. As with most people, I don't like conflict and being a naturally positive and happy person, I like to get on with everybody, however, sometimes within business, you may not agree with a decision

and it's good that you're able to put your point across in a rational and measured way. I think a lot of this comes with age and having ran the business now for three and a half years, I've definitely grown more confident in my approach.

Describe 2023 in three words...

Enjoyable. Exhausting. Busy.

What are your aims for 2024?

I'm continuing my volunteer role as an Enterprise Advisor at Durham Sixth Form Centre so I'm hoping to once again be more involved with the students and support them and their teacher through their BTEC Marketing qualification.

From a business point of view, more of the same from 2023, I know I'm biased but I work with some of the best businesses in the north east and to be a small part of their success is so rewarding, it's not hard to see why I love my job!

Any New Year Resolutions

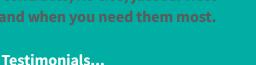
I'm not one to make new year resolutions as I feel people put too much pressure on themselves. I find that to give myself targets throughout the year and try to stick to them works better for me, however hard that might be sometimes. So, I suppose, my new year's resolution is not to make any!

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Mark Henderson, Compliant Ltd

"Nicola has been fantastic to work with, her first email campaign for us resulted in a conversion that is now a closed sale."

Kieran Turnbull, Zenith Systems



For further information contact Nicola Halse on 07908 623 405 Email: nicola@riversidemarketingsolutions.co.uk

Get ahead, get a NED - and four other tactics for moving ahead assertively in 2024

Wadds Inc. works in a non-executive director capacity with agencies in the creative sectors, helping to set company direction and provide support with strategic growth plans.

Here director Sarah Waddington CBE looks at key areas for all businesses to concentrate on now as part of business planning.

1. Secure non-executive director (NED) support

The Corporate Governance Code recommends that SMEs have at least two independent non-executive directors. The outside perspective and objectivity that NEDs can bring to a Board can't be underestimated. Our role is to scrutinise management performance and contribute to strategy development. One of the things Wadds Inc. clients like most is the accountability as it means things move forward faster and in the right way.

Get the right person and you get a range of benefits with them. Good NEDs bring useful contacts, expertise and knowledge, reduce the threat of group think and act as powerful ambassadors for the company because of their reputation and standing.

Appointing a NED is the first step to getting ahead, particularly when trading conditions are challenging.

2. Revisit your purpose

When it comes to best practice, all roads lead back to the Corporate Governance Code. This sets out that Boards should promote the long-term sustainable success of the company, generate value for shareholders and contribute to wider society.

It's just one of the reasons organisations need a strong purpose to help define values and guide decisionmaking and strategy.

Does your business have a clearly defined vision that communicates what it will look like in the future? If not, or if the vision is out of date (which happens more frequently than you might think), make this a priority now. It'll make all the difference to how fast you get out of the blocks when the upturn comes and your team will have a renewed sense of purpose in terms of achieving your objectives.

3. Futures and foresight work

Identifying change drivers should be a management mission. How up to date is your organisation's strategic analysis of its market position?

The right intelligence can provide competitive advantage because it tells you which up and coming changes to respond to. This is how more agile companies exploit opportunities and minimise risks as they arise.

The upcoming General Election is a great example. Are you monitoring each party's policies to plan for how these could affect you?

Working without this data means you're benefiting from luck rather than skill and as we all know, luck runs out eventually.

4. Risk management

The risk register is one of the first things a NED will ask for when coming into a business but often there isn't one in place.

This doesn't need to be a complex piece of work. Identify your risks, prioritise them and make sure you have the appropriate controls in place. Then monitor and report on these on an ongoing basis.

Risk management is absolutely critical to successful strategy implementation and, when the chips are down, survival.

5. Cost of finance

Finally, however you choose to fund your business, the financing strategy should fit with your risk appetite. When did you last review the cost of your finance? Have you really got the cheapest form of debt?

Remember access to finance can come in the shape of grants, voucher schemes and tax credits too.

Researching your options can equal a big pay off so it's worth your time and attention moving into the year ahead.

If you'd like help with any or all of these areas, please visit www.wadds.co.uk

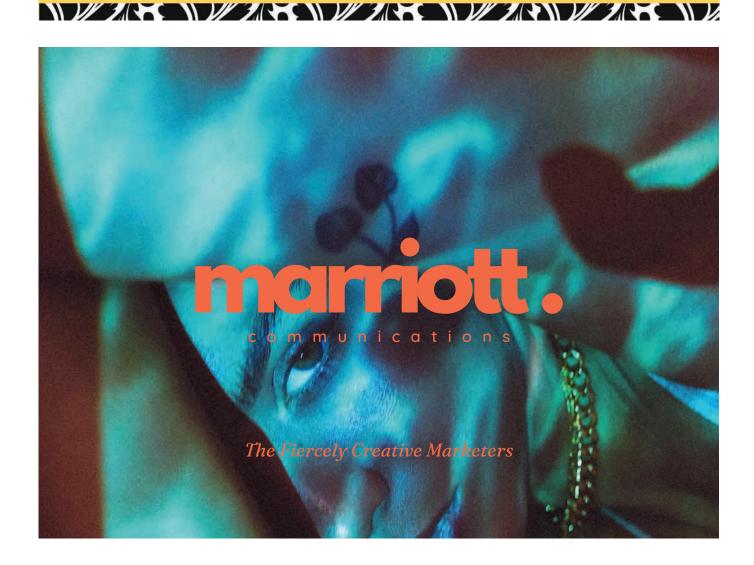




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Pupils crowned cross country champions for second year running

Determined school pupils have run away with a coveted cross country championship title for a second consecutive year.

The 41 youngsters from Years 3-6 at St Bede's Catholic Primary School, South Shields, ran rings around their competition at the South Tyneside Cross Country Championships, finishing an impressive 43 points ahead of the rest of the field. The school, which is part of the Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust, was keen for as many children as possible to take part in the annual event, held at Temple Park.

Proud staff at St Bede's say the children's dedication and determination was key to their success: pupils had regularly attended training sessions after school in the lead-up to the championship, whilst many even trained with their families at weekends. This enabled pupils to achieve personal bests on the day.

Coach and Year 3 teacher Brian McVittie said: "I was delighted how everyone supported each other at the event. While the children were pleased to retain the team shield, I was particularly proud of how many boys and girls were so enthusiastic to represent their school in cross country. The children were so keen they even encouraged their parents to run with them at weekends.

"On the day, all of our runners were inspired by the amazing family support they received at Temple Park, as they were cheered around the course. I hope the success of the squad will encourage more children to get involved in future school sport events and more families to continue running together."



Premiere of education trust's very own Mass Setting - Gaudete

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with 30 schools across the North East premiered its own Catholic Mass Setting recently.

Gaudete, which means rejoice, was unveiled for the first time at the Catholic Leaders and Clergy Conference at Newcastle Cathedral. The Mass Setting is the culmination of more than a year's work with acclaimed composer Will Todd and Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET), which has 25 primary schools and five secondaries across East Durham, South Tyneside and Sunderland.

Pupils from the Trust's five secondary schools, St Aidan's Catholic Academy, Sunderland, St Anthony's Girls' Catholic Academy, Sunderland, St Bede's Catholic School & Byron Sixth Form College, Peterlee, St Joseph's Catholic Academy, Hebburn, and St Wilfrid's RC College, South Shields, sang in the choir at this event. BCCET Lead Chaplain Liz Boylan said: "Over the past year, we have been on a fantastic journey working with our schools and local communities writing a Mass Setting, inspired by them, that can be used by both our schools and our parishes.

"The Celebration of Mass is the summit and source of our faith. We wanted to create a Mass Setting that our pupils and our communities had the opportunity to contribute to so that it was both inclusive and familiar. We worked with acclaimed composer Will Todd and have the approval of the National Liturgy Office.

"All our schools and parishes will be given free access to the finished musical score to use any versions or parts they wish in their Mass Setting. Versions will be available via our website."

Composer Will Todd, who has worked with pupils from across the Trust's schools and wrote the music for the Gaudete Mass, said: "It's been an amazing project to be part of."

Teesside University launches bid to further expand health, medical and clinical provision

Ambitious plans to support the region's healthcare needs have been unveiled at an event showcasing Teesside University's new £36.9m BIOS facility.

The newly opened BIOS, which boasts four floors of cutting-edge facilities for the science and clinical subjects, will transform the way health provision is delivered at Teesside University through digital and immersive learning.

State-of-the-art facilities include immersive simulation suites, operating theatres and a digital anatomy facility, enhancing the teaching and learning environment.

Teesside's commitment to train the next generation of health professionals has been further strengthened with the announcement of the University's intention to bid for a new medical school for the Tees Valley.

Speaking at the showcase event for BIOS, Teesside University's Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, Professor Paul Croney OBE, shared the University's vision to establish a new medical school.

Professor Croney OBE, said: "As an anchor institution, Teesside is firmly focused on addressing the challenges experienced within our region. Health inequalities, including a lack of access to healthcare, make a considerable impact on not simply the health of individuals, but the health of our regional economy. It is imperative that this is rebalanced.

"I am proud to confirm our strategic intent to further growing our health, clinical and medical



offer at Teesside University and can confirm that we are working closely with our partners and professional bodies to prepare a case for a new medical school.

"BIOS underpins this ambition and demonstrates the scale of our commitment to providing the NHS workforce of the future and continuing to transform lives and economies."



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What were your career ambitions growing up?

I have always had a passion for creativity. I have enjoyed generating ideas, problem solving and searching out solutions - I suppose some would call it big picture thinking - from an early age. I was very artistic at school which is where I believe I developed my ability to think creatively. Training to be a technology/art teacher was a very natural progression route for me from art college. I knew I would have the space to continue to develop my own skills alongside developing new ones in the classroom. For me teaching was a profession that would provide me with the opportunity to make a positive difference to young people and adults lives. I knew very early on in my career that I wanted more responsibility but I never really thought I would become a Headteacher and then Chief Executive. I guess those roles found me. I have been fortunate enough throughout my career to work with colleagues who have inspired me and believed in me, giving me the confidence to take on roles that, although removed from teaching, have allowed me to make a difference holistically for the benefit of young people.

Tell us about your current role?

I have recently taken on the role of Chief Executive of Providence Learning Partnership after being the Headteacher of Durham Sixth Form Centre for 10 years. I am still based at Durham Sixth Form Centre and am still fortunate enough to continue to work alongside students and the same colleagues but in a slightly different way. Providence Learning Partnership is a new multi academy trust which was established to include Durham Mathematics School (DMS), once opened. I am working closely with colleagues from Durham University and the Department of Education to realise this specialist school, the only one in the north east, which will be one of eleven nationally.

This is an exciting opportunity for us but also for Durham who are amongst a limited number of cities to have such provision. Post-16 mathematics schools are some of the top performing schools in the country. Students enrolled at DMS will study A level Mathematics, A level Further Mathematics, A level Physics or A level Computer Science. They can also study a fourth option from the choice of A levels at Durham Sixth Form Centre if students have a passion for an alternative subject. DMS has week day boarding facilities for about a third of its students, those who travel from further afield who wish to take advantage of studying in a mathematical rich environment. They will continue their education at one of the top universities in the country, including Durham University.



What is your proudest achievement in Education?

My proudest moments in education have always been those when you 'see the penny drop' in a young person's eyes, either through my own teaching or that of my colleagues. It's that moment when it all clicks into place and opens up the next level of learning. It is a priceless moment and never fails to make me smile.

My proudest achievement in Education has been the journey we have taken as Durham Sixth Form Centre over the past 10 years. Our journey, like many other schools, has been one that has seen many highs and some lows such is the rich tapestry of education.

We recently celebrated our 110 year anniversary which was a wonderful occasion and an opportunity for us all to reconnect with students and colleagues of the past, present and even future. For me, the event consolidated my 10 year journey as Headteacher but also facilitated us in having a better understanding of the journey of our school and its place in history; navigating difficult times such as the first and second world wars right up to the present day where we navigated our way through Covid. Our school is stronger than ever but only as a result of the many amazing people who have made the school, along the way, what it is today.

How has the world of Education changed in the last decade?

I think technology has changed the most over the last decade. I remember starting out as a young teacher with a chalk board and an overhead projector. Now we use technology in such a different way to aid and enhance our teaching but thankfully not at the expense of student learning. I also think the need for 21st century skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and collaboration are so much more prevalent now, especially in relation to the speed of how quickly everything happens as a result of new technologies. It takes many different skills to navigate your way through this as a young person. If we made mistakes at their age it was forgotten within a day, but for today's young people mistakes can hang around for a lot longer. Resilience is both a skill and a mindset that we must continue to work on as we move forward at all levels, from all backgrounds and in all walks of life.

Tell us about the team you work with?

Intelligent, knowledgeable, focussed and kind. To quote Ofsted, '...the highly skilled leadership team have established a culture in which students flourish and grow.' 'The highly experienced governors are unstinging in



their challenge of school leaders'. 'All staff are committed to providing whatever it is the students need to succeed'. We live each day by our core values which were written by our staff:

- High quality, inspirational teaching and learning;
- Excellent support, care and guidance;
- Personal and professional integrity;
- Ambition and progress for our students, our communities and ourselves.

I think our values are excellent at summing up our culture, ethos and expectations.



