

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

November 2024

Issue 107

**ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL NEWCASTLE**  
**Where sport is Flying High**

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# Foreword

## FOREWORD

Welcome to the November issue of Northern Insight.

Our penultimate issue of 2024 is one of our best yet with a huge array of features, interviews and critical analysis.

Royal Grammar are our cover stars and illustrate how they follow a “there’s more to life” approach in all aspects of the schools holistic education.

In our popular Big Interview slot we talk to long term contributor Peter Cromarty who reflects on the 10th birthday of his company CCBS Group.

Within a plethora of social coverage we showcase the Entrepreneurs Forum Annual Awards as well as Sweeney Millers first “Wine on the Wear” event.

Meanwhile on our travels I make a welcome return to Lumley Castle, some 31 years after my first media visit.

As ever I am eternally grateful to everyone concerned for the fantastic support.

*We hope you enjoy this issue.*

Thanks to all our wonderful clients, readers and suppliers.  
Till next month...

Michael Gramslaw, Publisher  
michael@northern-insight.co.uk



### Edition Sponsors





## Alan Shearer Foundation receives £23,500 boost from Agilico's Great North Run efforts

North East legend Alan Shearer has thanked a team of charity champions for going the extra mile. The former Newcastle United star's Foundation received vital funds worth £23,500 to provide facilities and therapies for people with diverse abilities and acute sensory impairments. The money was raised by workplace technology specialist Agilico who took all 35 places for the Alan Shearer Foundation in the world's biggest half marathon, the Great North Run.

Ex-England skipper, Alan said: "We are delighted with the amount raised by the Agilico team. These vital funds will help our Centre provide free access to a range of facilities including a hydrotherapy pool, sensory rooms, outdoor play areas and therapy sessions. Agilico's unwavering commitment to support my Foundation is highly appreciated, and we are incredibly grateful for their efforts."

Agilico's team laced up their trainers for the Great North Run on September 8th, to raise the funds for the Foundation. With its North East HQ in Team Valley, Gateshead, Agilico had runners from right across its various UK sites.

For many of Agilico's people this was their first Great North Run. The iconic 13 mile run from Newcastle to South Shields tested many of them. Warren Colby, Agilico North Director echoed this: "Running for me isn't fun, but it's necessary to raise the funds to make an impact for this cause which means so much to us all here at Agilico. And it was truly worth it seeing the money we raised! I would like to thank everyone for their donations; it is so appreciated!"



## Hanro and Gavin Black in the picture for Tyneside Cinema support

Two of the North East property sector's leading lights have been hailed as true stars for helping iconic cultural venue the Tyneside Cinema to survive and thrive.

Property investment and development group Hanro and commercial property agency Naylor's Gavin Black have been honoured for their contributions to the revival of the Grade II listed Newcastle city centre venue.

Newcastle-based Hanro provided assistance to deal with some difficult issues the Tyneside had experienced with the front of the cinema on Pilgrim Street and with the building's lighting.

At the time, the Tyneside was struggling with the worst funding crisis in its history but Hanro's generous assistance helped preserve the cinema's cultural heritage and allow cinemagoers to enjoy the bright lights of the movie house again.

Adam Serfontein, Chairman of The Hanro Group said: "The Tyneside Cinema has been a great Newcastle institution for many years and adds a lot of value to our City. It is a pleasure to work with them and, with so many others, support its bright future".

Gavin Black has worked tirelessly over a number of years to ensure that the cinema has been able to reach an exciting new era in its 87-year history.

Gavin added: "Naylor's Gavin Black have been delighted to assist the Tyneside Film Theatre with regard to their lease of the Cinema. They are a significant charity in the cultural sector in Newcastle and deserve our support."

## Sunderland business workshop helps boost content creation

**Businesses which are part of Sunderland BID can enjoy some insider information on how to boost their social media engagement.**

As part of its services to local businesses – and to members of its affiliate scheme – the BID is running a number of Business Boost Workshops, designed to help organisations and companies improve awareness and drive footfall.

And the latest in this series will concentrate on creating eye-catching and engaging content, with practical information designed to help make an impact on social media.

The workshop is being led by Sunderland-based influencer marketing and content creation agency, The Social Type and the session will look at what content is, what strategies are most effective and how businesses can develop a content plan tailored to their specific needs.

This will be followed by a hands-on workshop which will highlight how to capture high quality content which can then be repurposed across a range of channels – with the goal of engaging with an audience.

The event is aimed at everyone – from those who are just starting to post on social media

to anyone wanting to develop their skills.

Anyone that wants to attend can register at [sunderlandbid.co.uk/businessboost](https://sunderlandbid.co.uk/businessboost) but must be a BID levy payer or an affiliate member.



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## Parker opens up World of Filtration to young people

**Parker Hannifin, a global leader in motion and control technologies, helped to inspire and educate young people at a major STEM event recently.**

Teams from Parker Bioscience Filtration's Birtley site in County Durham, UK and Parker's Gas Separation and Filtration Division in Gateshead, UK, exhibited at STEMfest Sunderland from October 8 to October 10.

Coordinated by the North East STEM Hub and held at The Beacon Of Light venue in Sunderland, the event aimed to encourage and inspire young people from local schools in the STEM subjects. Three thousand young people aged 9 to 13 attended the event, which featured exhibitors from sectors including space, sports, e-sports, technology, energy and manufacturing.

Parker's STEM ambassadors ran a variety of activities, including manifold building challenges and microbiology demonstrations, throughout the three-day event.

They also showed how Parker's filtration technology is used every day across the biopharmaceutical, food and beverage, and process sectors, to help students understand the 'real world' applications of filters.



## ITEC practices what it preaches

**The staff at a leading North East training company practices what it preaches – with every employee achieving its Gold Inclusion Standard.**

ITEC, based at Newton Aycliffe, has built a strong and successful business by working with both apprentices and some of the region's top organisations.

And as part of its commitment to supporting its learners, all of the team have now qualified in several short courses, aimed at helping their understanding of a range of special needs.

The courses – which are available to anyone interested in taking them – cover Children and Young People's Mental Health, ADHD and Autism Awareness, Mental Health Awareness and Learning Disabilities Awareness.

The fact that every member of staff has now successfully completed these sessions and have achieved the company's Gold Inclusion Standard is good news for ITEC learners – and for any other company which wants to upskill its staff.

The courses are some of around 80 sessions that ITEC offers and which have relevance to companies of all sizes, which are carried out online so can be taken at any time.

Other subjects include GDPR, cybersecurity, first aid, food safety and manual handling, with many of the courses earning the participant CPD (continuous personal development) credits.

The e-learning modules are only one small part of the ITEC offering, with the company having successfully spent the last 40 years working with apprentices and companies across the North East.

.Along with IT they offer apprenticeships for team leading, network engineer, software developer, property, business administration and multi-channel marketing.



## Established company named 'best large business' in Hartlepool

**One of Hartlepool's longest-running companies is officially the best big business in town after winning a prestigious award.**

Having formed 135 years ago, The Expanded Metal Company employs around 80 staff at its Greatham Street HQ.

Firmly established as one of the leading names within the expanded metal mesh solution sector, the company has now enjoyed local recognition having been crowned Best Large Business at the 2024 Hartlepool Business Awards.

For Director Philip Astley, the award is the "icing on the cake" following a bumper 12 months of impressive growth for The Expanded Metal Company.

"This award reflects the hard work of our entire team and the deep connection we have with Hartlepool," he said.

"Our roots go back to 1889, not just as a business, but as the birthplace of expanded metal.

"To be recognised in our hometown is incredibly special, and we are proud to keep contributing to the success of this community."

Having rebranded following an acquisition by the Meiser Group, The Expanded Metal Company has worked with some of Britain's biggest brands.

Household names such as Nandos, JD Sports, and the BBC have sought their services while The Expanded Metal Company has worked with companies in a wide array of industries – from construction and engineering to aerospace.

The firm's work has even been featured on the hit Channel Four show, Grand Designs.

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## Cover Story...



## Sport is flying high at the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle

When choosing the school that's right for your child, you may primarily be concerned with academic success. As the North East's top performing school, the Royal Grammar School, Newcastle (RGS) certainly ticks that box.

However, at RGS, they follow a 'There's More to Life' approach in all aspects of the school's holistic education, within which its Sports programme plays a pivotal role. From rugby to netball, cricket and dance, Sport at the co-educational school is viewed as a fundamental vehicle for developing lifelong skills, character, and resilience. The school's approach is backed by recent research by the University of Manchester, which found Sport patriotism is a significant predictor of self-belief and mental resilience - critical skills for young people as they prepare for exams and life beyond school.

Unlocking students' athletic capabilities – and above all a love for daily movement – is something in which RGS thrives. The school is committed to refining and developing its programme, taking into consideration its students' voices and expertise of renowned sports coaches and alumni athletes. No stone is left unturned in giving each student from Year 3 to Year 13, the opportunity to strive to achieve their sporting dreams and fulfil their potential.



Angela Ponton, RGS Director of Sport, has over 24 years of teaching experience, and throughout her time at RGS has transformed the school's sports offering to help students foster a healthy attitude to physical activity and nurture young sporting talent. "At RGS, sport is open to everyone. We encourage students to give everything a go so they can find a sport they love, a team that empowers them, and the drive to aspire to be the best version of themselves," she explains. "I am proud that from quarter-to-eight in the morning until half-past-five at night, RGS students fill the sports facilities enjoying all that is on offer. We aim for everyone, whether they want to compete at a national level or be a part of a team, to have fun, enjoy sport and develop a lifelong love of physical activity."

Striking a balance is critical for RGS's Sports Department, from supporting students who are stretching their capabilities on the sports field to ensuring equal opportunities across the co-educational school. The sports programme is designed to ensure students develop essential life skills to set them up for success in adulthood.

"Students often work on the bus while travelling to fixtures, says Angela. "I find that students involved in sports and our co-curricular activities are self-organised and resilient and more-often-than-not achieve the best academic results. These qualities stand them in good stead while competing in sport, working in the classroom, and in later life."



Over 170 students from RGS have competed nationally and internationally in a wide range of sports, from hockey to rugby and gymnastics – both while at school and as professional athletes. The school is also proud to have three RGS Olympians: Boda Gallon (Old Novo 81-89) who competed in Judo in the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, Roger F. Brown (Old Novo 80-87), who rowed in the 1992 and 1996 Olympics for Team GB and RGS's first female Olympian, Kate Waugh (Old Novo 10-17) who competed in the Women's Triathlon at the Paris 2024 Olympics.

Alongside the school's inspirational alumni, its experienced and dedicated sports staff - who range from highly qualified and dedicated teachers, ex-professionals and sport specific coaches - are committed to imparting their knowledge. There is a diverse range of activities through the sports department and RGS's co-curricular programme, from strength and conditioning, to hockey, cricket and basketball. Weekends are spent travelling the length and breadth of the country to fixtures, competing across a variety of sports at various levels. School holidays are also packed with training opportunities and tours with leading sporting institutions across the globe.

RGS is proud to offer students the opportunity to play and train in its state-of-the-art facilities, including an on-site artificial turf pitch, a rugby pitch, and several play areas. In addition, its modern sports building houses a 25-metre swimming pool, two sports halls (one with a climbing wall), fitness suites, and a dance studio. Off-site, students can also access a range of rugby and football pitches as well as the school's cricket ground (formerly the County Cricket ground).

Reflecting on RGS's sport's offering, Angela adds: "From our breadth of sporting facilities to our dedicated Sports Department and inspiring athletic alumni, when it comes to choosing a school that balances academic and sporting success, the question isn't 'why RGS?' but 'why not?'"

The school, which is preparing to celebrate its Quincentenary in 2025, welcomes prospective families to attend its Open Morning on Saturday 16th November 2024, from 9.30am to 12.30pm to discover why 'There's More to Life' at RGS.

[www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk/prospective-families/admissions](http://www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk/prospective-families/admissions)



Chloe Taylor and Luke Lane

## The Power of Alignment

**In the mad dash to adopt the shiniest new technology and jump on the latest trends, so many businesses are overlooking what truly moves the needle, ensuring your sales and marketing teams are on the same page.**

**Those who prioritise aligning sales and marketing strategy are not only 67% more effective in closing deals, but also 58% better at retaining customers (LinkedIn, 2018). So why do so many still operate in silos?**

The solution lies in integrating sales and marketing strategies. By fostering collaboration and driving towards shared goals, businesses can achieve greater efficiency, consistency, and impact. But, in the overstimulating sales and marketing landscape of modern technologies filled with BANT, GANTT, CRM, CLV, practising your ABCs, and endless TLAs, sometimes it's easy to forget the basics. So, let's peel it back; what are the key pillars of sales and marketing, and how do we harmonise them to support our business objectives?

The core pillars of sales are essential for driving success and building lasting customer relationships. Understanding your customer is vital, therefore the development of ideal client profiles (ICPs)

from the outset allows you to target the right audience effectively. This helps you to tailor your approaches and communication for both sales and marketing activities. You then focus on building relationships as this fosters trust and encourages long-term partnerships, whilst effective communication ensures that both parties are engaged and informed.

The creation of a well-structured sales process guides you seamlessly through lead generation, customer engagement, relationship nurturing, and closing, making the journey more efficient. Having a clear journey outlined also allows you to flex your approach with core sales activities to align with your target market. Adaptability allows you to pivot based on customer feedback or market changes, and data-driven decisions empower you to refine strategies and measure success. Together, these pillars create a robust framework that enhances sales effectiveness and drives revenue growth.

Understanding your target audience is crucial for any sales and marketing strategy. Invest time into thorough market research and competitor analysis to gain a comprehensive grasp of the needs of your target demographic, where they interact with your brand, and most importantly their pain points. It is only from that position that you can go on to design a holistic sales and marketing strategy based on these findings.

From this position of understanding, it is then essential to look inwards. Brand profiling is a process that is essential in identifying your offering, your unique selling point, and why people should bother buying from you. And remember, this is not just about your product, it's deeper than that. What's your brand's story? What does your brand's voice sound like? Why should your stakeholders trust you? A great place to start

is asking what brands you admire and why; we're all standing on the shoulders of giants.

Once you know who you are, you can focus on positioning and visibility. This is where sales and marketing alignment is essential. If you haven't identified your ICPs, then how do you know that you're positioning yourself in front of the right people and businesses? If you're not directly targeting who you want to sell to, then you're shouting into the void. Highlight your unique value proposition, identify how you'll address your customers' pain points, and make sure this message is heard through a consistent, omnichannel approach.

As with any pantheon, it doesn't matter how strong the pillars are if they aren't built upon a strong foundation. Collaboration isn't a buzzword; it's a business necessity during the planning process and throughout. Start by laying out the following:

- Clear KPIs (key performance indicators)
- ICPs
- Shared goals
- A coherent long-term vision

Once established, the rest falls into place—though not without hard work. Success comes from ongoing communication, adaptability, and a commitment to refining strategies. By keeping sales and marketing aligned, businesses not only enhance efficiency but also position themselves to navigate challenges and seize opportunities, driving sustainable growth in the long term.

As sales and marketing experts, we've been providing support to SMEs across the North of England for almost ten years. If you're looking to grow your business sustainably and combine your sales and marketing efforts, get in touch.

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*...We're here  
to collaborate,  
not take over...*

Robert Brasington



# Building the Future of Dental Laboratories

*An Interview with Robert Brasington, Founder of Rosemont Dental Group*

**In an industry often dominated by corporate buyouts and quick exits, Robert Brasington is offering a different approach.**

**As the Founder and Executive Director of Rosemont Dental Group, Robert is reshaping the way dental laboratories in the UK are acquired and managed. The group's model aims to partner with dental laboratory owners, helping them drive their businesses forward, rather than simply buying them out.**

Rather than following the typical model where corporate buyers acquire 100% of a business and the original owner steps away, Rosemont Dental Group offers a more collaborative partnership. "We're looking to acquire strong, well-established businesses with talented management teams," says Robert. "But we also want to keep the sellers involved. They stay on as part-owners, continuing to manage the business while benefiting from our investment and strategic support." This unique model focuses on sustainable collaboration, ensuring that both the business and the people behind it continue to thrive.

Robert's journey into the business world is anything but conventional. Raised in Newcastle, he initially pursued a career in tennis. "I was fortunate to have incredibly supportive parents who allowed me to dedicate a lot of time to tennis. But by the age of 16, I knew I wasn't good enough to make it as a professional." This led him to Durham University, where he studied sport, exercise and physical activity focused on performance psychology, a field that ultimately sparked his interest in business.

"I saw a clear connection between the mindset of elite athletes and successful business executives," he recalls. "That's when I realised, I wanted to take my passion for performance and apply it in the business world."

While coaching tennis alongside university, Robert had an unexpected break that would change his life. Through a chance meeting with a personal assistant for an ultra-high-net-worth individual, he found himself on Sir Richard Branson's Necker and Moskito private islands in the British Virgin Islands, coaching tennis. "It was an incredible opportunity," he says. "I was inspired by the level of innovation and value these entrepreneurs had created. I knew then that I wanted to build something meaningful myself."

Upon returning to the UK, Robert threw himself into the world of mergers and acquisitions (M&A). "I cold-emailed and messaged a lot of people, trying to build a board of directors who believed in the RDG vision and had the experience I didn't have as a 22-year-old." With persistence, he succeeded in assembling a team, which now includes an impressive board led by Executive Chair Kieran Callan.