What is the best piece of advice you have been given in your career?

It is perhaps an odd piece of advice to cite but I was once told to 'dress for the job you want, not the job you've got'. I often think about this not from a sense of ambition or fashion but from the perspective of having high expectations of myself. We work together as a team at Durham Sixth Form Centre. We are fortunate in that we have an amazing opportunity to work with ambitious, academic and courageous young people everyday of our working lives. It is only right that they see we have high expectations of ourselves and through those high expectations it translates to high expectations of our students, hopefully inspiring the next generation.

What has been your biggest challenge?

This is a really sad one. We said goodbye to a colleague recently who, after a 12 month battle, died of Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. She was also a friend. It has definitely been my toughest challenge. It is hard as a leader to sometimes get the right balance, particularly when it is about giving colleagues and students enough space to grieve and reflect with that of getting on with day-to-day business. I hope I got it right.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

My heroes outside of business are my family. They allow me the space and freedom to love and enjoy my work, it is more a vocation than just a job to me. My heroes inside...working with colleagues who, despite everything, show absolute, unconditional dedication to their role in school and the work they do with their students, in whatever capacity.

Education is about making a difference, we give so much of ourselves every day in realising this. Teachers and support staff never really switch off, we are often told to but doing and saying are two very different things! Young people keep you young in yourself, they keep you in touch with the changes in the world and what that means to them growing up. What a privilege to be part of that on a daily basis.

How do you unwind outside of work

I spend as much time as I can with family and friends. We walk lots, eat out, go to the cinema and holiday together. We are fortunate to have been



on lots of fantastic holidays together and as a result have some amazing memories. We walk a lot in the Lake District, we've been horseback riding in Texas, whitewater rafting in the Rockies, snorkelling in the Indian ocean to name but a few. Lots of fresh air, good conversation and lots of laughter. The best recipe for a work/life balance.

Favourite film?

I have two favourite films. Number one, *Private Benjamin*, I have lost count of how many times I have watched it growing up. And number two, The Holiday, a typical feel good romcom, I am sure we all like one of those!

www.durhamsixthformcentre.org.uk





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Education Trust works with community to create a new mass setting Gaudete

A Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) with 30 schools across the North East premiered its own Catholic Mass Setting in November. Gaudete, which means rejoice, was unveiled for the first time at the Catholic Leaders and Clergy Conference at St. Mary's Cathedral in Newcastle.

The Mass Setting is the culmination of more than a year's work with acclaimed composer Will Todd, Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET) and its parishes and local communities.

BCCET Lead Chaplain Liz Boylan said: "Over the



past year, we have been on a fantastic journey working with our schools and local communities writing a Mass Setting, inspired by them, that can be used by both our schools and our parishes.

"The Celebration of Mass is the summit and source of our faith. We wanted to create a Mass Setting that our pupils and our communities had the opportunity to contribute to so that it was both inclusive and familiar. We worked with acclaimed composer Will Todd and have the approval of the National Liturgy Office.

"All our schools and parishes will be given free access to the finished musical score to use any versions or parts they wish in their Mass Setting. Versions will also be available via our website." Composer Will Todd, who worked with pupils from across the Trust's schools, and local parishioners, wrote the music. Will said: "It's been an amazing project to be part of.

"I listened to lots of the children's ideas, inspired by religious texts, artwork, poems, music, stained glass that they designed, which was incredibly inspiring.

"Then I delivered five workshops in the five secondary schools in the Trust, and we wrote music together. We also did some sessions in the parishes. Every school created completely different pieces of music which was another layer of inspiration for me. I was particularly pleased that one of the pieces of music that we created in a session was used in the final Mass Setting.

"I listened to a lot of songs that the children said made them rejoice, because Gaudete means rejoice. It was very upbeat and very positive music and that's what I tried to do with the Gaudete. Hopefully, people will sing it for a long time."

Excerpts of Gaudete were shared at the Trust's event, JOY in my Heart, at Rainton Arena, Houghton-le-Spring in November.

For more information, visit www.bccet.org.uk



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How NHSG's 'Life 360' initiative prepares Sixth Formers for a world beyond academia

By By Amanda Hardie, Acting Head at Newcastle High School for Girls

The transition from school to university life is huge – a monumental shift in independence for girls as they leave our Sixth Form to embark on degree level study. But what about life beyond higher education? How can we prepare girls for that?



I remember when I was studying at Oxford University, a fellow student confided that she didn't know how to write a cheque and it caused quite a challenge for her. It seems strange, doesn't it, that an obviously bright, academic achiever wouldn't know how to make this basic financial transaction.

However, that's where the problem lies – if we assume that everyone knows how to do these day-to-day tasks, nobody will ever show them. And if nobody shows them, when these tasks present themselves, they can quickly become significant barriers.

In fact, this need for wider support was raised in a recent major study conducted by the GDST, The Girls' Futures Report 2022, where over 1300 nationally representative girls from a range of schools (state, private, co-ed and single sex) were surveyed. Results showed that girls are demanding an education in more practical and hard skills; 70% of senior school aged girls saying they want more financial education, and they also highlighted how they wanted to know more about how the real world works.

That's where NHSG's Life 360 programme comes into its own.

Life 360 is an enrichment programme that we launched in September 2023 to provide sixth form girls with a holistic suite of learning activities that will empower them to make the most of the opportunities life brings their way. We consulted with pupils to ensure that we were designing the most responsive and relevant programme for them, and we run the sessions every week during Year 13.

The programme incorporates four key strands: financial literacy, global political understanding, UK citizenship and social responsibility.

We know that many NHSG girls are socially and politically aware, and they may often be tuned into news and politics, but that doesn't mean that they know the fundamentals of how our political systems work, or that they understand the history of the international conflicts that are sadly affecting many countries today. Equally, while some

may have a basic understanding of budget management, including university finance, they might not understand the tax system or how pensions, interest rates or mortgages work – and why they're needed. This is something I discovered as a parent of a graduate who recently headed into the world of work – when faced with taxation and the need to make decisions about pensions she felt she needed more understanding, despite her otherwise comprehensive academic journey. Life 360 provides this.

The social literacy strand helps pupils become proactive, responsible and independent members of society, for example through learning principles of self-defence, understanding organ and blood donation systems, knowing how to spot signs of coercion and being aware of safe driving practices – to name but a few. It's all about how to better contribute to society, but also how to maintain your own safety and independence.

These are all topics covered in our Life 360 programme, and, in line with our broader academic curriculum, all classes are taught by subject specialists to ensure that girls are learning from the best. We also bring in experts from outside of school to talk to girls about these key areas, ensuring they hear directly from industry experts.

Life 360 is part of our future facing approach to education which runs through everything we do, ensuring that we empower our girls to be the very best version of themselves in every sense – not just in terms of academic success.

Building solid foundations will put girls on the front foot, enabling them to confidently navigate the world around them, manage their resources effectively and play an invaluable proactive role in their community and beyond.

For more information about Newcastle High School for Girls visit www.newcastlehigh.gdst.net or contact Admissions on 0191 2016511







Kenton School pays its respect in moving Remembrance Day Parade

In a solemn and heartfelt ceremony, the Kenton Combined Cadet Force took the lead in the Remembrance Parade at Kenton School. Staff and students stood in reverent silence to pay tribute to those who volunteered, served and made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

The parade gracefully made its way through the school grounds, leaving all who witnessed it with a deep sense of pride and gratitude.

Principal of Kenton School, Sinead Green, commented: "Today was such a proud day for Kenton School as we watched our students conduct a very moving Remembrance Day service. It is important for our staff and students to take the time to pay their respects to those who have given so much to their country. I am delighted to watch our students as they grow into socially responsible and caring citizens."

Teacher of English, Ashleigh Gibson, who leads the Kenton Combined Cadet Force at Kenton School, added: "I am incredibly proud of the accomplishments of our Cadet Force today who have demonstrated strong leadership and communication to conduct a reflective and inspiring parade for the school. I am sure that todays' Remembrance Day parade will stay with us all as a lasting memory of our time at Kenton School."

Students also adorned the school with Remembrance Day window displays and a beautiful ceramic poppy art installation, with poppies crafted by art students in the school's ceramic studio.

For all enquiries, please contact our main reception between 8:30am - 4:00pm on 0191 214 2200

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In conversation with...

Michelle Hill

Headmistress, Durham High School for Girls

Leading girls' school, Durham High School, has appointed Michelle Hill as its new Headmistress. As a mother of two girls and a Biology teacher with 25 years' experience in the education sector, she talks about the benefits of a single sex environment and the key piece of advice she gives to all her girls.

Congratulations on your appointment. Can you tell us about Durham High School?

Durham High School is an all-through school, educating girls from Nursery through to Sixth Form, and we're proud to be one of the first schools in the North East to take girls' education seriously. Durham High School is now in its 140th year, with an impeccable track record of excellence, and it's a privilege to be appointed Headmistress. When I first stepped through the door it felt like home; there's a real buzz of energy and passion among the girls and the close relationships they build with their teachers are exceptionally special. I stand back and think: 'Wow! If only this could be bottled."

Can you expand on your role as Headmistress?

My overarching role is to develop and lead the strategic direction, vision and values of the school while ensuring that I'm accessible and approachable to parents, pupils and staff alike. As a mum, I fully understand the needs of parents and I set the bar high. I expect exceptional levels of teaching and outstanding pastoral care to ensure every girl here is known, understood, valued, nurtured and supported. Durham High School's motto 'Be Your Best' embodies everything I want for the girls and there are no limits placed on their learning or aspirations.

What excites you about working in an all-girls environment?

The breaking down of stereotypes...In fact, stereotypes don't exist here, and I love that! No subjects are assigned a gender, and no subjects are off limits. All our scientists, mathematicians and budding engineers are girls and there's no



ceiling on their dreams. They're driven to succeed, and we do our very best to help get them there. There are many STEM trailblazers in the school and as a specialist Science teacher that excites

Can you give a potted history of your 25-year career in education?

I specialise in Biology and have worked in state secondary schools for much of my career. In 2005 I became an Advanced Skills Teacher, raising achievements in Science across the Middlesbrough authority, and went on to work in the Extended Leadership Team at Redcar before being appointed in 2013 as an Assistant Headteacher. My move to Durham High came in 2021 when I was appointed Deputy Head (Pastoral) to lead safeguarding and support the pastoral needs of the girls. I became Vice Principal (3-18) in 2022 and, after a period as Acting Principal this year, was appointed as Headmistress

How did your experience as a pupil at an all-girls school support your move from co-educational teaching to the single sex environment at Durham High?

It's proven invaluable to have that firsthand experience and recognise just how special an all-girls learning environment really is, not only for academic achievement but for nurturing and empowering confident and ambitious females who are fully prepared to grasp opportunities and thrive in today's world. At Greenlands, I was taught to be the very best version of myself

possible, and that same sense of belonging and purpose exists at Durham High.

Who inspired you to become a teacher?

I attended Greenlands High School for Girls, in Blackpool, and was taught Biology by an incredible woman, Miss Gaffney. Like her, I wanted to make a difference to young people's lives through teaching and she gave me the encouragement and confidence I needed to realise my potential.

What do you love most about your job?

How busy and different every day can be...for me and for the pupils! Academia is undoubtedly important, but outside of the classrooms the days are filled with sport, music, drama, and a whole myriad of extra-curricular activities from rock climbing and rowing to chess club and rock band. I've particularly loved working closely with the Sixth Form Prefect Team, who are great role models for our younger girls. Being part of a vibrant environment is so inspiring.

How do you find time to unwind away from work?

I try to heed the advice I give the girls...that life is all about balance. I find that harmony by spending time with my family and visiting new places. I also have a passion for learning and I'm currently completing a MA in Education Leadership.

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A reflection on school success and support

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster of Newcastle Royal Grammar School.

The Newcastle Royal Grammar School community was delighted when we were recently awarded the accolade of overall Independent School of the Year for the whole of the UK. Someone even quipped that it is not often that a team from Newcastle goes down to London and brings home a major trophy! However, it was tremendous to know that the impact we have in our region on a daily basis, is being recognised at a national level.

The genesis our latest accolade started from our vision to inspire young people to make a positive contribution to society and, through promoting excellence, raising aspirations and attainment across the North East. I often say that for the RGS to have region-wide impact, what we do in school has to be excellent, and this is clear in the tremendous academic results that our students achieve. This summer over 40% of our GCSE results achieved grade 9 and 34% of our students' A-Levels were A*.

Perhaps more importantly, however, the RGS was one of the highest ranked schools in the country for "value added", a measure of how we help

students to fulfil their potential. This is significant because it shows the impact we have for students of all ability, not just the most able. Indirectly, it also reflects how well our students are cared for pastorally as well as academically. Our commitment to promoting emotional wellbeing and positive mental health for our students, staff and parents was recognised upon being awarded Wellbeing for Schools accreditation earlier this year.

That said, a key mantra is that results should be the consequence of a good education, not the purpose. Indeed, our students probably learn at least as much outside the classroom as they do inside their lessons. The wide range of our co-curricular programme allows each child the opportunity to find their own niche from which they can grow in confidence, develop the life skills needed for working alongside other people and, above all, simply have fun. Activities available span across sport, music, drama and outdoors activities, as well as a multitude of clubs and activities, not to mention the breadth of educational visits both in this country and abroad. Outside the classroom, our students and staff are also active in a wide range of service and charity activities which help them develop entrepreneurial skills in a social enterprise context. In doing so they learn to engage with people from all walks of life and develop the understanding of the importance of making that positive contribution to society.

Our focus on having positive impact across the North East is genuinely central to what we





do at the RGS. We have always had a strong commitment to supporting deserving students through our bursary programme which last year supported 84 students and our aspiration is to increase this number thanks to the support of our very generous alumni donors. In parallel, last year our students and staff also ran more than 50 projects in over 100 schools, regularly engaging with well over 10,000 young people and supporting more than 700 teachers. For those who are interested in the detail of how we did this, our most recent social impact report is available on our website. However, we are very grateful to organisations such as the Reece Foundation, British Engines, TSG and others who have helped us to develop a scaleable model for achieving such demonstrable impact. It was as a result of this work that we also won the category for Outstanding Educational Partnerships at the Independent School Parent Magazine Awards.

While this award is a tremendous validation of what we do, we are in no way complacent because we recognise the scale of need in the North East. Our state sector partners whom we support are doing extraordinary work in the face of extreme systemic challenges. The next generation of children who come to the RGS will be able to play their part in building on this success and, I hope, helping to make the North East into the powerhouse that it has the potential to be.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



Year in the Life at RGS^{*} 2022-23

1,346 STUDENTS 44% GIRLS 56% BOYS



GCSE 21 SUBJECTS 1,436 GCSES AWARDED

85.2% GRADE 9-7 40.9% GRADE 9

13 OF 139 STUDENTS ACHIEVED ALL GRADE 9s

A-LEVEL 26 SUBJECTS 582 A-LEVELS AWARDED

89% GRADE A*-B 34% GRADE A*

72% GRADE A*-A

68 NUMBER OF EPQ QUALIFICATIONS ACHIEVED



84 STUDENTS BURSARIES

ATTENDED RGS ON TRANSFORMATIONAL MEANS-TESTED BURSARIES

PARTNERSHIPS

INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS IN LOCAL STATE SCHOOLS 10.000 BENEFITED FROM RGS PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

RGS PARTNERSHIP **50** PROJECTS TAKEN PLACE



172 CCF CADETS 370 DOFE STUDENTS







NETWORK OF 11,300 OLD NOVOCASTRIANS

293 CO-CURRICULAR CLUBS









Goes Back to the 20's for Grand Launch of "The Miss Clara Vale Mysteries"

Author Fiona Veitch Smith has a rich cultural background, having worked as a journalist, a university lecturer, and a communications manager. She grew up in Northumberland and then moved to South Africa as a teenager before resettling back in Newcastle. Fiona's fascination with the 1920s and '30s has played a significant role in shaping her novels.

Best known for her critically acclaimed CWA Historical Dagger shortlisted series "Poppy Denby Investigates," she is an accomplished author with a diverse range of works, including Golden Age mysteries, historical fiction, children's picture books, theatre, and short films. She has captivated readers worldwide with her tales set in art deco period.

"The Picture House Murders," the first instalment of "The Miss Clara Vale Mysteries," delves into the intriguing world of 1929 Newcastle. Miss Clara Vale is an unconventional woman of her time, driven by her passion for science and a desire to forge her own path. Her life takes a thrilling turn when her estranged uncle's sudden demise bequeaths her his private detective agency and laboratory. The unexpected inheritance sends her from London to Newcastle into the realm of detective work including solving the mystery of a death in a picture house. Fiona has set the story in her beloved North East.



Laura's book provides a secret way to fight childhood abuse

Laura Coel, is a professional singer and runs a busy casting agency. She has written the book "Laura's Secret," to share as a resource for parents, safeguarding agencies, schools, and children themselves. It will be used as a tool to help young people express their feelings and know what to do and who to talk to if they

Laura herself is a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. From the age of around eight she was subjected to the demands of her stepfather. Eventually, after years of imposing terror on Laura he was convicted and sent to prison.

The book, "Laura's Secret," is designed to be accessible for children as young as three or four, acknowledging that they can start absorbing knowledge early. It aims to help children understand the difference between good secrets and bad secrets. The book gently tells the story of Laura's childhood without using explicit language or content that might disturb young readers. It implies Laura's unhappiness, making it suitable for a wide age range.

"I've been thinking about writing this book for a long time, and it's something very close to my heart. When I was sexually abused, at that time, nobody discussed it. I didn't have the vocabulary to express what was happening to me. If I'd had a resource like this as a child, I might have been able to talk to my mum or give her some clues about what was going on. I have three young daughters myself and I'd hate them to go through what I have."



Sting gives an exclusive performance

North East icon and multi-award winning musician Sting was the first ever artist to perform at North Shields cultural venue, The Exchange 1856, following completion of a £1m+ refurbishment programme.

Sting performed a stunning set, featuring songs from his illustrious catalogue to a specially invited crowd, who were there to see him receive the Freedom of the Borough award, the highest accolade any local authority can bestow and is in recognition of his incredible global achievements and advocacy for North Tyneside.

Following a change of operator earlier this year, The Exchange 1856 on Howard Street, North Shields, now open to the public, has undergone extensive renovations, transforming the 167-year-old building back to its former glory and creating a world-class community space offering entertainment, health and wellbeing, culture, food and drink, weddings and business in the heart of North Shields.

Every part of the historic local landmark has been refurbished and improved – from the 500-capacity auditorium with the most technologically advanced lighting, sound and visual systems to newly created conferencing and events spaces for meetings, fitness sessions, dance classes and weddings.

Throughout The Exchange 1856, original features such as ornate architraves, Victorian fireplaces and stained-glass windows have been carefully restored and complemented with sumptuous new fixtures and fittings, polished wooden floors and décor, in keeping with the building's unique character.

The Thomas Brown room, which celebrates the life of a local hero, has been given the 'Wow' factor with decorative wall panelling, new marble floor and feature marble fireplace.

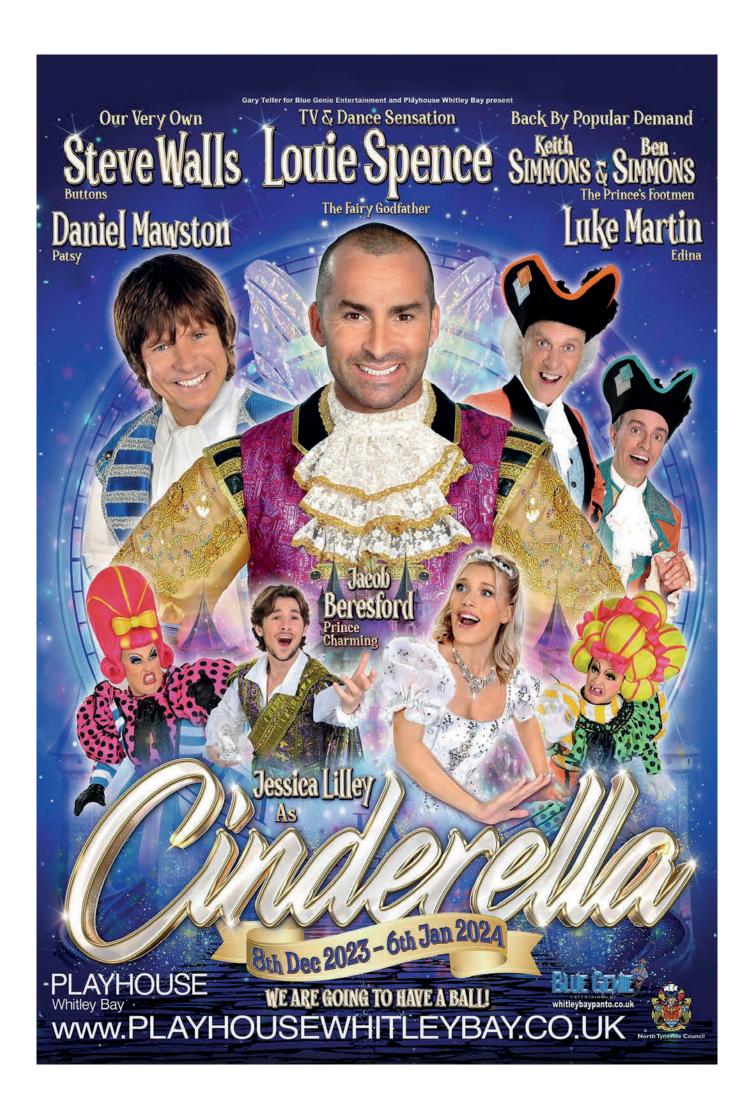
To celebrate its opening, The Exchange 1856 also unveiled its brand-new 2024 programme of events featuring everything from popular music acts to family-friendly performances, pantos and charity gigs. Full details of the 2024 line-up can be found on The Exchange 1856 website.





Showcasing the North Easts finest art

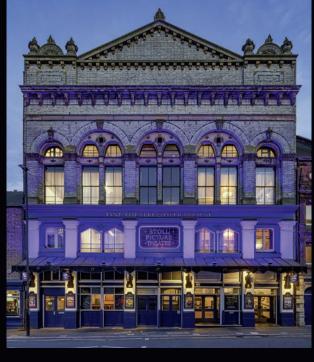
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New Chief Exec enters stage left at the Tyne Theatre & Opera House

Jonathan Higgins appointed to brand new role at the historic entertainment venue.



"How could I not come here," were the first words Jonathan Higgins said when we spoke to him recently.

He's taken-up the position of Chief Executive Officer at the Tyne Theatre and Opera House in what is a newly created role...one that is aimed at supporting the trustees and the management team in what has been an independently run, not-for-profit venue since 2015.

"When you look at the pedigree of the Theatre, it really is staggering," adds Jonathan. "What the trust has achieved since 2015 is remarkable and I'm honoured to have been given this new role. Having worked within the entertainment industry for almost 20 years, I know how well thought of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House is nationally and internationally...both with artists and promoters. I want to take this venue to the next phase in its illustrious history by developing, leading and supporting the current team and offering another layer of business management. I am tremendously proud to be working at such a wonderful venue in the iconic city of Newcastle."

The independent venue is owned by the Tyne Theatre and Opera House Preservation Trust and operated by its subsidiary company. All profits are reinvested into the Theatre, helping to restore and preserve the venue for future generations. Audience support is the main source of income, whether buying a ticket, sponsoring a seat, joining the Friends of the Theatre Club, buying drinks at the bar, or making donations.

We'd also point you in the direction of the Tyne Theatre social media feeds because you'll not only keep up to date with what's going on and ticket availability, but you'll also see some contributions from well-known performers. One of the latest is by the fabulous comedian and actor Tom Allen, who recently appeared at the Theatre. He recorded a message of support for the theatre and charity beneath the stage next to the famous Victorian stage machinery. Other well-known supporting voices have included Sarah Millican, Lucy Beaumont and Grayson Perry.

"These stunning endorsements reaffirm the wonderful work that's already been done by our Theatre Director Jo Johnson. It's a demonstration of how well we look after people. We have a terrific relationship with performers and the paying customers, and it's clear that the theatre is beloved locally and enjoys a great reputation within the industry.

As for the future, bearing in mind that this is a Grade One listed building, there's a never-ending list of stuff to take care of. We are the custodians of the building and we need to preserve it for future generations. Plans are afoot to develop a second performance venue at the Theatre and reinstate the Grand Saloon in what is currently the bistro, and develop other areas of the building which aren't used. For example the Grand Circle boardroom would be ideal for corporate and private hospitality. We need to maximise the potential of the Theatre, develop the programme of events, and make sure we can sustain the business going forward."

In other words, with Jonathan at the helm, the future of the Tyne Theatre and Opera House looks bright. His experience and drive will add to the fabulous work which has taken place at the Theatre and helped it survive during the Covid pandemic when it had to close and saw revenue drop to zero. For it to have recovered and blossomed since then is testament to the hard work and skill of the team who look after this North East gem.

For a full list of what's on go to www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk You can buy tickets, and find more information on how you can support the Theatre.

My weekend

Nigel Devine

Owner, Orbis Support Ltd.

Orbis Support provides supported living for disabled adults with learning disabilities who wish to live in their own home. Their work supports people to live and be part of their community, playing an active and positive role supported by well trained, well paid, and well supported staff.

His company has provided the main sponsorship of the upcoming "Christmas at the Cathedral" concert in Newcastle, which will benefit the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation. Here he tells us about his weekends...

Do you ever have to work weekends?

Yes, but less frequently now though. I have a great team behind me meaning I can spend more time at weekends doing what I like doing.

Are most weekends the same?

Each weekend is very different. I do a lot with the family. My young grandsons like football and travelling on the Metro and when I can combine both it's great. I particularly enjoy visiting the Tynemouth Market, go out eating, and watching football. I always love the weekends.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

Yes I hardly ever switch off, from the moment I get up to the time my head hits the pillow.

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

It's all about family. I enjoy eating meals with family and spending valuable quality time with the grandkids.

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I usually get up around 5am and I walk along the beach. My Facebook photos of the sunrise are getting a lot of fans.



Big night out or a night in the house?