Initially, Robert and his team looked at acquiring dental practices, but they quickly found that the market was already saturated with big players. "We were struggling to raise capital because valuations were high and the competition fierce," he explains. That's when the focus shifted to dental laboratories. "We saw a huge opportunity on the laboratory side. Most corporates buy 100% of the business, and the seller often leaves. That's where we're different. We take a majority stake, but we want the original owners to stay involved, so they still have equity in the business. Additionally, whereas practices look to optimise chair time and upskill their staff; we saw greater opportunity for value-add within laboratories. We see huge potential in digital equipment investments and Clinical Dental Technicians training support."

Rosemont Dental Group recently completed its first acquisition: Griffen Dental Laboratory in Byfleet, South West London. "We're thrilled to have partnered with the two owners who share our vision and commitment," says Robert. "We've got several more deals in the pipeline, and we're aiming to close at least one other transaction by Christmas."

Interestingly, Robert's model doesn't involve rebranding the businesses they acquire. "We believe in preserving the legacy of the businesses we invest in. Griffen Dental Laboratory will remain Griffen, but as a member of the Rosemont Dental Group. We don't want to disrupt the relationships they've built with their clients or destroy any acquired value by being heavy handed; it really is a partnership."

At just 24 years old, Robert Brasington is at the helm of a rapidly growing company. Now living in Teddington, Richmond upon Thames, he remains connected to his roots in Newcastle's Little Benton. The journey from aspiring tennis player to business executive has been anything but straightforward, but Robert's determination and vision have already begun to pay off.

For dental laboratory owners looking for a partner to help them grow, Robert offers an open door. "We're here to collaborate, not take over. We want to drive businesses forward together, for the long term."

**Interested in learning more about Rosemont Dental Group's unique approach to acquisitions? Get in touch with Robert and his team to explore partnership opportunities.**  
[www.rosemontdentalgroup.com](http://www.rosemontdentalgroup.com)





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*...It's all  
about trust...*

Michael Ward

# The Recruiter...

## Collaborative Search Recruitment – Driven by Quality and not by Quantity

*Executive Search done properly*

**'Volume' is often seen by some recruitment agencies as an unspoken rule. In other words, keep the flow of appointments going no matter what.**

Michael Ward, Director of Collaborative Search, the Newcastle-based international executive search and talent management company, has seen how other recruitment agencies operate and he wasn't impressed.

"It was in the early stages of my career when I was working with a large, privately owned, recruitment agency" said Michael. "It really was a case of keeping the recruitment churn going as quickly as possible and at all costs. Most of my clients at the time operated within engineering and construction, but it always felt that we were chasing clients and candidates for the wrong reasons and we were often regarded as a necessary evil, rather than a valued contributor to their respective growth strategies and talent requirements".

I eventually made up my mind to do two things. First, I wanted to found an agency that did recruitment the right way and, secondly, that I wanted to return home to the North East where I was born and bred.

Thankfully, everything has turned out fantastically. Collaborative Search is continuing to grow rapidly and we now partner to clients across all major industries all around world. We now have a highly experienced team and will be adding new members very shortly. We work extensively with clients in this country and abroad. Over the last few months we have been placing talented people into positions in the USA, France, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark and the Middle East. We really are a global firm."

Confidentiality means that we can't do some name dropping for Collaborative Search, but we've seen their list of clients and there are loads of household names that you'll recognise. They work with many major multinationals, but they also help find talented employees...mainly at senior, executive and board level...for SMEs and even some owner-operators.

"We can find great people for a whole range of industries. We tend to have a strong focus on the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) field, but we also have some terrific clients focused

in pharmaceuticals, finance, renewables and biotech sectors. AEC is arguably our specialist area. We have placed some amazing people into many of the world's biggest infrastructure projects."

Michael's experience in recruitment has not only taught him how to do recruitment the right way, but also how to help companies anticipate their employee requirements. He does this by working closely with companies and, in effect, becoming their recruitment partner.

"Because we're not volume or contract driven, firms are keen to work in partnership with us and see us as an important extension to their current internal teams. They know that when called upon to do so, we are able to identify and secure the best talent 'in' the market, wherever they are. We find out how their business operates, study their culture and previous employment trends, and then work alongside them to ensure they always have the right people at the right time. It's all about trust...and it's why we partner with clients for the long term."

In other words, Collaborative Search will collaborate with you.

Michael has a contacts list that would be the envy of everyone in the recruitment business. Having worked in London, Dubai and North America, he knows how international business operates.

And as someone who is from the North East and now lives in Gosforth, he also knows what makes businesses tick in this region.

So, do you want to find out how Collaborative Search can help you with your recruitment?

Simple.

You can contact Michael and his team via email [contact@collaborativesrch.com](mailto:contact@collaborativesrch.com) or you can also reach him via their excellent website [www.collaborativesrch.com](http://www.collaborativesrch.com) which is where you'll find out further details of how Collaborative Search can help you.

**[www.collaborativesrch.com](http://www.collaborativesrch.com)**

## Heidi graduates to Procurement Administrator

**Procurement experts Prosper has rewarded Heidi Molloy with a permanent position within the business after impressing during her business apprenticeship.**

Heidi, 19, joined Prosper in November 2022 as a business administrator learning the fundamental aspects of the business including systems and structures, reporting and invoicing and payroll.

She was referred to Prosper through EN:able Futures, who specialise in finding apprentices for roles within the built environment, employment and education sectors. She completed various modules over an 18-month period, culminating with a written exam and a presentation on an administration guide with a City & Guilds Examiner and has graduated with a Level 3 qualification in Business Administration.

Based at Prosper's office at Cobalt Business Exchange in Wallsend, she worked full-time in the office, while all learning was done virtually which allowed her to experience working in a busy office environment.

Commenting on her role, Heidi said: "I'm really grateful to Prosper for giving me the opportunity to undertake my business apprenticeship and offering me a full-time permanent position within the business. The apprenticeship has prepared me for my role as a Procurement Administrator



including understanding the valuation of contracts, learning about the operational tracker, contract management, the financial side of the business and using Microsoft Dynamics CRM system.

"I have learned so much over the two years and it has provided me with an opportunity I wouldn't get elsewhere. Working in a busy office has not only helped me with my work skills but also life skills."

Rod Brasington, CEO of Prosper, said: "Heidi has proven to be a valuable asset to the team and excelled during her two-year apprenticeship here at Prosper. As she was coming to the end of her apprenticeship, I had no hesitation in offering her a full-time position to support our Procurement and Contracts Managers. It proves that hard work pays off and apprenticeships are a great pathway to a career. Well done Heidi."

## Interim CEO appointed at The Auckland Project

**Bishop Auckland's regeneration charity, The Auckland Project, has appointed David Land as an interim CEO, as the organisation moves into a new ambitious phase.**

David's appointment comes as Edward Perry steps down as CEO after two years and signals an exciting time for The Auckland Project, as it embarks on a five-year plan focussed on the town's regeneration, community engagement and tourism.

The change in leadership strategy will not only help to futureproof the organisation's sustainability but also drive ambitious regeneration plans for the long-term prosperity of the town.



David Land, Interim CEO, The Auckland Project says: "I'm delighted to join such an aspiring team and very much look forward to helping propel The Auckland Project into a buoyant future. It's rewarding to see the near completion of regeneration projects, including Kingsway Square and Durham Dales Gateway, which are already taking steps to improve the town's facilities and infrastructure."



## Debt recovery solicitor joins growing Muckle LLP team

**Northumbria University graduate Amy Carlton has returned to the North East to join the growing debt recovery team at Muckle LLP.**

Amy joins as a debt recovery solicitor in the Legal 500 Tier 1 team at Muckle LLP, a ranking that the firm has held for over 11 years.

Amy completed her MLaw at Northumbria University in 2015 before working as an education paralegal and taking a training contract with another North East regional law firm.


After working at a large legal company in Manchester, Amy, was keen to return to Newcastle and is delighted to be back.

She has been reunited with Colin Churchward, Partner in the Dispute Resolution team, at Muckle LLP after having previously worked together in the North East.

Amy advises predominately on defended debt recovery litigation as well as liaising with clients, debtors and third parties to recover debts.

With a growing number of clients and volume of workload, the Muckle LLP debt recovery team is well known in the marketplace and is expanding its offering to several new sectors. Its clients range from plumbing merchants, builders merchants, vehicle hire, energy suppliers, commercial water suppliers and landlords to haulage companies, professional services and finance institutions.

Its expert team uses cutting-edge technology as part of its Muckle Collect automated system, which allows clients to upload invoices and track progress in real-time, alongside the personal touch and excellent customer relations for which Muckle LLP is recognised.



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# 10th birthday celebrations for CCBS Group

Northern Insight catches up with Peter Cromarty who talks about the last ten years in business.

**You're celebrating CCBS Group's 10th birthday this year! What are some of the most significant milestones and challenges that have shaped the business over the years?**

So many to choose from - as the business started from me working from a home office and now has a team with over 125 years of lending experience. The most significant I would say was making the initial decision to start the business, after receiving positive support from family and key business contacts. Then came the build phase, from the first recruit Matt Lister to the most recent Michael Horner. The challenges keep coming, as any business owner knows, but the milestones are there to remind you of what's been achieved along the journey.

**You've had year on year growth every year for 10 years, what do you think the key to success has been?**

That's really a big achievement for the business, and it comes with clarity, focus and a quality team. The last 10 years has been a real evolution; we have tried different things but we always play to our strengths and what has made us successful individually in our careers to date. We are currently working on the next phase, honing our culture, purpose and team spirit which will keep us moving forward.

**You have worked on hundreds of deals over the last decade - do you have any memorable ones you can share which show what CCBS is all about?**

I always like the deals that make a huge difference to our clients. These are often transactional deals like MBOs or acquisitions. We have also completed deals overseas where we have supported clients' global growth aspirations. All deals are different which is why our work is so varied and interesting.

**How has the industry changed since you started, and how have you had to adapt?**

When CCBS launched in 2014, the business world was coming out of the darkness that was the banking crisis of 2008. The funding landscape dramatically changed then forever. We naively

thought then that nothing like that would ever hit us again, yet we have had political instability, Brexit, a pandemic and war in Europe to contend with. Uncertainty is never good in the finance world and the big banks don't like that. Our job is to therefore navigate that funding landscape to find the right deal for our clients, even when it's very challenging.

**As a small business owner, you're often wearing a lot of different 'hats' - what has been the biggest learning curve?**

We work with clients on their business plans and growth aspirations, and over the last 10 years we have also been on our own journey. So, the old adage of 'life is not easy. If it was, it would be a holiday' is as relevant in business as it is in life. Scaling a business brings its own pressures but has some real highs when you achieve what you set out to do. The bar always gets higher though!

**Looking ahead to the next ten years, what would you like to achieve and what impact would you like to have in the North East business community?**

We've built our business supporting other North East businesses to take their next steps, whether that's something positive, or something more challenging or unexpected. Looking ahead to the next ten years, we will continue to add to our services, learning all the time, so that we can maintain our excellent network and find innovative solutions for clients. We recently opened an office in Teesside which has been great for the team and our network, so who knows where else we'll be in the next decade? How and where we support clients might change - especially with technological advancements in the funding sector moving at pace - but we will always be at the end of the phone for that initial call from a business who needs us.

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



“

*... Uncertainty  
is never good  
in the finance  
world...*

Peter Cromarty



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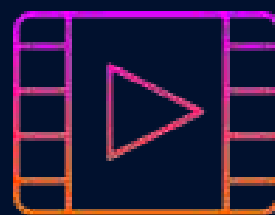
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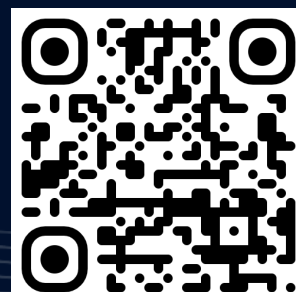


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# CHANGE IS AFOOT



Sanderson Young Lettings have experienced a great year so far on the level of instructions and number of units let, with business turnover exceeding year on year, telling me that landlords are not exiting the marketplace as we once thought. The introduction of the Tenant Fee Ban back in 2019, brought much worry about how it would affect the lettings market, but thankfully we all adapted, rolled up our sleeves and it was business as usual! The very same will happen once the Renters Rights Bill reform comes into play and I'm sure we will continue to adjust and look for the positives.

There has been much talk this year about this new bill and how it will affect the whole of the lettings industry. Although there was much negativity surrounding the initial introduction, where landlords were concerned about getting their properties back once the 'No Fault' Evictions Section 21 is outlawed, the initial shock has somewhat eased.

The reform could be in place by Summer 2025 and part of the changes could include periodic tenancies becoming the norm. Gone are the fixed term contracts, landlords having to register their properties with the new Ombudsman scheme, and a ban on bidding wars - a measure aimed at reducing competitive bidding among tenants in high demand areas, decent home standards, rent controls and pets. As well as

all of this, the local authority will have increased powers to enforce penalties in case of non-compliance.

Offering your property to the rentals market is not as straightforward as it used to be, and new and existing landlords need lettings agents now more than ever to guide them and ensure correct procedures are put into place once these changes become law.

If you're a landlord looking for guidance, or just in the early stages of venturing into the world of lettings, my professional team are here to provide you with knowledgeable guidance to ensure your peace of mind your property will be taken care of.

We have professional tenants waiting for all areas, so please do not hesitate to contact me today to arrange your FREE no obligation rental appraisal, where we can guide you on the service that we offer to look after your property throughout the duration of a tenancy.

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## *The Old Bank* *High Street, Gosforth*

The Old Bank, set back from the prestigious southern end of Gosforth High Street on the corner of The Grove, was originally constructed as a bank and in more recent years has been used as an estate agent's, and latterly the headquarters for a financial investment company. This historic building, located in an area of high footfall, provides over 1000 sq ft of superb ground floor office space, including private meeting rooms, along with a basement and an upper mezzanine kitchen, washroom facilities and storage. Externally, there is a front courtyard showing potential to provide parking facilities. Rateable value: £16,000.



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## *High Street Gosforth*

We are delighted to offer for rent a magnificent first and second floor duplex apartment in a prestigious part of Gosforth High Street. The extensively renovated apartment includes a fabulous reception room/entertaining space with concealed lighting and media wall, a newly installed modern kitchen and a large principal bedroom with lovely Parisian style French doors to a Juliet balcony. There is onsite parking to the rear. Deposit: £1846. Council Tax: TBC.



 2  1  2

**Price Guide:**  
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### *Apple Pie Cottage* *Chatton, Alnwick*

Rare to the market is this lovely end cottage in the picturesque village of Chatton surrounded by the Cheviots to the West, making this a perfect base for exploring the Northumberland heritage coastline. Chatton offers a range of local amenities with the nearby market towns of Alnwick (18 miles) and Wooler (5 miles) offering a wider range. The A1 is four and a half miles away and Alnmouth train station is 21 miles. Deposit: £1615. Council Tax: B.



3 1 2 D

**Price Guide:**  
£1400 PCM



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## *Princess Mary Court Jesmond*

This magnificent and stylish duplex apartment offers a rare opportunity to rent one of the finest conversion apartments within the North East. With great entertaining areas, a stunning kitchen and spectacular views over the Town Moor, this fabulous property is situated to the second floor of the prestigious Hugh Phillipson Building and offers a superb central Jesmond location, yet with supreme privacy in a quiet setting. Deposit: £4153. Council Tax: G.



3 2 3

**Price Guide:**  
£3300 PCM



**Gail McLean MARLA**  
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[gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk)





## The 20th annual Entrepreneurial Awards

250 business leaders recently gathered at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead for an unforgettable evening at the 20th annual Entrepreneurial Awards.

Delivered by the Entrepreneurs' Forum, the event celebrated the North East's most inspiring business talent, recognising innovators and pioneers across various stages of the entrepreneurial journey, from One to Watch to Lifetime Achievement. Winners included Natasha Boulding (Low Carbon Materials), Mark Edmondson (Inflo), Kari Owers (O.agency), Charlie Hoult, Nigel Mills CBE and a special recognition was given to Caroline Theobald CBE. The evening captured the dynamic spirit of entrepreneurship, leaving attendees inspired by the region's outstanding achievements.







## Amanda Cooper, promoted to Director at RG

**Ryecroft Glenton (RG), one of the North of England's leading independent advisory firms, has promoted Amanda Cooper to Director within the firm's Accounts and Business Services service line.**

Specialising in providing advice to RG's Agricultural and Landed Estates clients, Amanda's career progression highlights her dedication and expertise.

Amanda joined RG in 2011 during a placement year while studying Maths at Northumbria University. She continued working with the firm part-time during her final year of university before joining RG permanently two years later.

Over the past decade Amanda has played a key role in delivering advice and expertise to the agriculture and landed estates market, predominately in the North East of England, progressing from Manager to Senior Manager before securing this latest promotion.

RG has long-standing experience of working with agricultural businesses and landed estate clients and has evolved its capabilities to offer a comprehensive service, including succession and inheritance tax planning, trust and estate management as well as personal and business tax planning.

The team, which is led by Partner Helen Pennock, acts for more than 300 clients in this area, representing more than 25,000 acres of estates across Northumberland and County Durham.

## Clive Owen LLP expands with Newcastle Office

**Clive Owen LLP, a leading independent accountancy and business advisory firm, has expanded its footprint further in the North with the opening of a new office in Newcastle.**

The office, located at The Spire on Pilgrim Street in the city centre, is the firm's fifth base, adding to its well-established offices in Darlington, Durham, York, and Middlesbrough.

The Newcastle office will be led by Tax Partner Stephen Harris, who possesses more than 15 years of corporate tax experience and brings a wealth of expertise in working with owner-managed businesses and entrepreneurial clients.

Commenting on his new role, Stephen, who is well-known in the region's business community, said: "It's exciting to be part of Clive Owen LLP's next chapter as we expand into Newcastle. Having worked with a wide variety of clients over the years, I'm looking forward to helping more local businesses navigate the complexities of tax and business planning. Clive Owen LLP's ethos of offering tailored, client-focused service is something I



truly value, and I'm thrilled to lead this office."

Stephen's appointment further strengthens Clive Owen LLP's leadership team, whose experience of the Newcastle market will continue to support its growth across the region. He joins at an exciting time for the firm, whose appointment follows the recruitment of Michael Cantwell in the summer, who also possesses vast experience working in the city and leads Clive Owen LLP's burgeoning Corporate Finance division.

Managing Partner Gary Ellis added: "Opening in Newcastle is a natural progression for Clive Owen LLP. We've always been committed to growing organically, focusing on our independence and investing in the regions we serve to provide a personal and bespoke service to our clients."

## RG welcomes eight new recruits

**Ryecroft Glenton (RG), the leading North of England business advisory firm, is welcoming eight new team members across its Audit, Accounts, and Agriculture teams.**

The new recruits reflect RG's commitment to attracting top talent and supporting the next generation of professionals as they embark on their careers in the business advisory sector.

The firm has strengthened its audit team with the addition of two Audit Seniors, Vashenka Naidoo and Anton Vassilounis.

Vashenka joins RG with seven years of audit experience as a Chartered Accountant from South Africa. Having previously worked with a 'Big 4' firm, Vashenka brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the team.

Anton, a recently qualified Certified Accountant, joins the firm from a local practice in Darlington, where he honed his skills and developed an understanding of the audit landscape.

In addition to these senior appointments, RG welcomes four graduate trainees who have begun their training contracts to become Chartered Accountants.

Emily Halsall and James Bell join the firm's accounts department. Emily holds a History degree from Newcastle University, while



James recently graduated with an Accounting and Finance degree from the same institution.

Jake Macintosh and Connor Priest strengthen the Audit department. Jake holds a Master's in Accounting and Finance from Northumbria University, while Connor is an Economics and Finance graduate from Newcastle University.

Further expanding RG's team, two trainees are studying for their Accounting Technician Qualification (AAT). Stephanie Roots has joined the Accounts service line and will now be commencing her AAT studies. Stephanie brings valuable experience from her previous role in the finance department of a financial services firm.

Alex Shipsey is continuing his AAT studies at RG and has joined the firm's specialist Agriculture team. Alex, who has already made significant progress in his training, arrives from a smaller practice and is eager to develop his expertise in this specialist sector.



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*L-R: Chris Brown, Laura Weir and Jon Archer of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors*

## RMT trio earn Associate Director promotions

Three members of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors' expert team have earned promotions into new senior roles.

**Laura Weir, Chris Brown and Jon Archer have become associate directors at the Gosforth-based firm and have taken on additional responsibilities for the management of the independent business alongside their everyday roles.**

Laura joined RMT in 2008 after returning to her native North East from Stirling, where she had studied for an accountancy degree before completing her professional qualifications with a local firm.

She is a senior member of RMT's commercial services team, which provides guidance and advice to a wide range of companies in the North East and beyond to help their owners and directors achieve both their personal and commercial goals.

Chris has been with RMT for almost ten years and works within its specialist medical team, RMT Healthcare, which is one of the UK's leading specialist medical and healthcare accountancy practices and the largest dedicated specialist team outside London.

Jon is a member of RMT's audit department and joined the firm nine years ago as an audit senior before making his way up the ranks through a series of audit manager and senior manager roles.

A graduate of Durham University, he has worked in the professional services sector for 13 years and is a fully qualified member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of England and Wales.

Laura Weir says: "When I was returning to the North East, I was looking for a well-established firm with a strong reputation for both its commercial success and workplace culture which would provide me with opportunities to develop my career and do engaging work with interesting clients.

"RMT ticked all those boxes at the time

and has continued to do so as I've gained more experience and taken on greater responsibility for managing the team.

"Helping clients understand the practical impacts of the financial information we deliver is crucial in enabling them to use it as the basis for key decisions on their businesses' future direction.

"Many of the clients that I took on when I first joined RMT are still clients today, which speaks volumes for both their enduring success and the quality of service that our team has provided to them over the years."

RMT provides the full range of financial and business advisory services through its corporate finance, accountancy, specialist tax, medical & healthcare, and recovery & insolvency teams, and works with firms of all sizes both within and outside the North East.

Stephen Slater, director at RMT Accountants, adds: "Providing a clear pathway for our talented team members to develop their careers is a key part of the culture we've created here.

"Laura, Chris and Jon all thoroughly deserve their promotions, and we look forward to seeing them further develop their contributions to the practice's success in their new roles."

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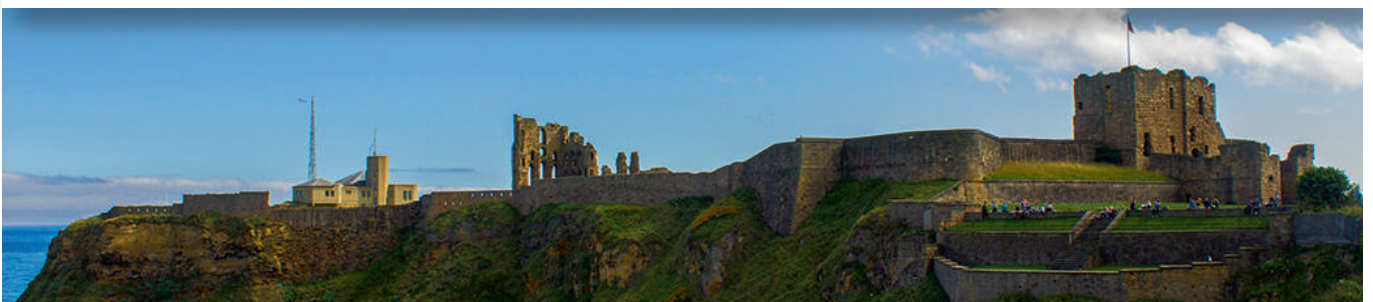


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# Managing Change

Did you know that only 34% of change initiatives succeed? And that one in three CEOs fail to achieve the desired outcome from their transformation initiatives?



**Once a quarter, Andrew Marsh, Vistage chair of the North East and Northumberland, brings his three leadership peer groups together for a speaker day to be remembered.**

At the latest event, the room of CEOs, MDs and business owners plus guests welcomed Sue Firth as their speaker and enjoyed a day of looking at Strategically Managing Change to ensure that they are not one of the one in three.

Sue is an expert on change, performance coach and mentor, who brings her background in psychology to deliver key note speeches and workshops. She speaks to corporate and business audiences about the importance of respecting, and reducing stress in our lives, along with building resilience.

Andrew said: "When you consider that nearly 80% of companies need to adapt their business offering every two to five years, leaders need to be on their game to manage the situations ensuring they are keeping stress to a minimum. Two-thirds of workers experience burnout crisis, which also causes transformation failure, so a leader has to make sure the workforce is fully considered. Sue gave us all lots of tools and food for thought to make sure this can happen."

Having established that the main reason that people don't like change is fear, Sue's tools concentrate on reducing that very reaction. She drove home to the room that change management is as much about how to help people adjust and adapt as it is about implementing the strategy.

Some great examples of strategic change management include Sophos migrating to Salesforce CRM, HMRC expanded its customer communication to new digital channels and Booking.com effectively migrated from Office 365 to Google Workplace. Andrew said: "Whilst these companies are all large corporates, the premise of change management remains the same. Keep your people at the heart of what you do, and talk to them in a language they understand with time scales they can digest."

Sue talked the room through this importance of language. The negativity towards change comes from a fear of breaking habits, bringing a perception it will take more effort. Most people are naturally risk averse, and if they don't understand why this change is necessary all that happens is that the fear of failure and the unknown kick in, which causes people to be disruptive, and the result for the leadership team is loss of control. Sue's top tips included:

- Language is everything.
- Tell your people what is NOT changing – down play the 'changes'.
- Avoid the word change or transformation. These words are attached with stress and negativity.
- Avoid references to BIG change.
- Use positive language such as alter/modify/improve/fix.
- Always give examples of the alternatives, reasons and because...

Once you have passed this part of the strategy it is key to listen to the staff to see what they are saying in response.

The Vistage experience, of course, is not just listening to speakers. As leaders keen to learn and implement, every session includes the cohorts taking time to think about their own organisations, challenging each other to explore more options to make better decisions and get better results.

That led to conversations about forms of intelligence - academic, emotional, spiritual, artificial and systems intelligence to understand why people react the way they do to change, and why those who need stability and consistency will find change overwhelming.

Andrew concluded: "We drew the conclusion that leaders need to create a culture of continuous improvement. Having discussed in our groups what mistakes businesses make that mean people struggle with change, such as over consulting and under delivering, too much too fast, or too slow or too late we all left armed with new ways to communicate. We agreed there would be no more knee jerk, poor communication and lack of planning to ensure our people aren't at risk of losing focus and feeling unstable."

The final takeaway of the session was a one page sheet ideal for middle management to understand changes afoot, in a way they can share with the team to get results.

***If you'd like to experience the support that Andrew's Vistage members get, attend an event or have any questions about this article then do get in touch on [Andrew.Marsh@Vistagechair.co.uk](mailto:Andrew.Marsh@Vistagechair.co.uk)***



Andrew Marsh



Peter Neal

## Banking on people

As the Charity world is changing swiftly in how and where funding is available, Peter Neal of The Experience Bank answers a burning question. Should charities invest in a recruitment partner to hire a chief executive?

**"I get asked this regularly by boards looking to recruit a new CEO. Charity funds are crucial to the delivery of purpose - many funds are indeed restricted to programmes and services. But, when utilising other funds, what's more important to a charity than having the right people steering it?"**

"There are strong arguments for investing in a recruitment partner to hire to such a pivotal role.

"When searching the top echelons of leadership for skills suitable for strategically running a charity, it's important to fish in a pool bigger than your own, to ensure you find the right person, not just someone convenient. Good recruiters specialise in finding the right person not just for now, but ensure the strategy of the charity's future is considered too. The positions of CEO and board members are crucial to the years ahead, not just for the present!

"As well as skills and experience, the candidate must have vision. That's what made Rebecca Maws the ideal candidate when I introduced her to a charity creating opportunity for young people, The Key. As well as understanding the charity today, Rebecca was vision-led, based on her experience of growth, development and strategic-thinking, and understood what the charity was likely to need to look like in the future.

"Recruitment is time demanding, and charities are time poor. A recruitment specialist puts all their energy, knowledge and expertise into understanding your needs and the candidates' potential before an introduction is made. Meaning your dedicated time to the interviewees is well spent, getting you the desired result.

"There are also some things that only an external partner can truly bring. For sensitive leadership roles, maintaining confidentiality is key. Recruiters can guarantee confidentiality, protecting your and the candidate's privacy. A partner can also bring true objectivity. Coming from an unbiased perspective, the recruiter can evaluate purely on skill and suitability, rather than any personal bias borne out of an incorrect compass.

"It's also the job of recruiters to be aware of market insights, how to position employer branding to the best effect, benchmark and position the role as desirable.

"Feedback received from clients is that the support I provide, with a guiding hand from start to finish, is reassuring. It's a huge decision, that can make or break a charity, so having a working relationship based on respect and trust goes a long way! The space to negotiate with the right candidate through your recruiter takes away any awkwardness and gives the candidate a professional


impression of the organisation from the start.

"Having a long-standing relationship with a recruiter can be beneficial for exit planning, ongoing recruitment, culture considerations, impartial advice and efficiency in future projects. An example of this is my relationship with Newcastle Carers.

"Following the departure of its CEO, the board focused on deciding the future strategy of the charity and how the organisation should be structured. Having worked with me previously, the chair of the board, Mary Youngs, liaised with me during the process for advice and input on creating a strong leadership team in a charity. I then assisted them with the search for the perfect candidate. Luke Bramhall, recently appointed CEO, was amongst the exceptionally strong candidates I introduced. Mary said:

"Thank you to Peter for his seamless approach to finding the best candidates for such a critical role in our organisation. He not only helped with recruiting the right person, but also on the journey to working out what we needed. He steeps himself in your charity, listens and gains good understanding before presenting a strong list of potential candidates. His advice is second to none and the fact the candidates understood the role and us by the time they were interviewed, was invaluable."

***Whilst The Experience Bank Group has many ongoing relationships with charities in the region, we are always keen to foster more. If you are a charity who would benefit from aligning with The Experience Bank, then please email [peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk](mailto:peter@theexperiencebank.co.uk)***



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## Ryecroft Glenton - an evening of conversation, connection and celebration

We believe that strong relationships are at the heart of everything we do and this was certainly on full display during our Annual Autumn Drinks event, held at the elegant Banyan Bar and Restaurant. This year's gathering brought together over 200 of our valued clients, professional contacts, and friends for an evening of conversation, connection, and celebration.

The event, which has become a highlight on our calendar, provided a unique opportunity for everyone in attendance to reconnect in a relaxed and informal setting. Whether catching up with long-standing clients or forging new professional relationships, the atmosphere was buzzing with shared stories, business insights, and future possibilities.

Located in the heart of the city, Banyan Bar and Restaurant was the perfect venue to host such a vibrant event. Its stylish setting and warm ambiance offered the ideal backdrop for an evening filled with laughter, lively discussions, and of course, a selection of delicious drinks.

For us, this event is not just about bringing people together for a social occasion; it's about celebrating the relationships that have helped shape our business over the years. It's a chance for us to express our gratitude to the clients who trust us with their financial management, the partners we collaborate with, and the friends who support us along the way.

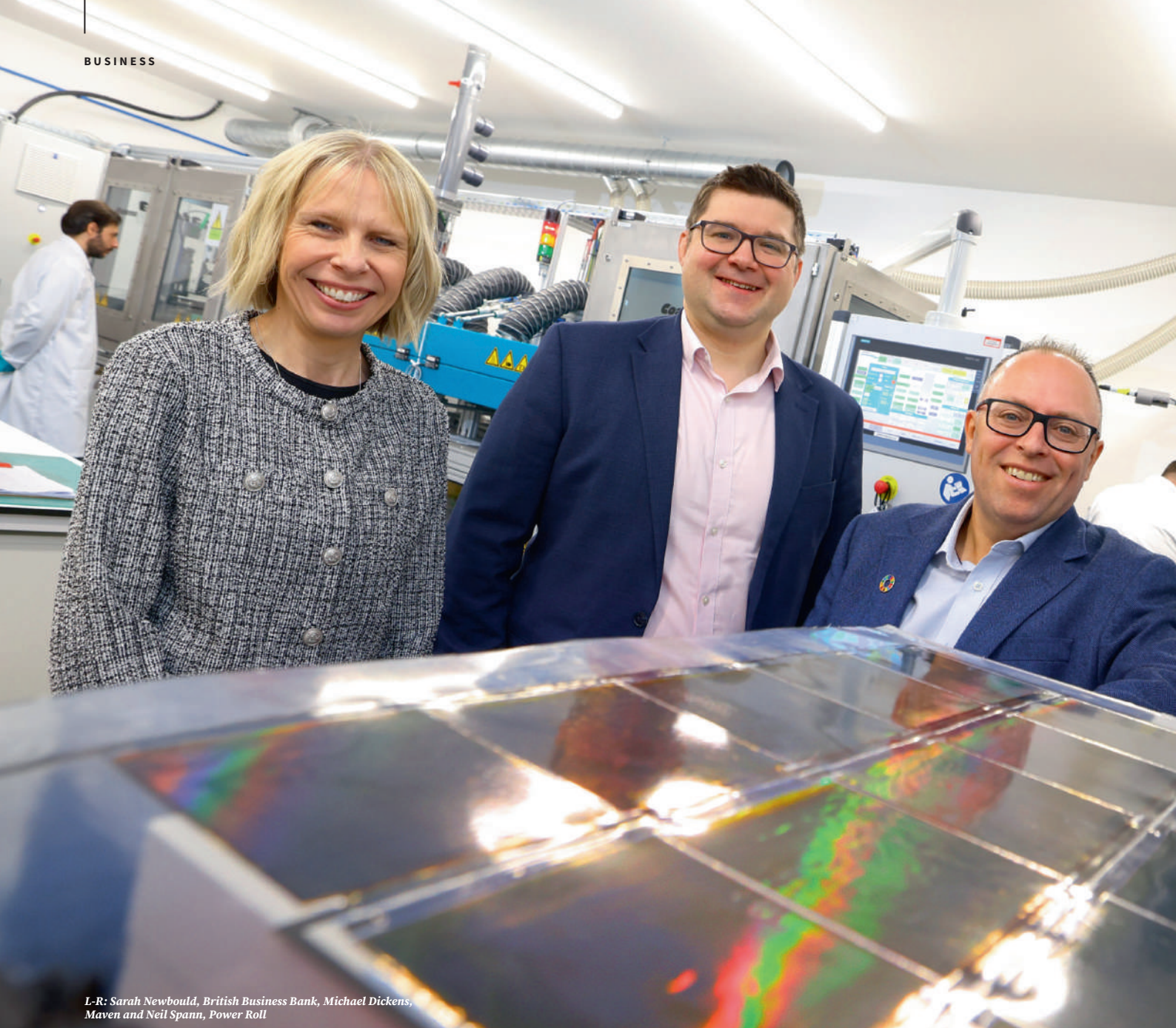
As the evening unfolded, it became clear that these gatherings offer more than just an enjoyable night out. They serve as a reminder of the importance of human connections in business – relationships that go beyond the boardroom and extend into friendships built on mutual respect and trust.