I gave up drinking 18 months ago but I still go out and enjoy a good social life. I'm particularly looking forward to the Christmas at the Cathedral event in Newcastle on 14th December. I have attended the 'Christmas at the Cathedral' concert for the past five years and have grown to love the event and the people associated with it. The combination of the beautiful cathedral setting, and the holiday spirit makes it truly special. It's a time when people come together to celebrate and give back to those in need. I am honoured to be a part of it and contribute in any

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I do, I watch one of my grandsons play football on a Saturday and I'm either at the match or watching the Toon on TV.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I love the Low Lights Tavern in North Shields for its pies, I also love St Vincent's in town, amazing food.

What's the best thing about weekends?

I just love that there is so much to do, family, football, friends, food and walking along the beach of course.

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

Watching the sunrise and watching the Toon win!

To find out more about Orbis Support Ltd. visit orbissupport.co.uk

In conversation with...

Matt Lapinskas

Playing Peter Pan at Tyne Theatre & Opera House this festive period, Matt talks to Jackie Marston about what to expect!

This month you will be starring as Peter Pan in Tyne Theatre & Opera House's pantomime of Peter Pan, what is the character like to play?

It's a fun, energetic and iconic role, so I am really going to love it.

Having performed in a Peter Pan pantomime last year, what are you looking forward to for returning to the role for a new run?

Ooooh, the flying, definitely. This is what sets this production aside from all others. I also love to hear the excitement and magic that this show brings.

What do you enjoy most about performing in pantomimes?

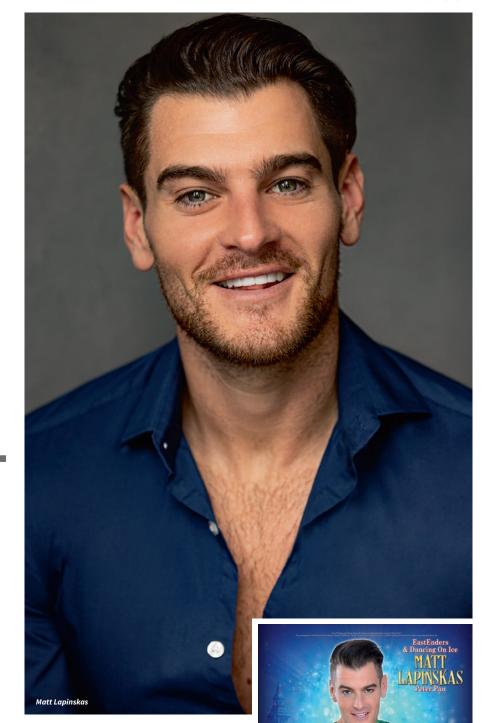
I love the fact that they are family traditions for many people and something that you take to adulthood yourself, before creating the same types of memories for your own children.

How do you find the experience of interacting with a pantomime audience?

You can't beat the interaction, whether you're playing a goodie or a baddie, it's always great to hear the audience get involved. It's often the first experience of theatre for a child going to a panto, so it's our job to make it extra special.

You have a diverse background in acting, including television, theatre and even ice skating! How has your past experience influenced your approach to playing Peter Pan on stage?

I trained at Italia Conti drama school in London, where they teach you lots of different things. But you know, over the years, I think as an actor you grow, you're always learning from each different show you do, over the years I've done EastEnders, but last year I was in Hollyoaks. I've done shows



in the West End, and I've done touring plays, so everything that you're doing sort of trained you and then you can tap into different things. Every show that you do prepares you for your next role, and you can always tap back into something.

What are some of your favourite memories from your time as Anthony Moon in EastEnders?

My memories came to life when I saw all the famous characters on set that I'd spent my entire life watching on TV. Sharing the stage with legends like Shane Richie and David Essex was an eye-opener and a real privilege.

How did you find the experience being a contestant on Series 8 of Dancing on Ice and how was it reaching the Final?

In a word, awesome. I still skate now, when I can, as it's a skill I'd like to continue with. Skating the Bolero for Jane Torvill and Christopher Dean was monumental.

How do you like to spend your free time?

The gym, playing golf, dog walking, testing my skills at songwriting, spending time with friends and family and finally singing as much as I can.

Tickets are already selling fast, and start from just £16.50, so don't miss the chance to be part of this adventure in Neverland. To book your tickets, call the Tyne Theatre and Opera House box office on 0844 249 1000 or visit www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk

How your business can support the TV and Film Industry

UK TV and film production continues to thrive, although recent studio strikes in the USA having some impact here and commissioning being down; the production of content for TV and film is still at a relatively high level.



If we look here in the North East; the screen industries continue to be on an upward trajectory catalysed by significant investment into the industry through North East Screen Industries Partnership (NESIP) delivery programme and the FulwellCain Crown Works Studio development in Sunderland.

But what is needed for the industry to continue to grow at the rate it needs to? Well, there's the people working on set in front of the camera and behind the camera, there's the people building the set, there's the people in the office working through all the logistics, finances and research, and there's the multitude of companies that are used to support all of these people to ensure that the production and filming runs as smoothly as possible. These supply chain companies range from equipment suppliers to post production houses, caterers to waste disposal companies, taxi drivers to prop firms. The list is vast and varied.

A key supplier based here in the North East is not only celebrating their 20th anniversary this year, but have won plenty of exciting business over the past year. Focus Canning started in a bedroom of Co-Founder, Jamie Hutchinson's parents' house and today, it is an award-winning camera supplier with a rich credit history suppling some of the nation's hit TV shows including Peaky Blinders, Boiling Point, Man like Mobeen and Little Birds. As well as supporting the regional economy and driving the development of the screen industries here in the North East, Focus Canning pride themselves on delivering quality and getting the 'little big things' right, earning the respect and trust from many production companies. They are also helping North East Screen nurture and inspire the next generation of camera operators through the North East Crew Academy. Recently 13 Academy members attended a workshop at Focus Canning's northern base in Newcastle providing them with hands-on



experience industry standard equipment. There will be further opportunities with Focus Canning as the partnership between them and North East Screen grows and develops.

Another business providing a service to the screen industry who is having impact nationally is The Church Post, a post-production house based in Newcastle. The business has made huge strides over the past year with recent credits including North East-based BBC comedy short, Where it Ends by Tiger Aspect, and Channel 5's hit drama, The Inheritance, by Lonesome Pine Productions. They have also been nominated for an Industry Makers and Shakers Award in the 'Initiative to Grow Local Industry'.

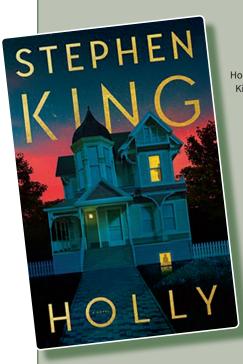
Both of these companies are key drivers to the growth of the screen industries here in the North East. Not only are they providing aspiration to other screen industry companies and sustainable job opportunities to those looking to work in the industry and continue to live in the region, but they also highlight that top North East industry talent are global business winners.

If you want to find out more about how your business can support the film and TV industry, get in touch with the North East Screen talent and business development team at business@northeastscreen.org



So this is Christmas

Here are four fantastic books which would make the ideal stocking filler.



Holly

Stephen King

Holly Gibney, one of Stephen
King's most compelling and
ingeniously resourceful
characters, returns to
investigate the gruesome
truth behind multiple
disappearances in a
Midwestern town. In this
thrilling novel, Holly is on
her own, and up against
a pair of unimaginably
depraved and brilliantly
disguised adversaries.

Commonly acknowledged as one of the greatest storytellers of the past century Stephen King delivers another gripping read full of twists and turns.

Broadly Speaking

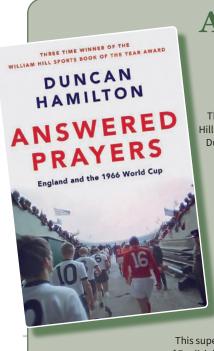
Stuart Broad

A multiple Ashes winner and World Champion Stuart Broad was a fierce competitor and one of the mainstays of some of the greatest England teams of all time.

His journey to the top hasn't always been straightforward and in this revealing autobiography, Broad shares the moments from the game that have made him and those that almost broke him.

Candid, entertaining and refreshingly honest, this book takes the reader over the boundary and into the dressing room, revealing the personal side of a true cricketing great.





Answered Prayers

Duncan Hamilton

Three time winner of the William Hill Sports Book of the Year Award, Duncan Hamilton is a colossus in the world of sports writing.

> He returns with Answered Prayers, the story of England and the 1966 World Cup.

Seeing the whole game again during the misery of the first Covid lockdown, finally made him realise what Alf Ramsey and his players had no inkling of,which was what came next for them. How '66 was not a beginning but a slow decline and fall.

This superb read provides a full account of English football's greatest achievement and the failures that followed it.

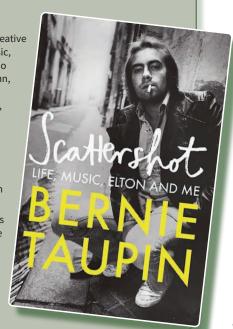
Scattershot Life, Music, Elton and Me

Bernie Taupin

Half of one of the greatest creative partnerships in popular music, Bernie Taupin is the man who wrote the lyrics for Elton John, who conceived the ideas that spawned countless hits, and sold millions of records. Their extraordinary creative relationship is the stuff of legend.

In this exciting read we ride shotgun with Bernie through his extraordinary life.

This is an epic journey across a landscape of unforgettable characters and locations, as well as a striking first hand account of a creative era like no other.





'Tis the Season

By Mary Ann Rogers

Short days, long nights, waiting for the winter equinox and the balance to begin to tip the other way.

In the meantime, the pre Christmas fever is upon us all here at Mary Ann Rogers Gallery. Orders for everything from paintings and prints to calendars and cards are being packed up and shipped out every day.

Occasionally things go wrong and parcels go astray, which creates intense anxiety here as everyone does their utmost to give the best customer service possible, but sometimes events beyond our control can cause disappointment. Today was one of those days, but by the end of the day, the magical email arrived from the customer 'Its arrived!'- huge sighs of relief from us!

Under the watchful eyes of the sheep in the adjacent field, also the sneaky guinea fowl who appear out of nowhere, observing everything that goes on in the studio, very little painting takes place in these few frantic weeks before Christmas. Visitors to the gallery open days create amusement, and anything new or unusual sets off the guinea fowl, who make the most tremendous squawking, and sometimes fly up into the branches of the nearby trees, feigning terror.

Endless rain has made the river slightly change the shape of the bank at our regular swimming 'get in' spot. All the 'treasures' collected over the year and placed in the little metal bowl attached to the side of my changing seat have been lifted up and washed away by the floods. Our treasures include river smoothed pieces of china and glass mostly, also freshwater mussel shells and any interesting stones picked up. The water is flowing high and fast all the time now, and river swims are out of bounds for the time being. Maybe when the colder stiller weather comes there will be a crust of ice to break through before taking a short swim.

Here's to a great Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Mary Ann Rogers Gallery • West Woodburn, Hexham NE48 2SE. Details about open days: www.marogers.com • 07967550772









Riding the Rocky Mountaineer in the USA By Stuart Forster

Does riding a train west from Denver count as a type of mile-high club membership? The Rocky Mountaineer began operating its Rockies to the Red Rocks route between Denver – nicknamed the Mile High City due to its altitude – and Moab in August 2021. That means the number of rail aficionados who've experienced the alluring day-and-half journey into Utah remains fairly exclusive.



The Rocky Mountaineer is a luxury travel company based in Canada. Its first train rolled between Vancouver and Banff in 1990 and soon came to be regarded among the world's top rail experiences. Journeys encompass viewing rugged scenery from cars with panoramic windows and comfortable leather seats, onboard fine dining and frequent offers of complimentary drinks by hosts with a talent for conveying details about aspects of heritage, geology and nature along the way.

The franchise now operates three routes in western Canada and one in the USA. Back in 2017, I travelled between Vancouver and Banff on the two-day First Passage to the West route and experiencing the Rockies to the Red Rocks route appealed to me as soon as it was announced but Covid-related travel restrictions were in place at the time. Thankfully, two years on, normality has returned and the USA is again proving a popular destination for British travellers.

Ahead of the rail journey, I flew into Denver a couple of days early. Touring in an electric rickshaw, similar in design to the three-wheeled vehicles that operate on streets of South-East Asia, proved an environmentally friendly way of orientating while seeing places of interest in the Lower Downtown, around Union Station, and RiNo – the street art adorned River North Art District. Then from Denver Art Museum's rooftop terrace, I gazed towards the Rockies.

In Canada, the Rocky Mountaineer's GoldLeaf Service features double-decker, glass-domed cars: the upper decks hold spacious leather seats while the lower decks are for dining. As I settled into my seat in Denver, Lacey, one of the hosts, grabbed a microphone and explained that those cars are too tall to squeeze through tunnels arching over track in the Rockies. Consequently, single-deck SilverLeaf cars are used on the Rockies to the Red Rocks route and meals are served at passengers' seats rather than at tables in dedicated dining cars.

Around 80 miles into the journey we began following the westward flow of the Colorado River. Soon we were presented with the dubious honour of what locals term 'the Colorado salute': a fisherman nonchalantly turned his back, dropped his pants, bent over and bared his bum in our direction. Intermittent salutes subsequently distracted us, prompting guffaws, as we rolled through magnificent canyons and valleys whose stratified and expansive scenery prompted passengers to reach for phones or cameras.