At Ryecroft Glenton, we understand that while our industry may be driven by numbers, the people behind those numbers matter most. Events like our Annual Autumn Drinks are a reflection of that belief, providing a space where our clients, partners, and team members can engage with one another outside of the formal business environment.

We look forward to continuing this tradition and are excited about the many more opportunities ahead to strengthen our partnerships and build new connections.

Thank you to everyone who joined us, and we look forward to seeing you again next year!





L-R: Sarah Newbould, British Business Bank, Michael Dickens, Maven and Neil Spann, Power Roll

## NPIF II Maven Equity Finance completes first deal

The Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II (NPIF II) has completed its first investment in County Durham since the launch of the £660m fund in March this year.

**Power Roll has raised £4.3 million, including £1.5 million from NPIF II – Maven Equity Finance, part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II, £750,000 from the Finance Durham Fund established by Durham County Council and overseen by Business Durham, and £750,000 from the North East Development Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund. The remaining £1.3 million was secured via a number of private investors.**

Power Roll operates at the cutting edge of green energy, aiming to significantly increase the worldwide uptake of solar power and support the transition to net zero.

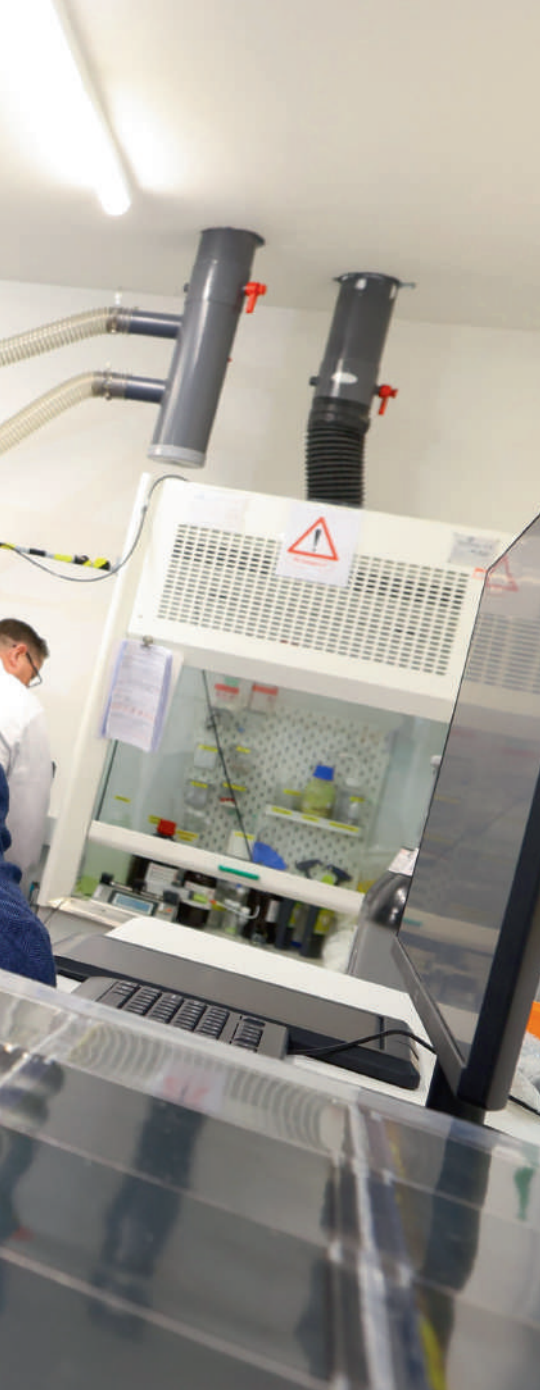
Its disruptive technology relies on a novel architecture called “microgrooves,” similar to a hologram, designed to produce solar power on virtually any surface, all over the world.

As Power Roll gears up to fully commercialise its innovative solar product, the funding will be used to accelerate the development of Power Roll’s pilot plant location in County Durham, enabling small scale manufacture of its proprietary solar products.

The business was founded in 2012 on the back of the invention of disruptive solar photovoltaic microgroove technology which

revolutionises the way we harness power from the sun. The unique technology pushes the boundaries of solar energy, utilising low-cost film, free from rare earth materials, which is paving the way for a more sustainable future.

“Power Roll is committed to transforming and reinventing renewable energy globally, enabling more commercial and industrial businesses to access energy through our lightweight flexible solar panel solutions. We have built the foundations for a very exciting future which will generate solar power without draining the Earth’s resources and meet the needs of an increasing demand for sustainable and eco-efficient energy sources.



“We heard about the funding after previously receiving investment through British Business Bank’s Future Fund and having previously sought funding from Maven. Securing further investment from Maven and the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II will be an important catalyst for us to achieve the funding we need to really scale our current pilot operations and there’s been a clear feel that we all share a common goal to get this over the line.”

*Neil Spann, CEO of Power Roll*

With solar energy expected to be the world’s largest source of power by 2050, providing 40% of the world’s electricity, Power Roll is committed to transforming and reinventing renewable energy beyond the North East. With plans to commercially license the manufacturing process internationally, the business aims to launch the ground-breaking technology globally, saving carbon and changing the future.

“Power Roll is an ambitious and innovative business with a mission to transition to green energy and transform the future of our planet. The Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II is committed to supporting technology-enabled, ESG focussed businesses like Power Roll to access the finance they need to achieve their ambitions across the North and beyond.”

*Sarah Newbould, Senior Manager at British Business Bank*

Since Maven’s initial investment into Power Roll in 2020, the business has achieved a number of development, technical and commercial milestones. Power Roll’s solar film has the potential to generate solar energy from the billions of square meters of rooftops where the heavy and rigid silicon panels manufactured in China cannot be deployed.

“Securing investment is about much

more than just the finance. It’s about finding a long-term business partner who is as committed to the business as the management team. We originally invested in Power Roll in 2020 and have worked alongside Neil and the management team as they embarked on a programme of growth to continue its intensive product development pathway, allowing for the production of its innovative solar film to be commercialised on a global scale. With green energy more important than ever, the need for low-cost clean energy has never been greater and Power Roll’s disruptive solar film technology looks to revolutionise solar energy and assist with the transition towards a more sustainable electrical generation system.”

*Dr Michael Dickens, Investment Manager at Maven Equity Finance*

“As part of our ongoing efforts to support sustainable development in County Durham, we are delighted to continue backing Power Roll through the Finance Durham Fund. This investment strengthens our commitment to driving innovation and creating lasting economic growth in the region. Power Roll’s ground-breaking solar technology not only places County Durham at the heart of renewable energy advancements but also highlights our dedication to fostering forward-thinking businesses that make a global impact.”

*Cllr James Rowlandson, Cabinet member for resources, investment and assets at Durham County Council*

NPIF II - Maven Equity Finance can provide investment of up to £5 million to support ambitious earlier and later stage businesses across the North East of England.

***If your business, or the business you advise, is looking for an equity investment as a solution to fund future growth, visit [mavencp.com](http://mavencp.com) to find out more.***



*Neil Spann of Power Roll*

# Tier One Capital hosts influential economist Liam Halligan at Newcastle Business Briefing



Newcastle-based wealth and fund management specialists Tier One Capital recently partnered with North East-based national PR firm, Recognition PR to host a business briefing lunch featuring renowned economist and journalist Liam Halligan.

**The event took place at the 21 restaurant on Newcastle's Quayside and was attended by a diverse group of influential business leaders, including financiers, venture capitalists, property sector professionals, engineers, CEOs, and advisors.**

Liam Halligan, known for his weekly economics column in the Sunday Telegraph and his expert economic analysis, provided a comprehensive overview of the current economic landscape.

His insights, shaped by global events and the latest developments in UK politics, offered attendees a deeper understanding of how these factors impact businesses.

Halligan, who has a wealth of experience reporting on economic issues in print and on television for Channel 4, BBC and GB News, praised the North East for its entrepreneurial spirit and its innovative business landscape.



L-R: Graham Robb, Recognition PR, Liam Halligan, Economist and Journalist and Ian McElroy, Chief Executive, Tier One Capital

He commended the region's resilience and ability to foster dynamic businesses despite the challenges facing the broader economy.

He regularly provides analysis on global economic developments and their impact on the UK, making him a highly respected voice in the field. His extensive knowledge and ability to translate complex economic trends into actionable insights made him an ideal speaker for the event.

Ian McElroy, CEO of Tier One Capital, said: "As wealth and fund management specialists it was great to secure highly regarded economist Liam Halligan for our business briefing. He provided an invaluable opportunity for business leaders to gain a deeper understanding of the economic outlook. His knowledge and ability to break down complex global trends into relevant insights for North East businesses were incredibly valuable.

"As the region continues to navigate the economic challenges of the time, events like these are invaluable in bringing together key

players to share knowledge, network, and strategise for the future."

In addition to Liam's expert commentary, the event provided a forum for business professionals from across a range of sectors to connect and discuss the challenges and opportunities within the current economic climate.

The business briefing was a great success, fostering meaningful connections between leaders from a wide array of sectors while highlighting the unique strengths and potential of businesses in the North East.

Graham Robb, Senior Partner at Recognition PR, added: "The calibre of the attendees and the conversations held at this event demonstrated the strength and ambition of the North East business community. Liam Halligan's insights were a timely reminder that, despite economic headwinds, our region continues to show real entrepreneurial grit and innovation."

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

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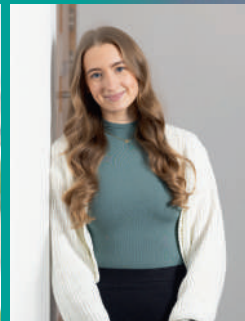
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*...Time is  
your greatest  
financial ally...*

Jason Smith

## Advertising Feature

# Change Ahead

The new Labour Government has just unveiled their first Budget, and we saw this as the perfect opportunity to catch up with Jason Smith, a financial adviser at Sage Wealth Management, to explore how he's helping clients navigate the changes ahead.

## How are you working with your clients to navigate the changing financial landscape?

At Sage Wealth Management, we provide tailored, one-to-one financial advice, so when any changes come into force, we first assess which clients' financial plans might be affected, and then schedule face-to-face or phone consultations. It's important that we're able to discuss any changes and how they could impact their goals, and what adjustments we can make to keep them on track toward their desired financial futures.

The financial landscape is evolving rapidly. With an ageing population, pension funds need to last longer, and rising healthcare costs make planning even more critical. Coupled with increasing living costs and tax burdens, these factors especially affect older clients who want to pass on wealth efficiently. Meanwhile, younger generations are often exposed to high-risk investment schemes via social media, making it more important than ever to seek reputable, professional advice.

In this environment, accessible, one-to-one financial guidance is essential. It's about striking the right balance between enjoying the present and planning for the future. For me, that often begins with a good cup of Italian coffee and a meaningful conversation!

## Should employers be doing more to help employees with financial planning?

In an ideal world, yes—along with schools and colleges. Imagine young people entering the workforce with knowledge about budgeting, mortgages, investing, and understanding risk versus reward. Unfortunately, in many industries, the focus is on targets and cash flow, leaving little time for structured financial education. As a result, employees often only address their situation in times of stress, not only affecting their own mental wellbeing, but level of productivity and absenteeism in the workplace.

## How do you help bridge this advice gap?

I deliver Financial Wellbeing in the Workplace programmes, spending time in companies talking with teams about financial planning. These workshops are tailored to the needs of the employees, no matter their role, with individual appointments offered thereafter, to employees who have identified a requirements for financial advice.

## Tell us about your move to financial advising

I've always had an interest in financial planning, and during my time as a Senior Manager in the motor trade, I noticed a significant advice gap. The fast pace of the industry, driven by acquisitions, often left employees unprepared for unexpected changes. Many relied on auto-enrolment pensions without fully reviewing their investments.

Seeing the need for better financial guidance, I decided to pursue a career that aligned with my passion for financial planning, and made the transition to Sage Wealth Management, which has been providing financial advice for over 15 years, helping clients from all walks of life achieve their financial goals.

What I enjoy most about my role is building personal connections with clients, understanding their goals, and offering advice that fits their unique circumstances. I often share my own interests during meetings—whether it's talking about family time with my two Labradors or my passion for music, having played guitar and written music since I was young.

These shared moments help me build genuine relationships and provide personalised advice.

## What are your top five financial tips for getting started?

- 1. Live within your means** – Spending less than you earn is the foundation of financial planning.
- 2. Invest wisely** – Put your surplus to work by seeking professional, trusted advice.
- 3. Build an emergency fund** – Be prepared for life's unexpected challenges by setting aside funds for unforeseen expenses.
- 4. Protect your most valuable asset—yourself** – Ensure you have adequate insurance in place to secure your and your families financial future.
- 5. Start early** – The sooner you begin, the more time your investments have to grow. Time is your greatest financial ally.

**For a coffee, conversation and to understand how the Autumn Budget affects your financial plans, reach out to Jason Smith on 07369 228896 • [sagewm.co.uk](http://sagewm.co.uk)**

The value of an investment with St. James's Place will be directly linked to the performance of the funds selected and may fall as well as rise. You may get back less than the amount invested.

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The 'St. James's Place Partnership' and the titles 'Partner' and 'Partner Practice' are marketing terms used to describe St. James's Place representatives.

SJP Approved 15/10/2024



## Hay & Kilner receives international recognition from Investors in People

North East-based law firm Hay & Kilner has announced that it has been awarded the 'We invest in people - Silver accreditation', by Investors in People (IIP), further demonstrating their ongoing commitment to the development of their employees and being a great place to work.

Investors in People, the international standard for people management, defines what it takes to lead, support and manage people effectively to achieve sustainable results.

Over a period of a few months, staff were asked to complete engagement surveys to be submitted to IIP, along with on-site visits and meetings with staff and partners to review supporting documents provided.

The report showed that staff were incredibly positive about the success of the firm and felt proud to work for Hay & Kilner, with its supportive, nurturing culture and the friendliness of partners being noted as particular highlights.

Commenting on the award, Employment Law Partner, Sarah Furness, said: "I am incredibly proud of the whole team for this achievement - absolutely thrilled.

"To be awarded Silver and be told that we are just 40-percent off reaching Gold, for our first time applying is amazing.

"We are already putting in place a three-year plan to further reinforce our values and company culture to ensure everything aligns internally. The report included so much positive feedback, which was great to receive.

"Over the past five years, we have moved to better offices at the Lumen building in the Newcastle Helix hybrid city quarter, we've improved our brand identity, invested heavily in employee engagement and culture, and been on a huge growth strategy which we will be continuing over the next five years.

"We recognise that people are our biggest assets, and this forms part of our plan to ensure that we recruit and retain the best talent and that our amazing culture is championed throughout the business. The Silver IIP accreditation forms just part of the bigger picture."

## Chambers recognises Newcastle law firm as one of the best in the UK

Newcastle's Burnetts Solicitors LLP has achieved eight ranked departments and 14 ranked lawyers in the Chambers UK Legal Guide 2025, placing it among the best law firms and lawyers in the UK.

Burnetts' Corporate team achieved Band 1 status for the very first time and Corporate Partner Peter Robinson also features as a new entrant in the North East Corporate M&A rankings, noted for his ability to advise on complex transactions.

Chambers and Partners has over 70 researchers ranking the best law firms and solicitors working in the UK legal market and covers 78 specialist areas of UK law and has been one of the leading sources of independent legal market intelligence for over 30 years.

The eight departments to achieve rankings are: Agribusiness, Corporate, Commercial Property, Banking, Medical Negligence (North West and North East), Serious Injury and Family law.

Managing Partner Nick Gutteridge said:

"We're proud to have been recognised by Chambers as one of the leading law firms in the North. Client feedback is fundamental to achieving these Chambers' rankings and this means a lot to us, as it reflects the pride that our people put into their work.

"This marks another great year for Burnetts, following our recent move to our new office at Citygate."

## True Solicitors unveils rebrand to enhance client experience

Newcastle-based True Solicitors has unveiled a comprehensive rebranding, partnering with creative agency Drummond Central to modernise its identity.

This strategic shift reflects the nationwide firm's commitment to growth through its ongoing dedication to providing exceptional legal services to clients in an increasingly dynamic environment. Having enhanced its service offerings, it sought to streamline the client journey to ensure that clients can connect with True Solicitors anytime, anywhere.

The refreshed brand positions True Solicitors as an approachable, always-professional and trusted partner for legal advice. Through the revitalised brand identity and messaging, the firm aims to resonate with a diverse client base, ensuring its legal expertise is accessible to all.

Including a new logo, visual identity, website and tone of voice, the rebrand encapsulates True Solicitors' mission to cut through the complexities often associated with legal services.

Andrew Milnes, Managing Partner at True Solicitors said:



"We are excited to unveil our new brand identity, which reinforces our dedication to modernising and simplifying our client's journey. Our firm has evolved over the last nearly 30 years, and we believe that our new branding reflects not only who we are but also our vision for the future. Throughout our rebranding process, we have considered how best to make our services more accessible and user-friendly, and this effort is just the beginning."

The firm appointed Newcastle-based creative agency Drummond Central for the rebrand.



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# Solicitor of the Month

*In the latest of this popular series of features we spoke to...*

## Nicola Fisher

*Associate Solicitor, Private Client Department, David Gray Solicitors LLP*

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

I did know that I wanted to help people so was drawn to caring professions. As a child, I had a strong sense of fairness and wanted to stand up for people.

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

I am a solicitor in the Private Client Department, where I deal with personal matters like wills, probate, and estate planning, allowing me to have a real impact on people's lives. My work helps clients navigate important and often emotional decisions, giving them peace of mind for the future. The added aspect of Court of Protection work allows me to help those who may not be able to manage their own financial affairs, ensuring they are protected and their best interests are served.