Arguably the most dramatic stretch of the first day's scenic journey was the craggy Glenwood Canyon just outside of our overnight stop, Glenwood Springs. The Coloradan town's hot springs have attracted tourists since a railroad connection was established in 1887. One of the great names of the American West, Doc Holliday, is buried in Glenwood Springs' Pioneer Cemetery.



Less than 12 miles into a second day that saw us board before daybreak, we passed through New Castle. The small town was founded in 1888 and, like its near-namesake in northeast England, coal mining played a key role in its history. A host explained that an underground fire has burnt in the area since a deadly explosion at the Vulcan Mine in 1896.

From the open vestibule between cars, I breathed in the fresh scent of the cool morning air and clicked reflection-free photos of the sun rising over the steaming water of the Colorado River. That spot proved ideal for capturing arid landscapes further west that reminded me of the scenery from cartoons in which Wile E. Coyote repeatedly attempted to thwart the beeping Road Runner.

Arriving in Moab presented opportunities to tour the nearby Arches and Canyonlands National Parks, where erosion has sculpted landscapes of dramatic beauty, and to participate in outdoor adventure activities. A sunset Hummer tour, thrashing over hills and through desert above Moab proved a thrilling final journey with a handful of the people I'd got to know during the memorable rail journey west.







Travel information

Visit rockymountaineer.com for further information on the luxury train service, including 2024 packages to experience the Rockies to the Red Rocks route. British Airways (britishairways.com) and United Airlines (united.com) operate direct flights, with a duration of approximately nine hours and 50 minutes, between London Heathrow and Denver International Airport.

Find out more about Denver (denver.org), Glenwood Springs (visitglenwood.com) and Moab (discovermoab.com) via their respective tourist information websites. Visit Utah (visitutah.com) has details about things to do beyond Moab, including

visiting state and national parks in the Beehive State's southeast.





Recognition for the Inn Collection Group

The Inn Collection Group is now a Which? Recommended provider after the UK consumer champion revealed its list of the best and worst hotel chains of 2023.

The pub with rooms operator is a new entry into the list of providers with the Which? seal of approval, a coveted accolade which marks out the brands of choice for the discerning purchaser.

More than 5,000 people rated their hotel stays for the annual hotel survey, with respondents invited to rate their experiences at 37 hotel chains across the UK.

Heralding warm welcomes, posh pub grub and a decent beer selection as key features of the group's offering, Which? Rated The Inn Collection Group as offering inns that were "cheaper, better and with more character" than other leading operators.

Placing third in the small operator listings, surveyed guests scored their stays out of five stars across 10 categories including cleanliness, customer service, bed comfort, how well the description matched the reality and value for money. With sites across northern England and Wales, The Inn Collection Group came out with a customer score of 78%, which combines overall satisfaction and likeliness to recommend.

In a table where the highest rated operated earned an 80% mark, it is a solid endorsement of what guests choosing to eat, drink, sleep and explore with the group in Northumberland, Tyne & Wear, Co Durham, North Yorkshire, Lancashire, North Wales and the Lake District are experiencing.

The Inn Collection Group scored particularly strongly for the cleanliness of the inns, whilst bedroom comfort, bathrooms, customer service and value for money were all on par with the brands ranking above on the list. With a host of recent re-openings bringing The Inn Collection Group to more places than ever before, including Knaresborough, Ripon and Tynemouth, now is the ideal time to sample these standards in person.

Ophelia, Gosforth works with North East artist

The team at Ophelia, Gosforth recently teamed up with artist Frannie Wise, to create bespoke artwork for the Newcastle based bistro.

Frannie, originally from Hexham, studied illustration at the Edinburgh College of Art, graduating in 2021. Currently living and working in Edinburgh, she's massively proud of her Northumbrian roots, and as a result comes home regularly to seek inspiration from the environment she grew up in.

She's particularly inspired by its folktales, the rolling countryside, stunning coastline and inevitably its burgeoning food scene, which included regular visits to The Patricia. As a result



of these frequent visits back home, Frannie quickly became firm friends with the team at The Patricia. This burgeoning friendship led to chef patron Nick Grieves asking her if she'd look at creating bespoke work for the restaurant.

Nick opened the doors to his second venture Ophelia earlier this year, and inevitably he soon got in touch with Frannie, but this time the



Hotel joins Sunderland gift card scheme

Sunderland people can give the gift of an overnight stay, after one of the city's newest hotels joined its hugely successful gift card scheme.

And now Holiday Inn Sunderland, at the city's Keel Square, has joined them, in time for the busiest gift buying period of the year.

Since it was launched more than £150,000 worth of gift cards have been sold providing a huge boost to the local economy, with buyers able to purchase them online, as a digital gift card, an e-voucher or in person at sales points across the city and beyond

The gift vouchers can then be redeemed at any participating retailer, business or leisure outlet – making them an ideal Christmas gift for those of all ages, as well as a corporate reward for staff or as a thank you to clients.

Rob Dixon, general manager at Holiday Inn Sunderland said the hotel was delighted to have joined the scheme.

"There are so many reasons for people to come to Sunderland and it made total sense for us to be part of the Sunderland Gift Card," he said.

"It's a great way for someone to gift a stay to a relative or friend or for companies and organisations to give out as a reward

"We are very excited to be taking part and we look forward to welcoming the lucky recipients."

brief was a little different. Nick wanted her to create some Parisian-style table scenes from her interpretations of the restaurant.

Inspired by the space, Frannie set about creating a suite of work depicting the simple elegance of the restaurant, creating a suite of simple but contemporary line drawings, which will be used in a variety of branding applications across the business, with more to follow in the coming months as the brand develops and grows.

Frannie started selling work commercially in 2020, aged 20, initially establishing an online business to sell her work during the pandemic. Since then things have grown, with Frannie exhibiting at the Old School Gallery, Alnmouth, as well as the White Space Gallery, Edinburgh. Now aged 23 Frannie's work has developed and progressed, she's also an accomplished selftaught painter and ceramicist and as a result has some exciting projects on the horizon for 2024.

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Keep a look out for Luci's By Jackie Marston

Luci's in Cleadon Village, South Tyneside is the latest food offering to the little town and if you haven't already been, then it's definitely one to add to your 'want' list.

We booked for Sunday lunch and although I tried to get in a week earlier for a 3pm slot, it was fully booked, so the only table available was 12 noon, which is when I suspected it must be good and that we were late to the party!

Luci's is a small, cosy restaurant, tastefully decorated with around 30 covers. The staff are super-friendly, helpful, and once seated were soon offering us a selection of drinks and advising on wine etc. I was driving so soda water it was for me, but hubby had a cider, which came with an array of fruit and plenty of ice. For starters, Rich had goats cheese salad and I opted for the Yorkshire pudding off my main course as a starter with gravy. Where I come from, Chesterfield, that's how they're eaten, not on the main course!

The goats cheese salad looked delicious, so pretty on the plate and Rich said it tasted awesome, as it was served with a selection of leaves, slices of orange, which cut through the cheese and pomegranate seeds. There was a light dressing on it too, which completed the dish.

My Yorky pud was crispy, light, and airy, perfectly seasoned and the accompanying gravy... delicious.

Main course, Rich went off-piste and chose gluten-free fish and chips. The fish was huge and incredibly crispy on the outside. The white flesh of the fish was delicious, but what made this dish



special was the home-made tartare sauce. Bigger than usual chunks of dill pickles in it, which hubby thought was perfect. It was served with minted crushed peas and the chips were crunchy with a really mealy interior.

My pork dinner arrived with mashed potatoes, carrot, parsnip, stuffing, and roast potatoes. Other vegetables served separately were broccoli, red cabbage, green cabbage, and suede. Next time we go, I'm ordering a child's portion, as there was too much for me and normally Rich would finish my food but his meal was big too, so we sadly sent quite a lot of it back to the kitchen. The pork was melt-in-the-mouth, with crackling on the top, which was not teeth-breaking, and a perfect accompaniment. The mash was particularly creamy and veg cooked perfectly al dente.

Although we had no room for dessert, we shared a sticky toffee pudding, with ice cream. This was



like a really good quality parkin and my favourite from all of the places we've been to. Rich toffee sauce on the top and creamy ice cream made this an absolute winner.

The bill came to £65 and included a large glass of red wine for Rich too, so extremely good value for money. Next time we go, and there will be a next time, hubby is driving as I saw on the menu Espresso Martini's, which I'm partial to!

Luci's Bar and Restaurant, 42 Front Street, Cleadon, SR6 7PG 0191 563 0924.

Christmas is coming – Let the professionals do your event catering

Whether you're planning an intimate gathering for 10 or a grand corporate event for up to 250 guests, our expert catering services are designed to elevate your experience. We specialise in crafting unforgettable culinary experiences that cater to both private and corporate occasions.

Our dedicated team of culinary artists and event specialists is committed to creating a seamless and memorable dining experience that exceeds your expectations. From exquisite private dinners to large-scale corporate gatherings, we tailor our services to suit your unique needs and preferences.

At The Funky Indianwali, we specialise in crafting exceptional food experiences. For years, we have been at the forefront of Indian tapas and street food cuisine rooted in heritage recipes that have been cherished for generations, offering a tantalising array of fresh and flavourful dishes.

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Time ticks away without realisation and before we know it, we come to the end of another year

The value of time is often forgotten.

Our true currency when it comes to the reality of a life lived, our most crucial and valuable asset...Time.

December and January will see businesses and citizens reflecting, and planning.

How did you spend your 2023?

What did you do with your 31, 536, 000 seconds this year?

Shortly 2023 will be in the past, time we can't get back.

What we did, now a memory.

But the actions we took and the choices we made.

They will be experienced throughout 2024, into 2025 and beyond. Surpassing our lifetime.

Impacting the lives of others not only today but into the future, surpassing our lifetime.

Which makes me ponder; what type of Human do I want to be?

How we spend our time and how we spend our money leaves a legacy.

What do we want our legacy to be?

No doubt you are reflecting on 2023 as you read this and planning your 2024.

Do you want to make kind choices?

Do you want to create kind habits?

Do you want to take kind action?

Do you want your time and money to positively impact others?

Do you want your time and money to influence the future, surpassing your lifetime?



At Kind Currency we end the year and move forward into 2024 offering businesses and citizens opportunities to take kind action, to create a legacy of kindness, ensuring kind impact, surpassing our lifetime and protects people and the planet for the future.

If you and your business are committed to protecting others and the environment, we can support, celebrate and reward you and your business to design a kind lifestyle and take a little bit of everyday kind action that makes a big difference and creates a better world, changing the way we live, work, shop and play.

We verify small businesses as Kind and support those businesses along with Social Enterprises, Charities and Good Causes through our community, the home of kind living.

We enable corporates to embed kind values in their operations and solutions and support them to work towards real impact.

We reward citizens to take everyday kind action through our membership opportunity, helping us all do our little bit, simply and easily, easing the poverty and climate crisis as we sleep.

What type of Human do you want to be?

What type of Business do you want to be? What does your 2024 and beyond look like? Is it kind?

It is easy to say we are kind, but taking kind action, and creating kind impact isn't.

We can help you with that.

Wishing you, your family, and your business much hope for the future, Team Kind and I hope it's kind.

www.kindcurrency.co.uk

NEHA 2023 Winners





The North East Hotel Association Excellence awards

Organised by the North East Hotel Association (NEHA), proved to be a resounding success yet again last month. This cornerstone organisation, comprising of 50 of the region's most prominent hotels, stands as a symbol of support, guidance, and camaraderie for hoteliers and businesses in the hospitality sector. NEHA, serves as the collective voice of the industry, advocating for necessary changes and ensuring that the concerns of hoteliers are heard.

With over 400 attendees, the masqueradethemed gala dinner was a night to remember. The event celebrated the excellence of the teams within the association through 10 award categories, showcasing the outstanding achievements of individuals and establishments. The evening also featured a special recognition award, highlighting remarkable contributions to the hospitality industry.

Guests at the event were treated to a delectable three-course menu supported by Bidfood, with a selection of wines provided by Lanchester Wines. The pre-dinner entertainment, curated by Legacy Events, concluded by a fantastic live performance by the band Storm, while Charlie Richmond

skilfully hosted the evening.

NEHA, under the leadership of Co-Chairs Anna Wadcock, General Manager of Maldron Hotel Newcastle, and Sarah Harrison, General Manager of Delta by Marriott Newcastle Gateshead, continues to drive improvements in skills training and attract new talent to the industry.