Quite often clients are nervous about coming to see a solicitor and I hope that I can change any misconceptions they may have. I take pride in creating a welcoming and approachable environment, helping clients feel comfortable and at ease. This allows them to openly share all the relevant information, enabling me to provide tailored and effective advice that meets their individual needs.

An average week can take me out and about, visiting clients at home, or even in hospital or a hospice, according to their needs.

### **What is your proudest business achievement?**

I have gained accreditation with the Association of Lifetime Lawyers. They are a gold standard when it comes to supporting vulnerable and older people with legal advice. I consider it a real privilege to assist people who may be coping with bereavement or adjusting to life altering diagnoses. Being able to help ease their burden and offer peace of mind during such challenging times is incredibly rewarding.

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

Like most industries, there has been a significant increase in the use of digital technology and artificial intelligence in the private client world too. There has been an increase

in digital processes, for example with the signing of many documents, applying for probate online, correspondence by email and more and more virtual meetings.

However, I believe this is an area of law that still greatly benefits from the personal touch of face-to-face meetings, which many clients continue to value. While digital advancements will undoubtedly streamline certain aspects of the job, it's essential not to lose the human connection that is so important when dealing with sensitive and personal matters like wills and probate.

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

I manage a diverse caseload, working with clients from a range of ages and backgrounds. We have been focusing on raising awareness about Court of Protection matters. We aim to ensure individuals are better prepared and informed about their options. This may be needed if a family member or close friend has lost mental capacity and someone needs to be appointed to look after their financial affairs.

We've also recently been working closely with St Oswald's Hospice, preparing wills for their users and supporters and even members of staff via Wills Clinics on site.

### **Tell us about the team you work with?**

We are a close knit team of solicitors, paralegals and assistants. We have a great dynamic, where everyone supports each other with their cases, workload, and career progression. It's rewarding to work in an environment where we all understand and contribute to each other's work. As a team, we're looking to expand with like-minded, hardworking individuals who share our commitment to providing excellent service.

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

Don't stress too much about the career choices you make at 18. It's a daunting decision to think about what you want to do for the rest of your life, but remember that whatever path you choose can work out. Prioritise your happiness and well-being.

*continued...*



Nicola Fisher



David Gray Solicitors offices

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

I hope to be part of a thriving Private Client team at David Gray, training and mentoring junior members of staff. My goal is to advance to the position of partner. I'd also love a bit more sleep too, I can but dream!

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

*Taylor Swift* has to be my number one choice; she is just an inspirational woman.

*Rosie Ramsey* would be my next guest. I love her podcast and her down to earth nature and strongly think we could be friends!

*Rob Delaney*, because laughter is super important and he's one funny and intelligent man.

My final guest would be *Johnnie Cochran*, not only because he did some amazing work and represented some incredible people, but who doesn't want the inside scoop on O.J.?!

(I've just realised I should have included a chef; my cooking isn't that great).

### How do you unwind outside of work?

With two young children, I wouldn't say I have much time to unwind but I certainly try! I love spending time with my family on day trips whether out for walks, at the beach or inevitably soft play – all while hunting for a flat white to keep me energised.

### Favourite book and boxset?

It might be an unpopular choice, but I'd have to go with *The American Office*. I've watched it countless times, and Dwight is just brilliant.

I don't have a lot of time for reading at the moment, presuming that Peppa Pig doesn't count. I do love murder mysteries, thrillers and the occasional romance.

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Craig Malarkey

## The Legal Complexities of MBOs

By Craig Malarkey, Partner in the Corporate and Commercial Team at Swinburne Maddison LLP

Management buyouts (MBOs) are a popular strategy for executives looking to take ownership of the companies they manage.

**Experian data showed an increase in these transactions year on year for 2022 and 2023. While the market for trade sales and private equity investments remains active, an MBO can be an attractive exit strategy, allowing the management team to step up and can be potentially less impacted by external market forces.**

An MBO involves the management team acquiring a significant portion, if not all, of the company's shares, often with the help of external financing or vendor support. While MBOs offer benefits like leadership continuity and deep business understanding, they also come with legal complexities that require careful navigation.

### Structuring the deal

An MBO typically involves a share purchase from the current owners, often through a newly formed holding company (Holdco). Some sellers may wish to exit outright, whereas others may "de-risk" by selling only a proportion of the shares. Establishing this early is crucial as it impacts the deal's structure and the seller's ongoing involvement.

### Financing the MBO

Financing an MBO adds another layer of complexity. Management teams often lack

the capital to buy the company outright and must rely on external sources or other payment structures.

Private equity firms, which specialise in buyouts, are a common option. Management teams must engage early with advisors, including lawyers and corporate finance specialists, to ensure the deal works for all. PE expertise can significantly benefit the management team, though legal documentation can be complex.

Other financing methods include traditional bank loans, where company or personal assets may be used as collateral, and seller financing, where the current owner agrees to receive payments over a period of time. Seller financing is often easier to negotiate in an MBO due to the seller's vested interest in the management team's success. However, sellers should carefully consider their risk and exposure, potentially retaining some interest or taking security.

Each financing method comes with legal considerations. For instance, bank loans may impose operational covenants, while private equity deals often require negotiation over control and future exit strategies.

### Legal Due Diligence and Ancillary documents

Legal due diligence is critical in any

acquisition, though it is often minimised in MBOs. The aim is to obtain a full understanding of the business, including financial performance, market position and hidden liabilities that could affect the transaction. While the management team's familiarity with the business might allow for reduced due diligence, this should be carefully evaluated with legal, corporate finance, and tax advisors.

Thought should be given to any unknown risks or liabilities and whether the selling shareholders need to be released from any obligations, such as personal guarantees. Depending on the business and the MBO team's knowledge, our corporate team may be supported by our employment and commercial property teams to assist with the due diligence.

Beyond the main transaction documents and any funding arrangements, the new management team and Holdco shareholders must consider how they will work together. Bespoke articles of association and a shareholders' agreement are usually essential.

### Value to all

MBOs can be a rewarding way for executives to take control of their company, however it is crucial to understand the legal risks. Poorly managed transactions can derail the deal, exposing all parties to substantial risk and jeopardise the ongoing business's future.

Long-term planning is vital for both the management team and exiting sellers. The management team should have time to transition into ownership roles, and any gaps in the team should be filled internally or with external hires. A strong team ensures the sellers achieve the best value and secure funding for the transaction.

[Swinburnemaddison.co.uk](https://www.swinburnemaddison.co.uk)

# What does Labour's Employment Rights Bill mean for your business?

The Labour Government published their Employment Rights Bill on 10 October 2024. The bill spans near 150 pages and contains numerous provisions updating individuals' employment rights.

Although the Bill is very much in the early stage of its journey through Parliament, there are several key takeaways from the Bill's current drafting.

## Unfair Dismissal

The Bill proposes to remove the two-year qualifying period on Unfair Dismissal claims.

Unfair Dismissal will be a "day one" employment right. The current draft also provides the Secretary of State with the power to modify an individual's right to bring an Unfair Dismissal claim if they are still within a, currently undefined, "initial period of employment." This will be a point of consultation in the near future.

## Third Party Harassment

The Bill proposes that an employer will now have a duty to take all reasonable steps to prevent third parties from harassing their employees in the course of their employment.

## Fire and Re-hire

The Bill proposes to limit the practice of employers varying employment contracts by dismissing employees and then re-engaging them on different terms, known colloquially as "fire and re-hire".

Under this proposal, should the reason (or principal reason) for dismissing an employee be to vary the employee's contract of employment, the dismissal will be deemed automatically unfair.

An employer will need to evidence that:

- the reason for the variation is to eliminate, prevent or reduce significant financial difficulty that was affecting, or would likely affect in the immediate future, the employer's ability to carry on their business; and
- in all the circumstances the employer could not reasonably have avoided the need to make the variation.



Jane Sinnamon

## Zero Hours Contracts

The Bill proposes steps to limit the practice of Zero Hours Contracts. To confirm, employees who prefer having zero-hours contract will be able to remain on those terms.

Employers will be required to offer a zero-hours worker a guaranteed-hours contract based on the hours they have clocked up during a 12-week period.

Should any changes be made to a zero-hours worker's shift, or if a shift is cancelled, the worker will also be entitled to "reasonable" (yet to be defined) notice. Should an employer fail to provide "reasonable" notice, then the worker may present a claim to the Employment Tribunal.

## Flexible Working

Further to the update on 6 April 2024 that made a flexible working request a day one right, the Bill proposes to limit an employer's right to refuse flexible working requests.

Although the statutory grounds of refusal remain the same, an employer will have to evidence that it is reasonable to refuse the application on such grounds. An employer must also explain why such grounds are reasonable in their outcome letter to the employee.

## Protected Disclosure

A less publicised amendment is the

proposed addition to the list of "Qualifying Disclosures" under section 43B of the Employment Rights Act 1996 regarding sexual harassment.

This would mean that should an employee be dismissed, or put to a detriment, for the reason of disclosing that sexual harassment had occurred (or was likely to occur), then they will be entitled to bring a claim to the Employment Tribunal.

## Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

Both the waiting period and lower earnings limit for SSP will be removed. Employees, regardless of earnings, will now be entitled to some level of SSP from the first day that they are ill.

The Bill is set for a second reading on 21 October 2024 in the House of Commons and will likely be October 2026 before any of the above proposals become law.

There are a notable number of aspects missing from the Bill that had been promised by the Labour Government such as the "right to switch off" and the single status of a worker. The Government have included these in a "Next Steps" document.

***Should you require advice about the immediate and future impact of the Employment Rights Bill on your business, please contact Jane Sinnamon, Partner and Employment Law Specialist at Collingwood Legal.***

# Meet the newest aspiring lawyers at Muckle LLP

Photo credit: Mike Smith Photography



Top row (L-R): Annie Bell, Jason Wainwright, Eleanor Amies-King

Bottom row (L-R): Pippa Garden, Megan McCaughey, Louis Hutton, Cassie Woodier

**Leading commercial law firm Muckle LLP has appointed five new trainee solicitors and one solicitor apprentice, taking the firm's total of budding lawyers in training to 19.**

**As trainees, Eleanor Amies-King, Annie Bell, Pippa Garden, Louis Hutton and Megan McCaughey will gain experience in four teams over their two-year training contracts. Cassie Woodier, the firm's newest solicitor apprentice, will spend six years training with a variety of teams while completing her studies part-time.**

Annie, Louis and Megan are all from the North East and attended university here, whilst Teesside-born Cassie joins us after completing her A-Levels at Yarm School.

The remaining cohort members – Eleanor, from Tadcaster, and Edinburgh-born Pippa – have chosen to remain in the North East after completing postgraduate studies at Newcastle University.

All trainees completed the vacation scheme at Muckle prior to securing training contracts, whilst Cassie had undertaken work experience at the firm before becoming a solicitor apprentice through the North East Solicitor Apprenticeship scheme.

## Welcome to the team

Pippa completed the University of Law's PGDL and LLM at Newcastle University after studying business management at

the University of Aberdeen. She joins our construction team. She is already feeling settled at Muckle and commented: "The people and the support (both professional and personal) are some of the key reasons I applied here. Everyone has been so welcoming and I'm really looking forward to growing my professional network over the next two years."

Annie is from County Durham and completed her undergraduate degree and LPC LLM at Newcastle University. She is taking her first seat in our employment team. She credits the culture at Muckle as a key reason for her application. She said: "When applying for training contracts, Muckle's commitment to people really stood out for me; everyone is accepted for who they are and empowered to do what's right for them. I'm excited to learn from some of the fantastic lawyers here over the next two years."

Northumbria University MLaw graduate Megan joins our corporate team. She is delighted to be back in the North East after living in London for a year. She commented: "I completed the vacation scheme at Muckle twice, and I'm pleased that everyone is as friendly and supportive as I remembered. I'm hoping to get involved in our community work, such as joining the community team and supporting with pro bono advice."

Fellow MLaw at Northumbria graduate Louis is taking his first seat in real estate. He also shares the firm's passion for ESG, particularly inspiring the younger generation, and said: "I wanted to work for a local law firm that had a strong focus on giving back to the community, and Muckle was the perfect choice. I'd love the opportunity to undertake some charity work as well as visit schools like mine to encourage others to consider a legal career."

Eleanor is joining Louis in the real estate

team. She completed her LLB at Lancaster University but moved to the North East to study the University of Law's MA at Newcastle University. She said: "I have wanted to be a lawyer since my early teens, and I'm excited to finally be starting my legal career. I've undertaken work experience at a few different legal firms, but as soon as I completed Muckle's vacation scheme, I knew I wanted to train here."

Cassie Woodier joins us immediately after completing her A-Levels this summer. She credits the supportive culture at Muckle in helping her smoothly transition from education to work, and commented: "It can be a bit daunting to start your first ever job, but everyone has been so kind and helpful. I chose the solicitor apprenticeship because I wanted to gain real-life work experience alongside studying, and I'm excited to see what the next few years will bring."

## People investment

Jason Wainwright, managing partner at Muckle, said: "Investing in new talent is so important to the future of Muckle, and I am delighted to welcome these six aspiring lawyers to the firm."

"Many of our partners, associates and solicitors began their journeys here as trainees, and we are committed to providing the same opportunities for development and success to the next generation. I have no doubt that Annie, Cassie, Eleanor, Louis, Megan and Pippa will excel in their careers here."

**Muckle is renowned for its commitment to developing legal talent through trainee and solicitor apprenticeship programmes.**

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# The Importance of Trademark Registration: Lessons from Lidl v Tesco



Dominic Elsworth

**Trademark registration is crucial for businesses to protect their brand identity and maintain a competitive edge. Trademarks, such as logos, names, or slogans, are the markers that set your business apart from your competitors, and are an extremely valuable asset. Protecting your trademarks through trademark registration is crucial for maintaining your brand's integrity and defending it against misuse or imitation.**

A recent case, Lidl v Tesco, highlights the importance of trademark protection. The dispute centred around Lidl's registered trademark which consists of a yellow circle, outlined in red, in the centre of a blue square. Lidl alleged that Tesco had infringed this trademark registration with its use of a similar blue-and-yellow design in connection with Tesco's "Clubcard Prices" marketing campaign.

Lidl claimed that Tesco's use of the similar logo could mislead customers into thinking the Clubcard prices promotion was connected to Lidl, thereby benefiting from Lidl's reputation for low-cost products. Tesco argued that their blue-and-yellow logo was simply a commonplace type of attention grabbing signage used to communicate value or sale price information to customers,

however the court sided with Lidl, ruling that Tesco had infringed Lidl's registered trademark.

The Lidl v Tesco case emphasises the importance of being proactive about trademark registration. Without formal registration, enforcing your rights in court becomes far more difficult. Registered trademarks provide exclusive rights and allow businesses to enforce their intellectual property more effectively. Businesses should therefore prioritise registering their trademarks early and conducting thorough searches to avoid infringement issues. Monitoring the market for potential violations and enforcing trademark rights is essential to maintaining brand integrity. For those expanding internationally, trademark protection in multiple jurisdictions should also be considered.

Businesses thinking about their approach to trademark registrations, whether they have existing portfolios or are considering registering new trademarks may be able to avail themselves of the UK IPO's IP Advance programme which provides targeted support to innovative, high growth potential SME's.

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

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Please contact:

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## Wine on the Wear by Sweeney Miller Law

Sweeney Miller Law launched their first Wine on the Wear networking event as part of Sunderland Business Festival on Friday 18th October at the firm's new headquarters in Sunderland, Sweeney Miller House.

Wine on the Wear is set to become a regular feature on the Sunderland networking scene, with the next Christmas themed event being planned for Friday December 6th.

*For further information, contact claire.  
fenwick@sweeneymiller.co.uk  
[www.sweeneymiller.co.uk](http://www.sweeneymiller.co.uk)*





# Understanding Shareholders' Agreements

A shareholders' agreement is a crucial document that governs the relationship between shareholders in a company.

**It outlines their rights and obligations, specifies what the company can and cannot do, and regulates the sale of shares. Typically, this agreement builds on the company's articles of association.**

Having a good working relationship does help prevent conflicts but issues can still arise. Although the articles of association provide some guidance, a well-crafted shareholders' agreement offers greater protection for individual shareholders particularly when things go wrong. A shareholders' agreement fosters confidence among partners and helps prevent costly legal disputes.

## **Aren't Articles of Association Enough?**

Many might wonder if articles of association alone provide adequate protection. The answer is no, for three main reasons:

- 1. Limited Protection:** Shareholders' agreements offer more tailored business specific guidance as opposed to the standard articles, which are often created quickly and cheaply, lacking essential protective provisions.
- 2. Amendment Control:** Changes to a shareholders' agreement require the consent of all shareholders. In contrast, articles can be amended by a 75% majority, potentially undermining minority shareholder interests.
- 3. Confidentiality:** Unlike articles of association, which are public documents filed with Companies House, shareholders' agreements remain private. This confidentiality prevents access by outsiders, such as creditors or non-member employees.

## **Who Should Consider a Shareholders' Agreement?**

Any company with more than one shareholder should strongly consider a shareholders' agreement. This document can apply to all shareholders or be tailored to specific share classes.

Certain situations make a shareholders' agreement especially vital:

- **Employee Share Issuance:** Companies issuing shares or share options to employees should include transfer provisions to reclaim shares if an employee leaves.
- **Third-Party Investment:** Outside investors often seek some level of control over the company to protect their investment.
- **Professional Services Firms:** Businesses in sectors like law or finance should draft agreements to address consequences if a shareholder loses their professional certification.