The annual Excellence Awards exemplified NEHA's commitment to promoting excellence and driving positive change in the region's hospitality industry. It was a night of celebration, recognition, and inspiration, reinforcing NEHA's vital role in the success and growth of the sector.

www.nehotels.co.uk

nearby

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BEST NEWCOMER

Lukas Common, Vermont Hotel



CULINARY EXCELLENCE Paul Nicholson, Rockliffe Hall

O Destination

SALES EXCELLENCE

Destination North East England/NGI Kemoy Small, Hotel du Vin

RINGTONS

SERVICE EXCELLENCE Jake Coventry-Peters, Sandman Signature

The Roberts Family

INSPIRATIONAL LEADER Amanda Jennings

SPECIAL AWARD Neal Crocker, Services to the Hospitality Industry

FISHERS

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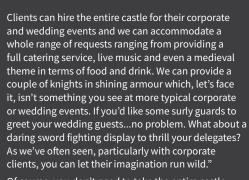
RISING STAR

RISING STAR
Rachel Willoughby
Hotel Indigo Durham

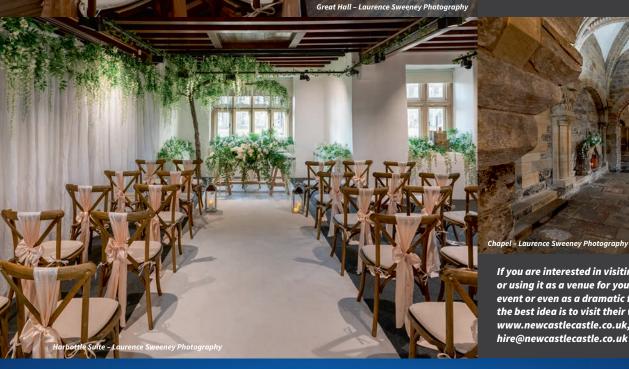


ECO AWARD
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Of course, you don't need to take the entire castle. There are several smaller rooms within Newcastle Castle...the Chapel, with its vaulted ceiling, is small and intimate and can cater for up to 30 guests. The Harbottle Suite can seat up to 50 guests, while if you need a much larger space, the Great Hall can hold up to 80 guests for something like an evening reception.



If you are interested in visiting Newcastle Castle, or using it as a venue for your wedding, corporate event or even as a dramatic film location, the best idea is to visit their website... www.newcastlecastle.co.uk, email hire@newcastlecastle.co.uk or call 0191 230 6300.





Celebrating festive fun at Sanderson Arcade – and looking ahead to big plans next year!

The shops are filled with special offers and the jingle jangle of festive music - it's fair to say we're all getting into full Christmas mode!

And Sanderson Arcade - the iconic shopping destination in the heart of Morpeth,
Northumberland - is here to tend to all of your yuletide needs this festive period.

A full programme of festive fun

The Salvation Army will be performing at the centre twice in the lead up to the big day on Saturday, December 2, and Saturday, December 23, both from 10.30am onwards. Village Voices will be filling the air with the

Village Voices will be filling the air with the sound of festive favourites from Saturday, December 9, from 11am.

And if you fancy taking part in the singing, the popular Carol'oke event is your big chance!

Join us on Saturday, December 9, from 3pm when we will be singing some of the best carols and festive songs around the Christmas tree. Song sheets will also be given out to help you to keep in tune.

Reindeer will be paying a visit to the Arcade on Sunday, December 10, between 10am and

4pm. Come along and meet Dasher, Dancer, Prancer and their friends before they make their big journey around the globe.

The popular Alnwick All Stars will be in full voice on Sunday, December 10, from 11am.

And just a few days later, Sing Northumberland Choir will take centre stage on Wednesday, December 13, from 11am.

Ladies from the Boulmer Military Wives Choir will fill the winter air with festive songs on Saturday, December 16, from 11am. And it will be a double header that day, as the Voicemale, an all male choir, will follow on with a performance from 3pm to 5pm.

Members of the popular Ellington Colliery Band take centre stage on Sunday, December 17, from 11am.

Feeling fabulous on New Year's Eve

Looking for a new outfit to help usher in the New Year? Sanderson Arcade is known for its wide array of shops, from high-street favourites to boutique brands including Phase Eight, Hobbs, Sandersons and Mint Velvet.

Starting the New Year feeling fit and healthy

Overindulged over the festive season? Snap Fitness have a wide range of fitness equipment for you to use, and best of all – they are open 24/7!

Making the most of office working

We have office space available here at Sanderson Arcade, if in the New Year you are looking to expand or open an office in Morpeth. Please contact Olly Jansen from our Estates Department, olly.jansen@dransfield.co.uk

Big anniversary plans for 2024

We are celebrating our 15th year anniversary in 2024 – keep an eye out on our website for how we are planning to celebrate this big occasion.

For more information on Sanderson Arcade opening times, festive events and activities head to our website, www.sandersonarcade.co.uk







Open seven days a week

Sanderson Arcade is open 7 days per week with onsite parking at Stanley Terrace, 3 hours FREE with parking disc (Monday – Saturday) and all-day Sunday.

Blagdon Gallery





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Pictures of Lily

By Michael Grahamslaw

A major dental operation recently left this seasoned socialiser on the sidelines. After a depressing two week diet of "no alcohol and soft food" it was therefore great to make my first foray back into public life with a welcome return to Leila Lilys in Newcastle.

Situated on the iconic Grey Street this opulent and refined venue is one of the jewels in the Malhotra Group crown and the perfect setting for any occasion.

We visited prior to a visit to the theatre and were hugely impressed upon arrival. The restaurant has the most gorgeous floral décor and welcoming booths to sit and enjoy your meal.

Serving sophisticated plates Leila Lilys offers an extensive menu range including starters ideal for grazing, elegant main courses and delicately assembled desserts.

After much deliberation over a welcome glass of Pinot Grigio I kicked off this culinary feast with the classic King Prawn Cocktail, a dish you don't see enough these days in this humble critic's opinion. The succulent prawns accompanied by a tangy zesty sauce were a delight with the accompanying Bloody Mary Sauce a real treat.

Lisa opted for confit duck spring rolls with an eyecatching Asian salad and soy marmalade. Very fresh and tasty with a real fusion of flavours according to Mrs G.

If the starters were impressive then the mains were no less so. I opted for the signature Leila Wagyu Burger, 8oz of prime Wagyu Beef with seeded Brioche, Black Truffle Mayo, Smoked Cheese, Streaky Bacon, Caramelised Guinness Onions, Gem Lettuce, Tomato, Fries & Onion Rings. Absolutely delicious and light years away from the spartan fayre I'd had in the preceding fortnight after my operation. I also noted that £1 from every Wagyu Burger sold is donated to Newcastle Westend Food Bank. A lovely touch.

Lisa meanwhile tucked into Herb Roast Chicken with Pomme Pureé, Wild Mushrooms, Confit Onion, Barbecued Asparagus and Tarragon Red Wine Sauces which she described as nothing short of perfection. The chicken was crisp and golden, and the meat was succulent and imbued with a medley of herbs that added depth and complexity to each tender bite. Velvety and rich, the sauce draped the chicken in a luxurious embrace.

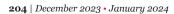
We then rounded off a lovely meal by sharing a delicious lemon cheesecake. Calorie counting could wait for another day.

Our waitress Amber looked after us throughout with terrific service adding to the overall experience.

From January 3rd-12th Leila Lilys is offering 50% off their A La Carte Menu (visit website for full t&c's) and their Eva Rose Garden is perfect for hire for private and dinners.

Definitely one we'd recommend.

www.leilalilys.co.uk





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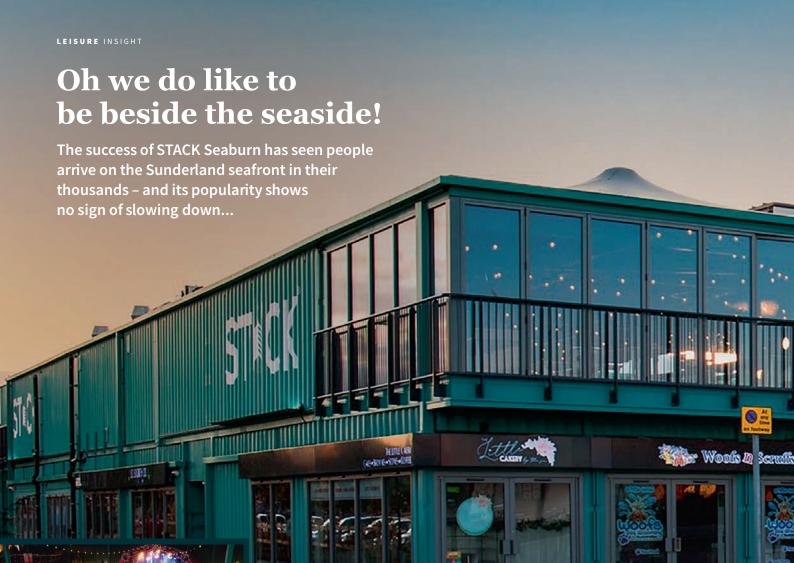
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It's been a busy year for STACK as the brand has announced plans to roll out this unique entertainment and leisure concept across the North East and beyond. With the creation of a new development in Newcastle underway – plus the fan zone STACK in conjunction with NUFC – 2024 is going to be an exciting year.

And that's not all. With STACKs at Lincoln, Middlesbrough, Durham, Bishop Auckland, Whitley Bay, Manchester, Carlisle, Northampton, and Sheffield all at various stages of development, the dream of making STACK a nationally recognised brand is well on its way to reality.

Until all of these schemes come to fruition, it's easy for fans to get their fill of STACK – by simply heading down to Seaburn.

Over the next few weeks and in to early 2024, STACK Seaburn has put together an incredible programme of events for both adults and children, living up to its reputation as a family friendly venue.

Recognising that only the very brave may be able to face the icy blast from the North Sea, STACK Seaburn has installed additional tents to cover the plaza, making the venue both snug and warm – and keeping those cold winds at bay. Not surprisingly, currently the focus is very much of the festive season with the creation of a whole host of Christmas party nights – running every Friday, Saturday and Sunday throughout December. Mini elves parties, Kroud Karaoke and Santa Paws are all part of the programme – meaning there is something for all the family, including the pooch.

The period between Christmas and New Year is notorious for trying to find

things to do, which is why STACK has also created a full programme of entertainment. Right through from Christmas Eve to New Year's Day (closed Christmas Day) there will be an exciting programme of live music and entertainment which is accompanied by tasty street food that doesn't involve turkey or Christmas pudding!

The venue will also be welcoming all of the brave souls who will be plunging into the sea as part of the Boxing Day Dip, as STACK is sponsoring the event.

STACK plan to see the year end with a bang with a New Year's Eve Extravaganza with a live house band, DJ and Kroud Karaoke. New Year's Eve is a time where people are faced with massive price hikes as everyone wants to celebrate the arrival of a new year, but STACK has kept their tickets at a purse friendly £15 per person. Tickets can be purchased online and are likely to sell out as they have done in previous years.

Regular visitors will also note some changes in December, notably the reopening of the popular coffee shop which has now doubled in size.

The Yolo Coffee & Kitchen menu, which includes hot drinks, breakfasts, toasties, pancakes and waffles, will also be available to order directly from inside the plaza, from the hatch, which will remain open until late.

December will also see the street food line up change with newcomer Lev's replacing Big Fat Indian Kitchen – Lev's will be serving Caribbean cuisine including favourites such as Jerk Chicken.

A new year is often a time of change – and that's certainly the case for Downey's as they plan to expand their unit, opening a restaurant alongside their fish & chip shop with a mouthwatering menu serving dishes such as grilled fish, mussels and surf and turf.



"STACK is a welcoming venue for everyone to enjoy and our varied programme of entertainment reflects that. We hope that this year with the additional tents providing full coverage from the elements, the whole family will come out to enjoy everything we have to offer.

"The year ahead for STACK Seaburn is really exciting. With new traders onboard, and some of our existing traders expanding their units, the venue continues to go from strength to strength."

Gemma added: "We are immensely proud of what we have achieved in Seaburn and look forward to creating the same vibrant and exciting buzz at the new STACK locations."

stackleisure.com



Jason Dalus

General Manager, Village Hotel, Newcastle

What did you set out to achieve this year?

At the beginning of 2023 as the industry navigated through recovery, travel was still subject to a degree of uncertainty. Here at Village we set out to provide information and re-build relationships with staff, guests and local businesses as the world steadily returned back to normal

Has everything gone according to plan?

We always knew that 2023 would be a challenging year, between staffing shortages, coming out of a global pandemic, supply-chain disruptions and the economic headwinds which were stoking fears of a 2023 recession. Despite this the hospitality industry still defies expectations and posting strong numbers .

What are you most proud of this year?

Embracing the digital experience which has brought efficiency to our business and allowed us to be able to communicate with guests in new ways. Guests can now stay connected with key services for Village Hotels and Wellness club through the tap of an app. This includes check in, unlocking your room, order and pay for food and instant chat access as well as our Gym members being able to stay on track of their fitness goals with the Village Gym App.

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

Always be present. Even more than ever, approachability is the key it is all about being present to your team and the guests.

Tell us about your team...

During the pandemic, the hospitality industry lost much of its workforce as hotels had to make severe staffing cuts.

I am very proud to have a fully engaged team who have been with Village Hotels for a number of years. We also deliver open-pathway, gamebased training that allows employees to receive cross-department training and unleash their full potential.

At Village, some bar staff have cross-skilled by completing the kitchen staff training. This improves the staffs knowledge of the wider business, increases mastery and drives continued learning and engagement. It is a vital tool for growing their career within the hotel.

What has been the most enjoyable business event you've been involved with?

It has to be working with the Sage Foundation and helping them deliver the FIRST LEGO League at the hotel, which is a program that challenges young people aged four to sixteen, to build robots using LEGO bricks and components.

What have you learnt about yourself this year?

That I have one of the most challenging yet rewarding jobs in hospitality.

Describe 2023 in three words...

Exciting. Grateful. Proud.

What are your aims for 2024?