Jess Fenwick

## **Protecting Minority Shareholders**

Without a shareholders' agreement, minority shareholders have limited control over company decisions. An effective agreement can ensure that critical decisions require the approval of all shareholders, which can include:

- Issuing new shares
- Appointing or removing directors
- Approving new borrowing
- Changing main business operations

Additionally, a "tag-along" provision may mandate that if a majority shareholder receives an offer for their shares, the same offer must be extended to all shareholders.

## **Protecting Majority Shareholders**

For majority shareholders, it is essential to include provisions that require minority shareholders to sell their shares if the majority shareholder decides to sell. This "drag-along" clause ensures that a reluctant minority does not impede the majority's exit strategy. Furthermore, shareholders' agreements can include restrictions on whom shareholders can sell their shares to, protecting the interests of existing shareholders.

## **Key Clauses in a Shareholders' Agreement**

Shareholders' agreements typically contain:

- **Restrictions on Share Transfers:** Ensuring that shareholders have a say in who their

fellow shareholders are.

- **Approval Requirements:** Mandating shareholder consent for key decisions and expenditures.
- **Restrictive Covenants:** Preventing former shareholders from competing against the company post-exit.
- **Operational Regulations:** Detailing the management structure, including appointing and compensating directors.
- **Minority Shareholder Protections:** Safeguarding the interests of minority shareholders.
- **Dispute Resolution Procedures:** Establishing a clear process for resolving conflicts.

The above example will not all be included in every shareholder agreement but by investing in a comprehensive shareholders' agreement, you can mitigate risks and establish a solid foundation for collaborative growth, securing your business's long-term success. While this agreement is hopefully just a document safely stored away and rarely needed, it will serve as a reassuring safeguard ready to deal swiftly and effectively where the circumstances arise.

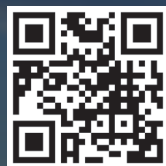
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## The Three Tumours Champion Focus

Georgina Bentley recently undertook a gruelling and challenging half marathon to raise vital funds for The Three Tumours Charity.

The Three Tumours is a North East Charity determined to support brain tumour sufferers and their families. Their aim is to signpost resources that might help you. They want to raise awareness about brain tumours and their aim is also to raise funds to find a cure and improving the quality of care for sufferers and families.

Georgina told us: "I ran the Royal Parks Half Marathon on October 13th for The Three Tumours. The charity is very close to mine and my partner's heart. I'm running in memory of Graydon and my colleague Kevin Pratt. By raising awareness and funds for The Three Tumours, I hope to support their charity in their research and ensuring others facing similar challenges receive the help they need."

***It's not too late to donate and every penny is hugely appreciated - [www.gofundme.com/f/royal-parks-half-marathon-the-three-tumours](http://www.gofundme.com/f/royal-parks-half-marathon-the-three-tumours).***

***To contact The Three Tumours Charity, email on - [support@thethreetumours.com](mailto:support@thethreetumours.com)***



Georgina Bentley

- 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
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## Kids get their skates on thanks to Blyth Town Council

Blyth Town Council commissioned Pop More Skate School operated by Shred the North to hold a series of free skateboarding workshops at the Isabella Community Centre. These workshops were part of an initiative to engage the local community and took place near the future site of Blyth's state-of-the-art skate park, currently under construction.

The workshops were designed to give children of all ages a chance to develop and refine their skateboarding skills in a supportive and safe environment. The young people received guidance from professional skateboarders, learnt essential safety practices, and gained insight into the skate park's cutting-edge design, which promises to cater to skaters of all skill levels.

Julie Summers, Events Co-ordinator from Blyth Town Council said, "The workshops are all about working with skateboarding professionals to teach the kids new skills, ensure they know how to stay safe on a skateboard, and ultimately, enjoy themselves. We ran sessions for under-sixes, under-tens, over-tens, and even an intermediate group for more advanced skaters."

Mayor of Blyth Town Council Aileen Barrass said, "Our new skate park will be a tremendous asset for Blyth, offering a dedicated space for young people to engage in positive, healthy activities. By creating a space specifically designed for skating, we are not only encouraging physical activity and skill development but also fostering a sense of community and belonging among our youth."



## £35,000 raised to support dementia research

Alzheimer's Research UK have announced their popular Ladies Day 2024 fundraiser has secured a staggering £35,000, which will see all funds donated directly to local dementia research at Newcastle University.

250 guests came 'Together For A Cure' at the sell-out Alzheimer's Research UK's Ladies Day event held at Hilton Gateshead, Newcastle and has exceeded all funds raised in previous years. This is all thanks to the donations of the North East business that came together in force to back the event. From the generous Barclays Bank colleagues who gifted their matched funding to the event, the headline sponsor Talentheads for backing the event for the third year running, exhibition area sponsor Ramasay Healthcare, drinks reception sponsor Hilton Hotel and The Perfume Shop who provided the most generous goodie bags.

The committee team behind this year's event were on a mission to boost Ladies Day 2024 even further in their plight to raise more vital funds for Alzheimer's Research UK. To support the elevation of this year's event Sara Grix (Alzheimer's Research UK) recruited a committee of regional business leaders to support behind the scenes including Scott Wilson-Laing, WL Distillery, Sam Spoons, Talentheads, Jane Dennison, Dragonfly Cancer Trust, Lauren McWilliams, Visibility Strategist and Brand Photographer and Claire Pickersgill, House of Hype and Co.

## Charity golf day raises vital funds for Butterwick Hospice

A Charity golf day raised over £10,000 for a Hospice which has been supporting people across Teesside and County Durham for 40 years.

The event, for Butterwick Hospice, was sponsored by family-owned Croxdale Group Durham, which has been providing motorists in the region with an array of high-quality vehicles and services since 1967.

The golf day took place at Ramside Hall, featuring 16 teams playing on the Cathedral Course - and has been hailed a great success by everyone involved.

Events such as these are vital for Butterwick Hospice, as it costs more than £7,000 per day to deliver the Hospice's many services. It provides holistic care for children and adults living with a life-limiting illness.

The charity is also a great source of help and support to their families and loved ones.

Speaking of the successful day, Helen, senior fundraiser, said everyone enjoyed their golf - despite the windy weather!

"Afterwards, when we all met in the clubhouse to enjoy a well-earned



carvery and dessert, we received lots of positive comments about what a great day it had been," Helen said.

"This was my first golf day, which I loved organising coming from a family of golfers - I just wish I could have captured the atmosphere in a video for the team, with everyone laughing and enjoying themselves."

A team put forward by Taylor Wimpey were the victors on the day, followed by runners-up Smith & Friends.

# Grace House

Enriching the lives of disabled children, young people and their families

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"Where Friends Become Family"





## Grace House North East

Community, commitment, and corporate social responsibility.

**No stranger to networking or partnership building, Grace House is thrilled to introduce Amy Samson, their new Corporate Fundraiser.**

Amy's passion for supporting local causes and her commitment to making a real difference in the lives of disabled children and young people. With her on board, Grace House is excited to take their corporate partnerships to the next level.

Amy brings a wealth of experience in working with non-profit organisations and a deep passion for creating meaningful connections between local businesses and charities.

On her new role, Amy says: "What excites me most about joining Grace House is the

opportunity to build relationships with local businesses and individuals who care deeply about their community."

"Together, we can create partnerships that not only support Grace House's mission but also provide businesses with a chance to give back in a way that has a lasting impact."

Grace House is dedicated to improving the lives of disabled children and young people by providing essential services, support, and care. With Amy's expertise, they're aiming to grow their network of corporate supporters and engage with local businesses that share their passion for helping others.

### How can local businesses get involved?

#### 1. Corporate Sponsorships

Amy is eager to connect with companies interested in sponsoring specific initiatives, events, or activities. Whether it's sponsoring a community event or funding new resources for the children, businesses will have a direct and meaningful impact on the lives of those the charity serves.

#### 2. Employee Volunteering

Employee volunteer programs offer businesses an excellent way to engage staff in meaningful activities that give back to

the community. Amy is passionate about creating unique volunteer opportunities that allow employees to contribute their time and skills to support Grace House. This can range from hands-on assistance at charity events to using professional skills to help with operations.

Volunteering not only benefits the charity but also helps businesses foster team spirit, boost employee morale, and enhance their corporate social responsibility profile.

### 3. In-Kind Donations

Many businesses have valuable goods or services that could greatly benefit a charity like Grace House. Amy is ready to discuss how local businesses can offer in-kind support, whether through donating office supplies, providing catering for events, or offering services such as printing or marketing. Every contribution helps, and in-kind donations are a fantastic way for businesses to get involved in a way that aligns with their resources and expertise.

### 4. Fundraising Campaigns

Amy is excited to partner with businesses to launch fundraising campaigns that directly benefit Grace House. Companies can host internal fundraisers, match employee donations, or encourage customers to contribute by adding donation options at checkout. Amy is here to help businesses develop creative and effective fundraising strategies that maximise their impact.

### Why Support Grace House?

Grace House is more than just a local charity—it's a community dedicated to supporting disabled children and young people to live fulfilling and happy lives. Partnering with Grace House not only helps them to continue their vital work but also provides businesses with a unique opportunity to build positive brand recognition, increase employee engagement, and enhance corporate reputation.

### Get in touch with Amy

If you're a local business looking to support a meaningful cause, Amy Samson is eager to hear from you!

**To learn more about how you can get involved, contact Amy at [at@gracehouse.co.uk](mailto:at@gracehouse.co.uk) or visit [www.gracehouse.co.uk](http://www.gracehouse.co.uk)**



“

*...Together, we can make a difference in the lives of disabled children and young people in our community...*

# Charity of the Month...



L-R: Elvis Katoto, Vaina Lumbiwa and Junior Masandi

# A Taste of Africa

Taste of Africa North East is a Tees Valley-based charity which was established to champion diversity and inclusion while promoting and celebrating Black communities through creativity.

## Why was the charity formed?

The charity believes that thriving, diverse communities which are inclusive and well-integrated create positive social value. To foster such communities, the charity operates based on six key values: equality, inclusion, diversity, community, creativity and integrity.

Taste of Africa was founded on determination, resilience, and love for African culture and heritage. Our vision is to develop the African community in the Tees Valley and beyond, striving to create a society free from discrimination and prejudice, while providing a vibrant platform to promote and celebrate Black history, heritage and achievements.

## Key Programmes and Activities:

- **Creative Youth Leadership Programme** – Meets every two weeks in Middlesbrough, providing workshops for children aged 11-18, focused on life skills and leadership development.
- **Black Creatives and Arts Network (BCAN)** – A community for Black creatives to connect, collaborate and network with other creative networks
- **African and Caribbean Carnival** – A street-based event celebrating culture through live music, dance, parade, and food.
- **Black History Youth Awards** – A prestigious awards dinner recognising the achievements of young Black people in the region.
- **Exhibitions – Conquering the Unimaginable** – Touring exhibitions that highlight the experiences and contributions of Black communities.
- **Miss Black History Final** – A celebratory event spotlighting the achievements of young Black women.
- **Taste of Africa Showcase** – The grand finale of the festival, bringing together performances, exhibitions and cultural celebrations.

## Which area do you cover?

The charity covers the entire North East, with a primary focus on the Tees Valley.

## Who are your trustees and patrons?

The trustees are Junior Masandi and Hilaire Agnama, with Folasade Sangowawa as the founder.

The charity is also supported by esteemed patrons, including Estephania Dunn, regional director of the Royal College of Nursing for the North West, and Mark White CBE.

Their collective leadership and support help drive the charity's mission forward, ensuring its continued success and growth.

## What have been your proudest moments so far?

Our proudest moment was celebrating 20 years of Taste of Africa. Over these two decades, we've witnessed the growth of young people who have been part of the charity, overcoming the challenges of being Black in society and going on to achieve success in their lives.

It's been incredibly rewarding to see the impact that our events have had on community cohesion, bringing people from all races and backgrounds together to learn from one another and experience the richness of Black culture. These milestones highlight the powerful role that Taste of Africa plays in fostering understanding, breaking down barriers, and celebrating diversity in the North East.

Taste of Africa Creative Youth Leadership Team



## What are you currently working on?

Currently, we are focused on several key initiatives aimed at empowering youth, uplifting Black creatives, and expanding our community impact. One of our main projects is the Creative Youth Leadership Programme, where young people meet every two weeks to attend workshops that build essential life skills. As part of this programme, they are actively involved in organising the Black History Youth Awards Dinner and the Behind the Smile exhibit, helping them develop skills in event management, teamwork and leadership.

We are also developing the Black Creatives and Arts Network (BCAN), a vibrant community for Black creatives to network and connect across the Tees Valley and beyond.

In addition, we are working on next year's exciting events, including the African Caribbean Carnival, which will celebrate its 4th year, thanks to the support of the Arts Council and Tees Valley Combined Authority. We're also preparing for the 22nd anniversary of the Taste of Africa Showcase and the 12th anniversary of the Black History Youth Awards Dinner.

To further our impact, we are developing strong working relationships with local businesses such as Sytner (Mercedes of Teesside), North Star Housing, Olam Care, Durham University, Teesside University, Guardian Care, and Northumbrian Water, among others. These partnerships are vital in supporting our ongoing work.

## What does the future hold?

Taste of Africa North East has always been a beacon of cultural exchange, community cohesion and empowerment. We plan to expand our reach, creating even more platforms for African heritage to be celebrated across the North East.

Our work will continue to focus on education, cultural preservation, and providing opportunities for young people to explore their talents through various art forms, fashion, and entrepreneurship.

With the support of our ever-growing network, we look forward to continuing to make a lasting difference, not just for the African diaspora but for the entire community.

## How do you get involved?

Email: [info@tasteofafricanortheast.co.uk](mailto:info@tasteofafricanortheast.co.uk)



**The Dragonfly Ball**

Join us as we celebrated the unforgettable Dragonfly Ball, recently held at The Biscuit Factory in Newcastle upon Tyne!

Guests were welcomed by some moving melodies of Sing United and dance music from The 123's, which created a magical atmosphere throughout the night.

The incredible Alfie Joey hosted the evening, adding his unique charm to the event. With a sell-out crowd, the Dragonfly Ball was a resounding success, leaving everyone with cherished memories of a truly spectacular evening.

Enjoy the highlights!

*For further information on how you can be part of this event please contact [info@dragonflycancertrust.org](mailto:info@dragonflycancertrust.org)*







## Looking Back and Moving Forward

### Annual Joint Meeting of Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle

Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle held their Annual Joint Meeting giving community members the opportunity to learn about their influence on improving services over the past year and contribute to shaping priorities for 2024/25.

Yvonne Probert, CEO of Tell Us North (CIC), who oversees Healthwatch Gateshead and Healthwatch Newcastle said: "The insights gathered from our Annual Surveys and ongoing community engagement will help us set priorities for the next year, focusing on areas such as women's health, adult social care, digital inclusion, and supporting underrepresented communities."



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# Sporting Wallsend Community Hub - the perfect space for corporate events



Sporting Wallsend Community Hub is not only a purpose built facility for sport and well being activity, its also offers a perfect space for your corporate events.

**Whether thats a conference, away day, awards ceremony or indeed a celebration party, The Peter Olsen Community Hub can meet all your needs.**

By hiring out and hosting your events at the Hub you will be directly investing back into your community as all the money goes back into charity for young people & community activities.

The team at Sporting Wallsend can also connect you to highly-skilled experts to help you deliver the perfect presentation or host a memorable award show. It's this quality service that can often make the difference when it comes to delivering a great experience for your colleagues or employees.

Maybe your company wants to give back- in which case they can organise a Corporate Volunteering Day with the local community, or you may feel its time to bond with your team...they have the perfect sporting facilities to host fun packed team building days.

## **Check out what they offer:**

- **Hire** various size spaces
- **Award ceremonies/team building days**
- **Work with the team** - help to keep your community active
- **Business lunches** - Treat your team to a sporting lunch
- **Conferences** - Book your corporate get-together
- **Away days** - Team build in an environment with the perfect sporting facilities
- **Corporate volunteering days** - Partner up to help in the community
- **Presentations** - Pitch & present using HD projectors & multi functioning rooms
- **Awards** - Be rewarded for your hard work, host your awards at the Hub
- **Sponsorship** - Get sponsored by Sporting Wallsend
- **Exhibition** - Host an exhibition in the venue
- **Talks** - Be part of a community, corporate or sporting talk
- **Well-being retreats** - Achieve relaxation and zen through retreats
- **Workshops** - Educate others and host a workshop at our facilities
- **Fairs & Markets** - Use the facilities to hold fairs that impact the local community

The Peter Olsen Community Hub offers something different- its new, its fun and, by using the facility you are directly supporting young people and the wider community.



**For more information about hiring the Hub contact the team on:**

**T: 0191 263 9490**

**E: [johnp.wallsendboysclub@gmail.com](mailto:johnp.wallsendboysclub@gmail.com)**



In association with Wallsend Boys & Girls Club

# The perfect corporate event space for you

The Peter Olsen Community Hub is our brand new multi-functional facility, acting as the perfect venue for any corporate event and is completely adaptable to your needs.

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# Shared Interest announces appointment of new finance Director Designate

Current recipient of the Queens Award for Enterprise in Sustainable Development, Newcastle-based social lender, Shared Interest, is delighted to announce the appointment of Jo Powell as Finance Director Designate. Jo joins the team as long-serving Finance Director and Company Secretary, Tim Morgan prepares for his planned retirement after 15 years of dedicated service.

Tim Morgan, a Newcastle University graduate, has helped guide Shared Interest through significant challenges, including the global financial crisis, Brexit, and the pandemic. Under his stewardship, the organisation doubled its Share Capital and expanded its reach to over 45 countries, while maintaining its mission to support small-scale producers in marginalised communities worldwide.

Shared Interest Managing Director Patricia Alexander, said: "Tim's commitment to Shared Interest and the broader fair trade movement has been profound, and we are incredibly grateful for his service."

Tim reflects on his tenure with pride, stating: "It has been an honour to help steer Shared Interest through some of the most challenging global events. I'm proud of what we have achieved, especially the growth of our Share Capital and the innovations we have introduced."



Jo Powell, who has strong ties to the North East and significant experience leading the financial strategy in organisations with a social purpose, qualified with PwC and has worked at local organisations such as UNW LLP, Newcastle College and NHS Business Services Authority. She is eager to bring her passion for ethical finance to the role.

She said: "I'm excited to continue the incredible work Shared Interest has done to promote sustainability, fairness, and social responsibility. I look forward to working

with our global community of members and supporting local and international producers."

Shared Interest, with its headquarters in Newcastle, has been offering vital financial support to farmers, artisans, and co-operatives in developing regions around the world for 34 years. In 2023 alone, they supported over 400,000 producers to trade and earn a living.

[www.shared-interest.com](http://www.shared-interest.com)

## Make your money make a difference



**Your ethical investment will change the lives of fair trade farmers and handcraft producers from across the globe.**

**CAYAT co-operative has united over 3,000 cocoa farmers across Ivory Coast to help tackle deep socio-economic challenges.**

CAYAT is just one of thousands supported by Shared Interest across 45 countries.

Prior to this, the vast majority of local farmers sold their cocoa at low prices to middlemen and were often left unable to meet their most basic needs.

Today, thanks to fair funding from Shared Interest, the farmers - hundreds of whom are women - are ramping up production to meet soaring global demand for cocoa, while creating secure, well-paid jobs for those most in-need.



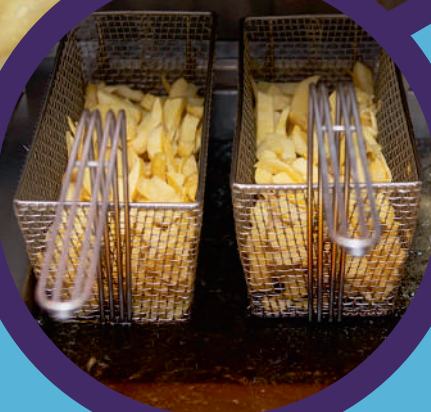
Rosine Aké Bekoin (pictured above), General Secretary of the CAYAT Women's Association, said: "Many of us were illiterate but with the training offered by CAYAT, we can now read and write a little. Thanks to the CAYAT training, I now know how to save, engage in agricultural good practices, and help others."

We all have a Shared Interest. Join the 11,000-strong Shared Interest movement today...

Shared Interest, with its headquarters in Newcastle, has been offering vital financial support to farmers, artisans, and co-operatives in developing regions around the world for 34 years. In 2023 alone, they supported over 400,000 producers to trade and earn a living.

**Interested in finding out how you could make your money make a difference? Call us on 0191 233 9101 or email: [membership@shared-interest.com](mailto:membership@shared-interest.com)**

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**Launchpad Armed Forces' dinner**

Guests celebrated the work of homeless veterans' charity, Launchpad by attending a glittering black-tie Armed Forces' Dinner at the Discovery Museum in October.

The event celebrated the work the charity provides to UK Armed Forces' veterans who have experienced homelessness and have struggled with the transition into civilian life.

Launchpad provides vital accommodation and support to support homeless veterans and has two houses in the North East, in Newcastle and Durham.

*To find out more, visit [www.veteranslaunchpad.org.uk](http://www.veteranslaunchpad.org.uk)*





# Your Why: The Importance of identifying and using your purpose to stand out for business success!



**Having authentic purpose in business is increasingly recognised as the key driver of long-term success.**

**Its key is not only to the company's identity, but also to its relationship with stakeholders, customers, employees and future talent.**

Business leaders set up their businesses because of their "why", it's their differentiator, their sense of purpose, based on their belief on what their market/industry is needing or missing...

At Talentheads our why is about putting people front and centre, to impact individuals, communities, and local businesses by sourcing the right talent, with the right values and skills match to their roles, without the complication of placement fees; and retaining and developing those teams to ensure that they are truly high performing.

We routinely go back to our why – as a business of over four years its important to continue to "check back in" and ensure we are still on course with our purpose...is it still true and reflective, knowing why we are different and still disrupting our industry – yes it is! For us, it's being a voice – an expert in our industry – it's about our community thriving and our clients' businesses growing!

We still believe in local jobs for local people, we believe our services and our expertise provide help and support to ensure communities grow and develop, and help businesses create legacies through getting the right people in through our recruitment team and holding on and retaining and developing them through our learning and development strategies, continually making impact, not just to our clients, but our community!

If we know our "why" is strong and it enables Talentheads to thrive, how can it help your business do the same and build high performing teams, we have shared our thoughts...and why that genuine purpose within a business is so powerful:

**1. It builds trust, credibility and resilience.** A defined and authentic purpose demonstrates that a business stands for something beyond profit making, and aligns its actions with meaningful values. Share this with your potential candidates, customers and stakeholders and make it central to your brand messaging.

**2. Candidate attraction.** It is so powerful to share your purpose when you are attracting candidates, people want to join businesses that are purpose led, with the right values that match their own. Candidates are more likely to join businesses that operate with authenticity.

**3. Enhances Employee Engagement and Retention.** Increasingly employees are seeking meaning in their employment. An

authentic, communicated and shared "why" can lead to high employee engagement and job satisfaction and lower staff turnover. Lower staff turnover and a high level of engagement is only good for your bottom line.

**4. Drive and Innovation!** By having a greater cause to work for aside from profits, the collective force – your people – have a big motivator to innovate, and be solutions focussed – this is when the high performing team created by your effective company purpose can really unleash their skills and abilities in the right direction.

**5. Competitive Advantage.** It's a massive differentiator when a business clearly communicates their purpose. Super impactful for those who want to stand out among competitors. You attract the right people to join your business and retain them!

If you don't have that authentic purpose in your business, how do you summon the motivation and determination to keep growing, to move those boundaries, continue to build on your business success! Knowing your why and your purpose supports building you high performing teams!

**Want to know how Talentheads can partner with you to help solve your talent puzzle? Visit [www.talentheads.co.uk](http://www.talentheads.co.uk), email [hello@talentheads.co.uk](mailto:hello@talentheads.co.uk) or call 0191 300 8688.**

**Castle Peak Group's Diverse & Inclusive Search & Selection services are committed to helping organisations navigate the complexities of making high calibre Executive and Board level appointments.**

Our unique approach offers a truly different and comprehensive evaluation framework to strengthen your organisation from the inside out. Groups that practice inclusive leadership and inclusive recruitment will have by default naturally inclusive workplaces and therefore, diverse and high performing workplaces.

Increasing diversity on both a leadership and board level is vital to ensure effective, high-performing and collaborative teams which in turn foster innovation, improve decision-making, and can better represent their stakeholders. Inclusive Executive teams and Boards are essential to securing inclusive leadership, inclusive recruitment, and diverse, high-performing teams.

**To start your journey towards a more inclusive, more just and more effective workplace contact our Managing Director, James Carss, on [james.carss@castlepeak-group.com](mailto:james.carss@castlepeak-group.com)**



# Want to attract the best? You need to have the best offer

Bryony Gibson, director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on how you can win the battle for the best candidates.

**In a competitive job market, attracting top-tier talent is no longer simply about the salary. Potential employees are increasingly looking at the full range of benefits when deciding where to move.**

It's something I often get asked about by clients and, the truth is, to remain competitive you need to stay ahead of the game. In a rapidly changing landscape, to attract the best, you need to offer the best. So, what benefits are shaping recruitment, and what do we expect to see in 2025?

## Current Trends

Most companies already offer a host of enticing benefits in a bid to attract and retain great people. Often seen as 'perks', these 'extras' make a significant difference when someone is deciding their future.

- **Four-day Working Week:** Many companies have increased working hours but reduced working days to help employees achieve a better work-life balance.
- **Hybrid Working:** With a bias toward working from home, hybrid working arrangements have become a standard offering, giving people the flexibility to manage their time.
- **Flexible Hours:** Employees are increasingly able to tailor their work schedules to fit their individual needs, allowing for a more dynamic environment.
- **Maternity, Paternity, IVF, Adoption, and Foster Leave:** Supporting employees with enhanced benefits during major life changes has become a priority for many companies.
- **Private Healthcare:** Going beyond standard healthcare offerings, some employers are opting for more comprehensive packages.
- **Pensions:** Offering more than the standard auto-enrolment pension schemes is becoming almost a non-negotiable.



Bryony Gibson

- **Charity:** Offering volunteering days and charity events are excellent ways to boost morale and show employees that their company cares about giving back.

While these benefits create a strong offer, to meet the evolving expectations of the modern workforce, companies must continue to progress.

## Benefits to Explore

There are some exciting trends set to take centre stage in 2025, with the potential to define employee benefits in the coming years.

- **Personalisation:** A one-size-fits-all approach is becoming a thing of the past as people search for benefits tailored to their unique needs and lifestyles. According to a MetLife survey, 74% of employees want more personalised benefits options, with 68% stating that it would make them feel more valued.
- **Financial Wellness and Retirement Planning:** There is a trend emerging for companies to place a much greater emphasis on financial wellness. Employees are seeking resources to help them manage debt, plan for the future, and improve their financial literacy. Providing these tools not only reduces stress but also enhances overall well-being.
- **Mental Health:** Since COVID-19, the focus

on mental health has never been greater; and the trend is set to continue. Holistic well-being packages focused on physical, emotional, and financial health are essential for a productive and happy workforce.

- **Inclusive Work Arrangements:** Employees expect flexibility in terms of working from home or adjusting their schedules but, moreover, inclusivity is at the forefront and striking the right balance is essential for employee satisfaction.
- **Sustainability:** People want to know their employer cares about the environment. A Deloitte report shows that 69% of employees want their company to invest in sustainability initiatives. From reducing carbon footprints to supporting social causes, tree-planting initiatives, and using sustainable products in the office, being a responsible company is a big draw.

While competitive remuneration will always be critical to talent attraction and retention, staying ahead with the accompanying benefits package shows that you are in tune with what employees truly want.

It is a quickly moving landscape, but if you have the flexibility to personalise benefits and stay adaptable with your offer, you have a golden opportunity to position your business as a top employer in 2025.

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



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# TAX VACANCIES

## NOVEMBER 2024

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Hybrid working.

### PERSONAL TAX SENIOR / ASSISTANT MANAGER

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A national firm with an emerging presence in the north east is keen to welcome a Tax Senior or Assistant Manager who is ready to take on a higher level of responsibility with a complex portfolio of clients (HNWI, Partnerships and Directors) with more technical issues. Leadership role within the team, reviewing work and training where required.  
Hybrid working.

### TAX COMPLIANCE & ADVISORY MANAGER

NEWCASTLE, Ref: 2306

A boutique firm offering high level tax advisory to a range of HNWI and SME clients across the north east is seeking an advisor to support with existing work. You will cover all aspects of corporate and private client issues whilst also playing an active role in overseeing the compliance process and supporting the team with review, planning and delivery.  
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Hybrid working.

### PERSONAL TAX SENIOR

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To express your interest in a vacancy, or for a confidential discussion, contact Bryony Gibson, Bryony Gibson Consulting, on 0191 375 9983 or visit [BryonyGibson.com/Vacancies](https://BryonyGibson.com/Vacancies)

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Kathryn Rodgers

## Probation Procedures – Changes in the Law

Preparing your business for the changes in Employment Law.

**The Employment Rights Bill, published on 12th October 2024, heralds significant changes for businesses. The Bill confirms that protection against unfair dismissal will be a day one right; it is expected that employers will be required to work to a maximum probation period of six months, and to provide formal reasons for any dismissal during probation. These are critical changes that businesses must prepare for carefully.**

In an interview with Northern Insight, Kathryn Rodgers from face2faceHR discusses what businesses need to address as they adapt to the new legislation.

"This represents a significant shift," explains Kathryn. "Since April 2012, employees have needed two years of continuous service to qualify for protection against unfair dismissal. Prior to that, 12 months of service was sufficient. For many small business owners, particularly those hiring for the first time, this is a steep learning curve. They often lack internal HR support to guide them through recruitment and onboarding. Given the existing backlog of tribunal claims, this change could lead to a substantial increase in cases."

However, there is some good news. "Although the Bill has been published, it will take a few months to become law, as it still needs to pass through both Houses of Parliament before it is developed into full legislation. This gives small businesses valuable time to prepare."

To ensure you are ready for the changes, Kathryn suggests the following key actions:

**Review or establish company values:** Ensure that your values are clearly defined to attract the right talent and that these are integrated into your onboarding processes.

**Develop a robust probation process:** Outline clear objectives, performance measures, and regular reviews. Provide guidance on how to address unmet objectives and how issues will be communicated and resolved.

**Train managers in people skills:** Equip your managers with the ability to provide constructive feedback and manage difficult conversations effectively.

**Review employment contracts and handbooks:** Ensure that your documentation reflects current probation practices and be ready to update it in line with the new legal requirements.

By taking these steps now, businesses will be better positioned to navigate the forthcoming changes and minimise the risk of any legal or operational challenges.

**For help with your HR worries contact Kathryn Rodgers on 07946 330 025.**

**[face2facehr.com](https://face2facehr.com)**



*Diane Mactavish – HR Dept Newcastle North and North Tyneside*

## Five things you need to do to prepare for a H(R)appy Christmas

There, we have done it. We have only gone and said the “C” word (sorry, not sorry). But for many businesses, now is a good time to get plans in place to enjoy a productive Christmas at work, as well as a happy Christmas at home.

**So, before decking the halls with boughs of holly, listening to Mariah Carey and George Michael on repeat and tucking into mince pies, there are a few (Christmas) gifts you can give now to get the business ready.**

Of course, for some businesses Christmas is a super busy time, whilst for others it goes quiet. Focus on what is important for your business.

### 1. Workforce planning

Assuming things are going to get busy, start checking in with your staff now so that you are aware of their availability before, during and after the festive period. Annual leave is one thing (see point two), but it is useful to know whether existing staff are available for overtime if necessary.

Once you know how much you can call upon your existing team, you can decide if you need to bring in reinforcements. Advertising seasonal vacancies directly, or using a temping agency, are both ways forward. Just make sure your contracts are right, and enough time is built into the process to train new staff up and consider health and safety.

### 2. Managing annual leave

Christmas is one of those pinch points in

the calendar when many employees may understandably be trying to take the same days off at once. Having a good annual leave management system is a big help (ask us if you don't have one yet), as it takes away much of the admin for you; and, of course, you will need a policy as to how decisions are made. First come, first served is often simplest. Or you may alternate who gets what time off from year-to-year to find fairness. Whatever you do, be consistent though.

Some businesses may block annual leave for certain periods, while others may enforce a shutdown where leave must be taken because it's quiet.

### 3. Party planning and staff benefits

Christmas is a time for giving, and many businesses use it as an opportunity to thank staff for a job well done over the previous 12 months. Most traditionally this might be done through a staff Christmas party. Venues can get booked up fast so if you haven't got somewhere lined up by now, you had better get cracking.

If you plan to host your party on your own premises, make sure you have health and safety covered and that it will not disrupt

operations. You may offer a Christmas bonus, or if not that, some other perk. Checking your cashflow now will help you budget for any gesture like this come December.

### 4. Considering alternative faiths and cultures.

Although it is a key part of our calendar, Christmas holds less importance for some people. Perhaps they are of a different faith, or maybe they do not celebrate for personal reasons. Be sensitive to this, ensuring that everyone feels welcome to any celebrations, but equally giving employees the space to have a low-key Christmas should they wish.

### 5. Policies and expectations

For all the fun that should be had, you still have a business to run. Therefore, early December, prior to a Christmas party, is often a good time to remind employees of some basics: etiquette at Christmas parties (they are an extension of the workplace), showing up fit for work for contracted hours and maintaining productivity.

This may be where your disciplinary policy comes into its own, but prevention is better than cure. So, make sure staff are aware of the consequences of poor behaviour.

### Your festive HR helper

At The HR Dept, we love Christmas, but we also love helping SMEs prevent people problems. Whether it is some help with seasonal recruitment, holiday management software, assistance with a disciplinary or something else, we are here to help.

**Please get in touch if you would like a hand, by calling 0191 2838732**



## Are you prepared for new sexual harassment laws?

While you may already have policies in place to prevent sexual harassment, they are likely to be inadequate under new laws.

**The new Worker Protection Act comes into force on 26 October. It means the onus is on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace. It's no longer enough to say you've taken 'reasonable steps' to prevent harassers from committing sexual harassment.**

This follows official government figures that show more than a quarter of people who experience sexual harassment do so at work.

### Employer's duties under new sexual harassment laws

Failing to comply to new legislation could lead to bigger penalties for employers. And it could also lead to more interventions from courts. The main outcomes could include:

- **Increased compensation payments.** Employment tribunals could make a

finding of harassment in the course of sexual harassment. If the employer has failed to positively comply to the new legislation, compensation payments could increase by up to 25 per cent! The new Labour government has enforced tougher requirements to take 'all reasonable steps' to prevent sexual harassment. How this will be interpreted remains to be seen, but it will be broader than current and previous laws. That means employers must be able to demonstrate they did all they could to prevent sexual harassment.

- **Human rights court action.** The Equality and Human Rights Commission (ECHR) could require employers enter a binding agreement. This would mean you would have to commit to the court to bring about change.