There will be a continued focus on our teams, which we believe are our most important assets. Maintaining transparency and communicating on a regular basis is now more important than ever. Village also understand that we all have a part to play in reaching a better more sustainable future and it is why we launched our Village Green Initiative with an aim of having a positive impact on the communities we operate in, both environmentally and socially. We have already been successful in reaching Silver status in the Green Tourism Certification program and will be working towards a Gold status through 2024.

www.village-hotels.co.uk



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The Hat Trick

By Michael Grahamslaw

After first visiting the Northumberland Arms in November 2020 on the eve of Lockdown 2.0 the venue became a huge favourite of mine.

I made a flying Sunday Lunch visit a year later and now, after completing a very busy November edition, decided to complete the hat trick.

On a bleak wintery afternoon my wife Lisa and I made the short journey up the A1 to the picturesque village of Felton.

Being a lover of pubs the venue ticked every box for me combining the snug atmosphere of a country local with wonderful food and sumptuous accommodation.

It is situated in a breathtaking location overlooking the River Coquet and offers a terrific alternate to the larger hotels in the area.

This is a venue rich in history, originally built in the 1820's by Hugh Percy, 3rd Duke of Northumberland as a coaching inn where his coach horses, family and visitors could take refreshment before journeying on to Alnwick Castle.

If the setting is impressive then the warmth of welcome was no less so.

Owner Stuart Young is someone who I have worked with for many years and his expertise in the hospitality industry is second to none as shown with sister venues Lovage and the Blackbird Ponteland in recent years.

The hotel's individually decorated guest rooms capture the spirit of Northumberland and are all tastefully appointed with tartan rugs, Bergere sofas, plush bedding and heavy drapes. Bathed in a countrified colour palette – all greens, browns, purples and mauve- ours was a haven of comfort and tranquillity with a beamed, vaulted ceiling adding real character.

After a quick change we headed downstairs to the comfortable bar area where we found a lively mix of late lunchers and early evening boozers. This would also be the perfect place to unwind afters a day's walking or cycling.

Over a warming pint of Guinness I perused the extensive main menu which is updated seasonally and found a huge selection of classic main meals, a la carte dishes and mouthwatering desserts on offer.

After much deliberation we decided to kick off with a sharing seafood platter of mini fishcakes, breaded haddock, smoked salmon, prawn & crayfish cocktail.

Showcasing the diversity of flavours and textures from the sea this was a pleasantly

versatile choice and something that we reflected we should try more often.

Carrying on the nautical theme I chose the classic comfort dish of beer battered haddock and chips with accompanying mushy peas and tartare sauce. The fish was delicate and tasty and the chips golden brown and crispy as they should be. This was an absolute winner.

Lisa meanwhile chose a delicious dish of pan fried chicken breast with potato and onion bhajis, carrot and coconut puree, toasted almonds and fresh coriander. Lovingly presented, beautifully cooked and quickly devoured!

Washed down with a lovely bottle of Sauvignon Blanc this was terrific fayre and the perfect way to kick off the run through to Christmas.

After much discussion we sidestepped dessert but noted the terrific variety of sweet tooth options available. Next time...

Service was friendly and attentive throughout as it had been on our previous two visits.

After a rare eight hours sleep we sampled further sumptuous fayre at breakfast with a full English and smoked salmon and scrambled eggs setting us up for the journey home.

Three visits, three flawless experiences. Make a beeline to the Northumberland Arms for the perfect country escape.

For further information visit northumberlandarms-felton.co.uk









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Thai another day!

By Michael Grahamslaw

For almost a decade now, Mantra Thai Dining has stood proudly on Newcastle's Forth Banks – a temple to the city's burgeoning love of Thai cuisine and culture.

Whether it's in the snapshots all over social media or the sage recommendations from local hoteliers, it hasn't taken long for the restaurant to become a firm favourite.

Set in the famous Waterside Palace site, Mantra offers onsite parking and a melody of Thai flavours – spicy, sweet, sour and savoury.

However, while I'm known to frequent with a hungry cabal known as 'The Curry Club', it had been a while since I'd visited with the family. A recent facelift proved an apt time to address this, so I pitched up with the Grahamslaw clan to compile an updated review.

With ample parking on-site, it's a perfect choice for those with designated drivers in tow. Inside, the new-look dining area evokes a warm and convivial atmosphere with floor-to-ceiling windows, parquet flooring and various Thai objets d'art bringing the style.

A warm Thai welcome is always assured as we were greeted and shown to a cosy corner table. Delightful aromas pervade the air and really got the digestive juices flowing while I had never seen the dining area so packed on a busy run-up-to-Christmas Winter's evening.

A cool Singha beer really awoke the palate for my son Jack and I while the girl's sipped on an excellent bottle of Pinot Grigio blush.

In terms of food, Mantras menu is exciting and varied in scope with an abundance of choice across stir fries, soups, salads, curries, chargrilled and seafood dishes and vegetarian dishes.

Carrying it's own mantra of "Food is an art, cook from the heart", dishes are homespun and freshly prepared and come stylishly presented with evocative colours leaping out from the plate.

Kicking off, I chose the chicken tom yum soup a winter-warming, creamy, hot and sour soup with chicken, mushrooms, roasted chillies, lemongrass, galangal, coriander, kaffir lime leaves and Thai herbs combining to create a spicy, distinctive taste.

Jack enjoyed the grilled pork skewers, Bangkok street food favourite, char-grilled pork and marinated in honey and coriander root and laced with a tangy tamarind for extra oomph.

Lisa tucked into the Thai fishcakes, spiked with red curry paste and balanced with kaffir leaves while my daughter Holly proclaimed the shredded duck spring rolls as some of the best she'd tried in recent times. Praise indeed!

This was quickly turning into an impressive meal and got even better when the main courses arrived. I reverted to type with my preferred chilli and basil chicken – a spicy and fragrant Thai classic stir-fried with fresh chillies, garlic, green beans and holy basil leaves

Jack's sizzling garlic butter king prawns featured some of the plumpest king prawns we had seen in recent memory with egg fried rice proving the perfect accompaniment.

Lisa and Holly meanwhile chose the Thai Green chicken curry and the king prawn Pad Thai respectively. Singing with umami flavours, these proved Mantra also does the basics very well.

Throughout our meal we were waited on superbly by Team Mantra and will certainly be back to sample their eight-

course 'Journey to Thailand' tasting menu which offers a real culinary odyssey.

Prior to leaving we were told by one of the team that the Christmas menu starts on 1st December and includes a set lunch & early dining menu with a complimentary festive drink. There will also be live music throughout the month on Wednesday nights provided by Connor Haley.

Mantra's mission of bringing a touch of Thailand to Tyneside continues apace.

For more information, visit www.mantra-thai.co.uk











Fizz in the City gets spooky

Mincoffs Solicitors' popular ladies' networking event returned to Banyan in October.

The Halloween-themed afternoon brought together businesswomen from across the region and a wide range of industries and backgrounds.

The final event of the year raised money for North East youth development charity, NE Youth, with plans for the first event of 2024 currently underway.















Places to go...Market Harborough







In late October I found myself for two days in a four-star hotel in southern Leicestershire. It was thirty minutes walk from the nearest bus stop in North Kilworth, ten minutes down the hotel drive and twenty minutes along a fast A road with no pavements, jumping out of the way of approaching lorries. There are often much better options close to railway stations and I estimate that there are about 400 stations which have hotels close at hand. Therefore, I am working on a list of hotels ideal for the rail traveller. The nearest railhead to North Kilworth was Market Harborough, which I reached from the North East with changes at York, Derby and Leicester.

There is a bus route, the 58, to North Kilworth, but I had only nine minutes to catch it from my on time arrival at Market Harborough. I could track the bus perfectly on bustimes.org, but I took the wrong turning off the platform, costing me precious minutes on my dash into town. I can quantify how much that cost me: £31.70 by taxi instead of £2 on the bus, and although I enjoyed my stay in the four-star hotel, I would rather have been in the cosy and fully refurbished Three Swans Hotel in Market Harborough which even had one of the old yellow AA signs denoting its three star starts.

On the Friday, I took a ride on the 58 bus to Lutterworth, which was an old coaching town in the days before the railways, which was around 1750-1850. There are three left, but the most authentic is the Greyhound (pictured). Two famous people hailed from Lutterworth. Firstly, John Wycliffe who was Rector in the town and who translated the Bible from Latin into English. This was several centuries before Aldred translated the Gospels in Chester-le-Street around 970, but, to be fair, Wycliffe did the whole Bible. Secondly, Sir Frank Whittle who first patented and built the jet turbine engine, whose story is told in the excellent, if small, Lutterworth Museum.

The main line railway came late to Lutterworth, in 1899 with the arrival of the Great Central Railway from London Marylebone. It was also the first to close in 1969, so Lutterworth is not a good place to

The 2024 National Rail Map is now available, an ideal present for Christmas for someone interested in railways, even if they can't travel any more. Details are at www.railmap.org.uk. Features all UK rail stations and operators at a level of detail unavailable elsewhere.

stay for the rail traveller, but it's an interesting place to explore for a couple of hours by bus (and probably no more) which is why the two-hourly bus service back to Market Harborough is so handy.

There's an old grammar school on stilts in the centre of the town of Market

There's an old grammar school on stilts in the centre of the town of Market Harborough, so built to accommodate the butter market beneath, and it's next to the church of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, which is an unusual dedication to one of the Athenian converts of St. Paul. Coffee and a chat was on offer on Saturday morning when I was on my way to the railway station, but unfortunately I did not have time. The museum was also a casualty of my journey in from the wilds, so I missed seeing the Hallaton Treasure which was the largest ever Iron Age coins ever found. The return journey involved a short visit to Leicester, home of the Richard III centre, with subsequent changes at Sheffield and York and a punctual arrival back home.

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Harley Street Doc takes up residence in Newcastle's private healthcare scene

Introducing the First Hair Transplant Clinic in Newcastle by renowned surgeon Dr. Kalra.

Dr Kalra (MD, MRCGP), a reputable surgeon hailing from Harley Street, London, has opened the first hair transplant clinic in Newcastle. With over 14 years of experience in his field of expertise, Dr. Kalra specialises in scalp, eyebrows, and beard hair transplants. The revolutionary surgery offers a cost-effective alternative to travelling to countries like Turkey for cut-price surgeries. With Dr. Kalra's services, you won't have to worry about language barriers, travelling to another country, or finding aftercare services far from home.

Living in Newcastle, Dr. Kalra is also a General Practitioner who provides post-surgery reviews at months four, eight, and 12. He also offers general hair loss advice and tips on how to prevent it. Choose Dr. Kalra's clinic for a hassle-free hair transplant experience with top-notch services and care.







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Age UK Northumberland celebrates Diwali with charity ball, sponsored by Nebula Construction Group

The spectacular event featured Dhol Drummer, DJs from Spice FM, singer Sanila Iftikhar and dance troop Breeze.

The charity supports older people across Northumberland, helping them to live their best life through support to maximise income, participate in friendship groups and exercise classes, access bereavement counselling, dementia services, care at home and have their voice heard and wishes understood.















How stress is affecting your health and how to deal with it

By Vera Powles – founder of health and well-being platform Mana Living.

A stressful situation — whether in the form of a work deadline, a toxic relationship, or a persistent worry about finances, can trigger a cascade of stress hormones that produce changes in our physiology.

When you feel stressed, you might feel your heart beating faster or you notice your breathing increasing and your muscles tensing up. When we enter this 'fight or flight' state there is a cascade of hormonal changes and physiological responses that are designed to help us fight the threat off or flee to safety. Stress is a perfectly normal reaction to external events and a very intelligent survival technique. Healthy stress is meant to protect us!

Unfortunately, the body can also overreact to stressors that are not life-threatening, such as heavy traffic, work demands, and a busy family life. This can be anything from a reduced ability to fight and recover from illness, due to lowered immunity (ever noticed that after a very stressful week at work or at home you end up with a cold?), increased blood pressure, heart rate, cholesterol, and risk of heart attack and accelerated ageing.

The good news is that, once we understand how stress affects our bodies as well as our minds, we can learn techniques to counter the stress response and complete the stress cycle. This can be done through:

1. Movement

Exercise is 'your first line of attack in the battle against burnout. Taking a brisk walk shortly, not only deepens breathing but also helps relieve muscle tension. Movement therapies such as yoga, tai chi, and qi gong combine fluid movements with deep breathing and mental focus, all of which can induce calm. Ideally, we would move for 20 to 60 minutes each day and not only when we feel stressed.

2. Breathing

Breathing is a very effective way of activating the parasympathetic nervous system. Deep, slow breaths down regulate the stress response—especially when the exhalation is long and slow.

3. Social support

It's suggested that people who enjoy close relationships with family and friends receive emotional support that indirectly helps to sustain them at times of chronic stress and crisis. even if you don't have anyone close you can rely on at the moment, casual but friendly social interaction is the first external sign that

the world is a safe place. So wish your barista a nice day after getting your coffee, offer a smile or a compliment to someone and this will send similar signs of safety to your brain.

4. Laughter

Laughing or crying are very effective ways of closing the stress cycle. Genuine laughter with friends is good for the souls and also helps strengthen relationships. Crying can be a very cathartic and relieving experience and not something we should apologize for or avoid (unless you feel you're not in a safe space to express yourself).

5. Get creative

Do something creative, that gives you joy or you find meaning in it. Engaging in creative activities today leads to more energy, excitement, and enthusiasm tomorrow.

Remember, try to practice these steps routinely, not just when you are feeling stressed, to help you navigate those feelings more proactively in the future.

About Mana Living

Vera Powles is a biomedical scientist and founder of Mana Living, an online platform designed to help women take back control of their health, develop positive habits, and create a maintainable, healthy lifestyle.

Membership to Mana Living costs just £14 a month and more information is available at manaliving.co.uk/live-beautifully

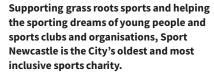
Northern Insight readers can receive the first month of membership completely free by using code WELCOME100.





Sport Newcastle awards night celebrates the very best of sporting success and rising stars of the future

Sport Newcastle's 45th Annual Awards Dinner at Newcastle Civic Centre, has celebrated the very best of sporting achievements from around the region and the rising sports stars of the future.



The annual award ceremony recognises the success across all sports and also focuses on the young Rising Stars of sport.

Mike Booth, Sport Newcastle, Vice Chair, said, "Our Rising Stars, representing eleven different sports, are already performing at an exceptionally high standard. All compete nationally and several have represented their country at world level.

"Sport Newcastle are proud to be able to support these talented young athletes at the early stage of their sporting career.

"Our major award winners reflect the region's success achieved across a diverse range of female and male sports. With the on-going support of the local business community this augurs well for the future."

Major awards were presented to: Joy Eze, Gateshead Harriers (Young Sporting Success of the Year), Becky Langley and Eddie Howe, NUFC (Coaching Award), Kieran Reilly, BMX Freestyle Champion (Sporting Success of the Year) and Sarah Hunter CBE, Rugby Union (Wilkinson Sword, Lifetime Achievement Award).

The Rising Stars of the future were awarded to, Haydon Mustard (Cricket), Gabi Freeman (Swimming), Orson Groot (Ice Hockey), Edward Solovyov (Figure Skating), Billie Netherton (Gymnastics) David Rice (Athletics) Jakub Bobkowski (Basketball) Serenity Waugh (Martial Arts) Jake Westgarth (Trampolining) Ben Redshaw, (Rugby Union)

NUFC women footballer Daisy Burt became the first female footballer to be awarded the Jack Hixon Award and Lewis Miley, who recently made his NUFC senior first team debut was awarded the Wor Jackie Trophy.

The awards evening was supported by headline sponsors Tier One Capital and S.O.S. Group and award sponsors included Ward Hadaway, Redgate Lodge Motor Group and Central Employment.

On the night Sport Newcastle were also presented with a giant cheque for £12,088 from Paul Keighley, Operation Director of Redgate Lodge Motor Group, who held their annual fundraising golf day in aid of the charity.

www.sportnewcastle.org.uk















Elevate your staff and corporate gifting with **Pure Bliss**

There is no greater expression of gratitude than the gift of beauty and wellness this Christmas, and the team at award-winning salon Pure Bliss are on hand with a host of exceptional gifting options.

The ethos at Pure Bliss is to offer exceptional and high-end service in a relaxed and nonpretentious environment. Offering an array of experiences from the relaxing NEOM and Aromatherapy Associates treatments to the most advanced medical based treatments, Environ, Omnilux light therapy, C.A.C.I. and Microdermabrasion, Guniot, Hydrofacial, IPL, 3D Lipo and Dermaforce.

Services have also recently expanded at the popular salon with the launch of The Medi Spa @ Pure Bliss, offering anti-wrinkle injections,

skin boosters and a range of aesthetic treatments.

The credentials of Pure Bliss shine as radiantly as one of their luxurious Guinot Hydradermie facials. Renowned in the industry for their innovative and luxurious range of treatments, and working with DECLEOR for over 20 years, the salon recently partnered with Guinot, with the team achieving Guinot Crown Salon recognition in January 2023. The prestigious accolade is a true testament to the business and recognises the salon and staff as being truly the best at what they do within the beauty industry.

Pure Bliss offer the perfect solution to appreciate employees and clients this Christmas with a host of bespoke gifting options via their luxurious range of products and vouchers, which are all impeccably wrapped and gifted.

To find out more visit: www.pureblissspa. co.uk or email: purebliss_spa@hotmail.co.uk

@Pure Bliss

The future of facial treatments and skin care has arrived VISIBLE AGE REVERSE!

Brought to you by Doctor Dr Jean Mondin (the founder of Guinot) and five years in the making, VAR is a replacement for micro-needling and Botox, giving amazing results with no invasive procedures and no downtime.

REVERSE really is the future of facial

Look out for the launch! Check the amazing before and afters of this ground-breaking treatment @DocteurJDM





Make 2024 an inspired year!

If you aim to take one valuable lesson with you throughout this year, it's this...you can't out train a bad diet!

Push aside the years of unfulfilled resolutions and take personal responsibility for your well-being. Remember, you alone possess the power to initiate positive lifestyle changes. These changes can not only transform your year but also your entire life.

It often feels like we live in a culture where we point fingers at external factors and individuals to blame for our expanding waistlines and unhealthy habits. Yet, in reality, there is an abundance of knowledge and information available about what's healthy and what should be avoided. It's all about making small daily adjustments and having the discipline to maintain them. If your desire for change is strong enough, you will make it happen.

This year, find inspiration from someone or something that keeps you focused, particularly during challenging times:

Do it for your child or a loved one, proving that you can turn your life around and make them proud of you.

Recall a truly inspirational movie that once motivated you. Watch it and keep that uplifting feeling and focus.

Surely, there is someone who has inspired you in the past. This year, reverse roles by making those health, fitness, and weight loss changes, becoming someone's source of inspiration. Imagine the sense of achievement that would bring.

Read a book or watch a documentary about someone who triumphs over adversity. Channel the emotions and energy from their story to inspire your own transformation. There are always people facing greater challenges in life, offering a humbling perspective.

Remember, you might have put your health at risk due to your lifestyle, but you possess the choice to turn things around, others may not have that privilege.

Stay positive this year, and remember that you can transform your life both physically and mentally in just a matter of weeks. Believe in yourself and make those changes last!

Here are my top five tips to shed body fat and lead a healthier 2024:

Implement two to three daily changes to your diet and exercise routine; it's as straightforward as that. However, you must take responsibility and maintain consistency. In my 27 years as a fitness trainer, this advice, when followed correctly, has never failed.

Eliminate refined sugar from your diet and be conscious of your daily consumption. For example, by cutting out 4 teaspoons daily, you can save over 1500 teaspoons per year.

Keep in mind that the recommended daily allowance for adults is 7 teaspoons.

Stay active, it's not rocket science. The more you move, the more calories you burn. Sitting at your desk during lunch and then spending the evening in front of the TV won't support your weight loss goals. Commit to getting outside and walking, and stick to it.

To make lasting changes, you must put them into practice, they don't happen by themselves.

Two glasses of wine daily add up to over 110,000 calories in a year, which is over 30 pounds of fat. If you're serious about changing

your waistline, you must commit to reducing your alcohol intake. You can see the impact it has on your overall number of calories.

Consume less food, most people tend to overeat; scale down your portion sizes. Aim to incorporate more protein-rich foods with vegetables or salads in your meals. Fresh, natural foods are what our bodies are designed to eat, so prioritize them in your diet.

Be exercise smart, diversify your workouts. If you exercise regularly, boost your metabolism by elevating your heart rate through interval training, lifting weights, and spending time outdoors.

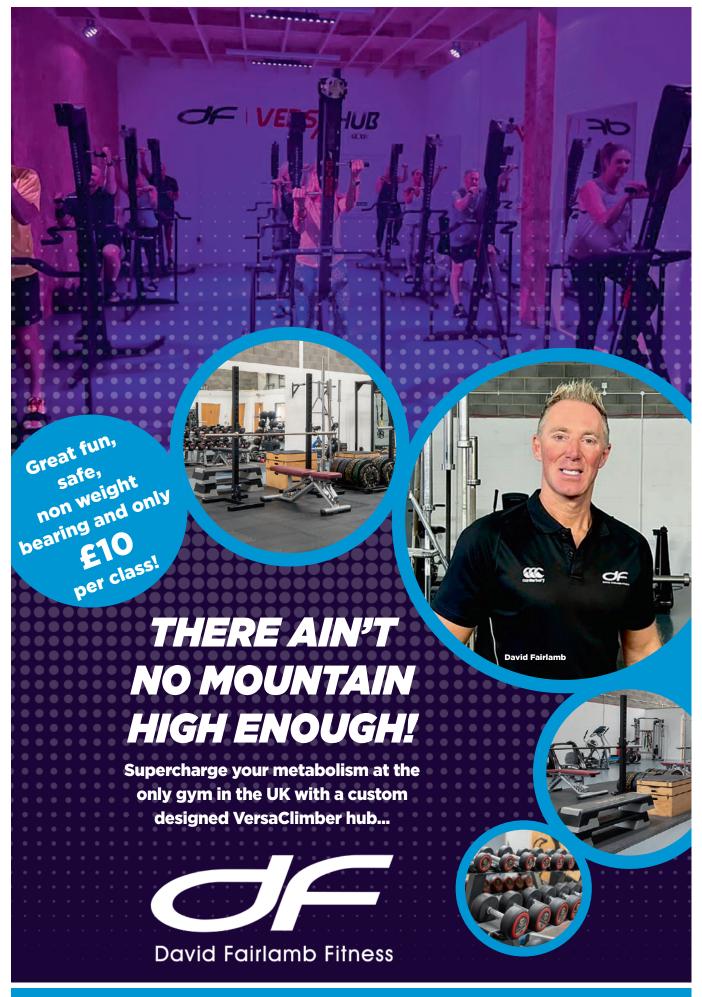
Your body is capable of more than you think; push your training to the next level, feel better, and burn more calories. If you're new to fitness, seek guidance to maximize your results.

Imagine the impact of reducing daily sugar intake, increasing daily physical activity, moderating portion sizes, consuming fresh and natural foods, cutting back on alcohol, and incorporating weight loss-focused exercises into your routine. You could save and burn a significant number of calories each week and month, potentially seeing a remarkable transformation in a matter of weeks.

www.davidfairlambfitness.co.uk

David's summing up...

Be inspired, make these small, daily changes and positive results will happen. Wishing you all a Happy New Year and encouraging you to embrace 2024 with positivity and determination!



The Last Word

Another round of personality recreation began with former Prime Minister David Cameron making a surprise walk down Downing Street and entering No.10. His emergence as Lord Cameron of Chipping Norton and the new Foreign Secretary took the blind-sided media totally by surprise, with commentators spluttering with frustration.

It was like Dallas's Bobby Ewing emerging from the long dream to resurrect the script - certainly a future opportunity for volume two of Cameron's memoir 'For The Record', a copy of which he recently presented to Boris Johnson's Downing Street library.

Cameron's political and diplomatic experience may mean Rishi sees him as a real vote winner at next year's election..

Possibly a less influential move was made Nigel Farage to take part in '1'm a Celebrity Get me out of Here'. Recent wide publicity about him being de-banked by Coutts, gave the come-back kid another chance to be the people's champion. Lucrative litigation already commenced. The modest £1.5 million paid for him to go to the jungle means, he says '1n the jungle you're going to find the real me. I'm a hero to some people and an absolute villain to millions' - well, there's a challenging election slogan! As he said 'I dealt with snakes in the European Parliament, I can cope with this too'. Now for eating bugs and kangaroo genitalia!

Having been relieved of her position as Home Secretary for forthright verbalisation of the views of the right of the Conservative Party, Suella Braverman may not be seen rushing into a new rôle but prefer to keep her powder dry for a future leadership bid. Or perhaps a Kuenssberg with GB News or a column in Private Eye of Metropolitan Police Monthly. What will she make of the Chancellor's Autumn statement?



Ridley Scott's much awaited Napoleon biopic has been released to critical acclaim - too long, Joaquin Phoenix too tall and too old; and allegedly too many historical inaccuracies. None of these should destroy the romantic spectacle of the Little Corporal whose exploits on battle field and in bed are legendary, with unending debate about the Napoleon Complex.

As for the length of the film, remember the 1927 black and white version by Abel Gance. It lasted eight hours and was planned as the first of six films about Boney. Let's count the Oscars.

By way of contrast Klimt and The Kiss is an engaging film exploring the beauty and significance of the iconic painting bu Gustav Klimt. It is the embodiment perhaps a self portrait of the artist and his partner Emilie Flöbge - but at the time of its first display regarded as shocking as society was not used to seeing physical intimacy showcased in public.

The Kiss is a profound expression of love, sensuality and the human spirit. The film explores Klimt's scandalous lifestyle and of this

painting expressive of the decadent art nouveau movement.

Whilst efforts continue to secure the release of the hostages seized in Israel on 7th October, there is despair at the loss of moral compass; no call for the Red Cross to have access to the hostages, little concern outside for their welfare, calls for peace when Hamas opposes peace and threatens to repeat the massacres again and again, the Palestinian Authority held up by some as a responsible alternative, openly celebrating the massacres in Israel and calling for its obliteration and having no wish to live in peace.

Many countries and universities in the West refuse to take any action about incitement, intimidation and racial hatred. There is shocking support for or indifference towards genocidal chants against Israel and Jews on the streets of London and other cities. For too many the horrors of 7th October are ignored.

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