- **Damage to reputation.** Recent revelations about former Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed highlight what harassment actions can do to a business's reputation. Even though its former boss died in 2023, its current MD has been forced to publicly apologise for not doing enough to protect workers. The fallout is likely to continue to damage the company's reputation.

### What should I do?

You should be taking steps now to ensure you comply with new sexual harassment legislation from the first day of its implementation. If you haven't thought about it or are unsure about the laws, reach out to one of our experts today.

Some of the steps you can take to adhere to the Worker Protection Act include:

- **A sexual harassment policy.** You must have clear measures in place that set out a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and expectations of employees. Think about appointing a person who employees can report harassment claims to. This is similar to a whistleblower officer.

- **Provide training.** Consider arranging training for all staff about sexual harassment. This should outline expected standards of behaviour and how to report such cases.

- **Third party obligations.** This is a big part of the new legalisation: how do you protect your staff from third party suppliers? Adding obligations to contracts and creating a supplier's code of conduct will demonstrate a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment.

- **Carry out risk assessments.**

Demonstrating that you have considered scenarios where team members may be at risk of sexual harassment is essential. By carrying these out, you will become more aware of areas where such harassment might be more likely. You can then take steps to help prevent such cases.

### One size doesn't fit all

These are just a few examples of how your business can implement the new laws. But one size won't fit all. It makes sense to enlist the help of experts to take preventative steps for your business. You can speak to our experienced team today.

[shrewd-hr.co.uk](https://shrewd-hr.co.uk)



Annabel Graham

## Bridging the conflict gap

**‘They just irritate me’, ‘They go out of their way to be awkward’, ‘They are so obstructive’, ‘We just don’t get on’...and so on...**

**In my conversations with clients, the topic of tensions in the workplace nearly always crops up. It can be with team members, a line manager, stakeholders or customers. It manifests in the guise of underperformance, poor employee engagement, silo working, lack of accountability, resistance to change and back-channel politics. The bottom line is, it’s often making what that person is trying to achieve more difficult.**

The people we are referring to are those who we feel ignore us, don’t listen, have it in for us, criticise us, are running their own agenda, talking behind our backs or are just going out of their way to be as awkward as humanly possible.

Except this behaviour usually isn’t reality. This is just a story we keep telling ourselves, born out of the assumption that our version of the story is right, they are in the wrong, and more to the point, we’re on their mind every minute of the day. Reality? They aren’t

even thinking of us, they’ve got their own stuff going on and they are struggling too. They are in protect mode, winging it just like we are, and they are probably making similar assumptions about us.

Conflict is rarely discussed overtly in the workplace, yet it is at the heart of so many poor relationships and teams that aren’t functioning as well as they could be. Challenging this disconnect openly is normally avoided, and instead we see passive aggressive behaviours, people talking behind each others’ backs, cattiness and moaning. Sometimes I wish there would be a row; at least we’d know how people felt, and the cards would be on the table!

When these behaviours all become to much, then clients often reach out to me to help their team work together more effectively. What though can you do to stop things escalating in the first place? The starting point is to address the situation and reset expectations. Below is a framework to help you.

● **Recognise:** Firstly, recognise there is an issue, and that you are judging the other person’s behaviour without knowing their intention. We never do this of ourselves – we think about our intent. So this means you need to find out theirs.

● **Explore:** Next, set up a meeting with them and express your wish that you would like to explore how you can both work together more effectively. Simply opening with that line is a great starting point.

● **Acknowledge:** Together, acknowledge the situation, without judgement. Share your goals and priorities with each other, find out

what is important to each other, and discover how you both work at your best. Also find out what isn’t working for each party – again without judgement. Just listen to each other.

● **Create:** Next, create together what steps you both need to put in place to work together effectively. What do you need from each other, who will do what, and when will you feedback to each other. When doing this – discuss how do you both like to receive feedback. Finding this out can be very useful to stop future issues.

● **Try out:** Then, try out what you agreed. See it as an experiment, rather than something set in stone. That means you can tweak what your both doing and continue a dialogue, so things work for both parties.

● **Review:** Finally agree a date when you will review together how things have gone. Assess what worked, what didn’t and what you need to adjust. You won’t get things right first time, but if you’re prepared to see this as a work in progress, you can tweak as you go. These conversations will also help build your relationship with each other, which can only help in getting your more aligned. Guess what, you may even find you like each other!!

**Annabel is an Executive and Systemic Team Coach. She works with newly formed teams, teams with challenging mandates and stakeholder relationships, and teams in conflict across a number of industries. If you would value an exploratory discussion on how your team could work together more effectively, contact Annabel via LinkedIn, [annabel@successfultraining.co.uk](mailto:annabel@successfultraining.co.uk), or visit [www.successfultraining.co.uk](http://www.successfultraining.co.uk)**



“

*... I've known  
many people  
nurture ideas of  
suicide almost as  
an escape plan...*

# When there seems no other option

Suicide and mental health challenges are endemic factors for entrepreneurs as they are for the rest of the population. Dr David Cliff explores things we'd rather not talk about...

**The popular 1970's show M\*A\*S\*H had a lyric: 'suicide is painless, it brings on many changes'. I am sure the first statement may be incorrect and the latter true, although one is no longer aware of them at the time.**

The fact remains that suicide is still a significant phenomenon across society and no less in the entrepreneurial community. Indeed, this can be more so, as the isolation of being an entrepreneur, the fact that only around 15% of the population are natural leaders in the leader/follower continuum makes this a numeric inevitability. Additionally, factors including organisational dynamics, peer pressures, growth pressures, legal challenges, regulation, cashflow and dare we say the often-insensitive impact of our taxation systems, means that the average entrepreneur has to contend with a shed load of stress that many others do not shoulder. There are reams of academic papers that attest to the sheer isolation of the role.

It goes without saying then that many in this position endure stress over a long time, often neglecting their mental health, when others would be taking sick leave. Ultimately, crisis points can occur for people when there are simply no personal internal resources left for them to cope and they feel there is no-where to go anymore.

The Samaritans and others made a significant impact on the suicide rates across the population when the agency was conceived of many decades ago. That performance has not been emulated by the modern round of mental well-being processes, with access to counselling and the much-debated role of apps in mental health. Equally, NHS services seem to be well able to diagnose, then seem to be overstretched to treat and support many people. For many entrepreneurs, a simple face-to-face dialogue with someone who understands the journey and its vicissitudes can make an enormous difference to the challenges they are facing. This need is not always apparent when the business environment always requires us to remain positive and upbeat with stakeholders, staff and customers.

In my professional journey as a supporter of leaders, an organisational change specialist and as a psychotherapist, I do recognise that these issues surface a lot with people. What I find almost

universally, is when people feel they have reached the point of no return it is not that they want to end their existence, it is simply that they want the pain to stop and can conceive of no other strategy than to consider their own total end. I've known many people nurture ideas of suicide almost as an escape plan - "if things just get too much then I can....". This is a problem as it creates more tolerance of the intolerable because you always can do something else cataclysmic. But it is truly a poor plan "B". It leads to the danger that when stresses and problems don't abate the prospect of ending the pain can become so much closer to hand and indeed, more palatable.

But there are other ways, and it is important that entrepreneurs consider their own self-care, their own needs and the ability to talk and share, if not with trusted colleagues, then with a trusted advisor, professional, therapist or coach.

Suicide is very real in the entrepreneurial community. Alongside the neglect of mental health conditions, associated with it, is the increased morbidity i.e. physical sickness of people who might not consider actually taking their lives but suffer from somatisation, where disease attacks the body because the stresses of the mind are not being addressed.

It's a Gordian knot that we spend a lot of time working with people here at Gedanken. It's not one we shirk from when it presents. Equally we are business and personal growth specialists, and our key aim is to align people's individual goals and personal dreams and desires with the journey the organisation takes as well. This we feel is the most mentally healthy route one can take.

So do take care of yourself, business has its ups and downs. Economic conditions are not good for so many at present and yet many continue the upbeat pretence of never being busier! Denial, avoidance and the fear of seeing oneself as failing are the first stages on a slippery slope that can ultimately lead some to want to do something pretty radical and irreversible. Reaching out is the first step back. Do it!

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



Suzanne Barbour, Founder of Suzanne Barbour Coaching

# Learning how to manage your stress levels

The holiday season often brings a mixture of excitement and pressure, especially for business people balancing work and personal demands.

**The stress of deadlines, budgets, social obligations, and family commitments can leave us feeling overwhelmed and burned out. This is where International Stress Awareness Day, celebrated on the first Wednesday of November, provides a helpful reminder to prioritise our mental well-being.**

First, being aware of what stresses you and how—whether it's work pressure, social events, or financial concerns—can make it easier to manage. By pinpointing your stress sources, you can start applying strategies to cope better. Here are some of my favourites.

## 1. Set Realistic Expectations

Trying to finish all projects by year-end can create an unnecessary and excessive workload. Setting realistic goals, prioritizing tasks, and delegating can help prevent burnout. Remember, it's okay to say not right now to new projects. At home, let go of perfection. Enjoying time with loved ones is more important than everything being “just right.”

## 2. Time Management is Key

Effective time management is super helpful during the festive season. Block time for important tasks, minimize distractions, and maintain clear boundaries between work and personal time. Use calendars and lists instead of relying on memory to avoid late night worries about forgotten tasks. And if things don't go to plan, that's okay too.

## 3. Set a Budget for the Season

Financial stress can also escalate during the holidays. Set a budget for both work and home spending. Consider thoughtful, lower-cost gifts instead of expensive ones, and try to avoid last-minute spending.

## 4. Delegate and Collaborate

Remember that you don't need to do it all alone. Delegate tasks where possible, and don't hesitate to ask for help from colleagues

or family members. Sharing the load can significantly reduce stress.

## 5. Prioritize Self-Care

Amidst deadlines and holiday demands, make time for self-care. Short breaks during the day, exercise, and a good night's sleep can make a significant difference.

## 6. Manage Your Time Off

Switching off from work can be hard, especially for those in leadership roles. Set boundaries before the holiday period. Inform colleagues of your availability and turn off notifications. A proper break will help you return refreshed.

## 7. Reach Out for Support

Don't hesitate to reach out if you're feeling overwhelmed. Talking to a mentor, coach, or another trusted person can help lighten the load. Sharing concerns can ease emotional stress.

The holiday season can be joyful but also stressful, especially when juggling multiple responsibilities. By recognising stressors and applying practical strategies, you can manage stress more effectively, allowing you to enjoy the season with relaxing peace of mind.

***barbourcoaching.life***

# New Employment Rights Bill Impact

A conversation with  
People Spark Solutions

**With significant changes on the horizon from the Employment Rights Bill 2024, businesses across the North East are preparing to navigate a new regulatory environment.**

We sat down with experts from People Spark Solutions, a North East provider of leadership development and coaching, to discuss how organisations can enhance their recruitment strategies using psychometrics amidst the changes.

**As the UK introduces major employment reforms, including "day-one" rights and more stringent dismissal protections, what challenges do businesses face when hiring?**

*Scott Smith, MD at People Spark:* "The 2024 Employment Rights Bill introduces significant changes, particularly regarding unfair dismissal. Under the new law, employees will have protection from unfair dismissal starting from their first day on the job. This means businesses must ensure they are hiring the right candidates from the outset. This is where psychometrics can play a key role.

"Psychometric assessments are designed to provide objective measures of a person's psychological characteristics. They provide an objective way to evaluate candidates, not just in terms of skills, but also their personality, emotional intelligence, and ability to work in a team. With probation periods potentially being capped at nine months, as proposed under the new Bill, it's more essential than ever to get the right hire from the start."

**How exactly do psychometric assessments help businesses make better hiring decisions?**

*Vicky Arnold, Head of Organisational Development at People Spark:* "Psychometric testing adds a scientific edge to recruitment. These assessments provide data on how candidates might perform in a role or fit within a team. For instance, ability tests assess cognitive skills, which can be tailored to a specific role—whether that's numeracy for finance roles or abstract reasoning for creative positions.

"You can also use tools personality assessments, which can help predict how individuals are likely to perform at work, handle stress or engage with colleagues. This could be useful when considering flexible or remote working arrangements, now a default option under the new legislation. For



Scott Smith

example, candidates with high emotional intelligence could excel in environments requiring autonomy and self-regulation."

**Given the Bill's emphasis on workplace inclusivity, including addressing gender pay gaps, how do psychometrics promote fairness in the hiring process?**

*Scott:* "Psychometric assessments are intrinsically designed to be unbiased. They focus on the individual's capabilities and characteristics, rather than their background, gender, or age. This is crucial, not only to comply with the new legislation but also to support development of a more diverse and inclusive workplace.

**How can businesses begin integrating psychometrics into their recruitment process?**

*Vicky:* "Some of these regulatory changes could take years to implement, but businesses can use this time wisely

to prepare themselves and hone their recruitment processes with less pressure, ensuring they're ready when the time comes.

"The process starts with identifying your specific needs - are you looking to improve leadership? Strengthen team dynamics? Or maybe you need to ensure new hires can adapt to flexible working structures. Once you're sure of your priorities, the next step is selecting the right psychometric tools, whether it's personality profiling, predictive workplace behaviour or cognitive ability assessments.

"We work closely with organisations to design and deliver these assessments - and crucially, facilitate the interpretation of the results and giving of feedback. If you think your organisation could benefit from support implementing psychometrics, get in touch with us ([scott@peoplesparksolutions.co.uk](mailto:scott@peoplesparksolutions.co.uk)) for a no-obligation chat."

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



## Team challenges? It's not always a capability issue...

If you've found yourself frustrated at an underperforming team or team member, you're not alone. It's actually one of the most common conversations to come up when I talk to clients and business owners across the region.

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It's easy to think the problem lies with the people themselves—maybe they're not as capable or committed as you want them to be. And yes, there are times when someone isn't the right fit or doesn't have the right skills for the role. But what I hear too often is the automatic assumption that capability is to blame when it's actually the structure they're working in that's causing the issues.

*Helen Butler*

Even the most capable employees can't perform at their best without clarity of expectations, clear roles, defined responsibilities, and active management.

Getting your business to run like clockwork isn't just about having the right systems in place. When a team is involved, it also relies on their being an environment where everyone knows exactly what they're supposed to be doing and how their work fits into the bigger picture. The problem we often see is that many business owners believe they've provided this clarity when, in reality, their teams are still struggling with confusion and uncertainty, or simply have a different view of what is expected.

#### How it shows up...

When roles and responsibilities are unclear, or when you don't actively manage performance, a few things happen:

- **Confusion:** People start second-guessing what they should be doing. Without clear guidance, tasks fall off track.
- **Accountability Disappears:** When it's unclear who's responsible for what, things get missed.
- **Tension Between Team Members:** Overlapping roles lead to misunderstandings, creating friction between employees.
- **Low Morale:** When people don't know what's expected of them, they become demotivated, and productivity takes a hit.

You might think you've laid out roles and responsibilities, but what's clear in your mind may not be so clear to your team.

#### Setting expectations is just the start

Even when roles are defined, some businesses fall into the trap of thinking that's the job done. But that's just the beginning. You can't set expectations once and never revisit them.

What often happens is that when someone drifts from their responsibilities, the knee-jerk reaction is often to think they're not performing. But performance isn't something you manage once and walk away from. Like anything else in business, it requires regular attention—check-ins, feedback, and course correction. If your team, or a team

member, isn't clear on where they're going, or isn't aware that they're not delivering what you expect, how can you expect them to do better?

#### Building the Right Framework

To get the most out of your team, they need ongoing clarity and support:

**1. Clearly Define Roles:** Map out exactly what each person is responsible for. Ask them directly if they feel clear about their role.

**2. Set Boundaries:** Make sure everyone knows where their role ends and another begins. This helps avoid overlap and confusion.

**3. Check in Regularly:** As your business grows, roles may need to evolve. Revisit expectations regularly to ensure alignment.

**4. Stay Engaged:** Don't wait until things go wrong to give feedback. Regular check-ins keep everyone on the same page.

#### Talk to your team

One of the best ways to ensure your team feels clear on their roles is simply to ask them. You might think everything is obvious, but their perspective could be very different. Open conversations can help you uncover hidden issues that might be holding your team back, giving you the chance to address and resolve them before they become bigger problems.

If your team isn't performing, it's not always a capability. Taking a step back to assess whether you've set them up for success could make all the difference.

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“

**...Even the most capable employees can't perform at their best without clarity...**

# Why entrepreneurs find it easier to manifest

I love how manifestation has become so mainstream. I started learning about the Law of Attraction back in 2006 when Rhonda Byrne released the book *\*The Secret\**. Back then, there were only a handful of my friends who “got it.”

**Excitingly, it seems to have reached another level of mainstream acceptance now, with more people openly talking about it and admitting to having a vision board or manifesting something big (I’m all over this!!).**

If we break down what manifestation is, it’s the belief that we can create or attract something we desire—not just by thinking about it, but by taking aligned action. The key to this is belief: the belief that it’s possible. That’s where the magic happens—the universe aligns with us and helps make it happen.

For those working in entry-level jobs wanting to get to their next level or individuals running a side hustle they dream of turning into their main income, belief plays a HUGE role in what holds them back.

Let’s simplify this: if you believe you can’t achieve something, or if you feel like you’re not smart enough, good enough, or *\*anything\** enough, the minute things get tough, you’ll lean into that belief. You’ll start telling yourself a story about why it’s not possible for you, and eventually, you’ll give up.

But entrepreneurs are different. They’re focused on their end goal, and when challenges come up, they problem-solve and keep going. Why? Because they believe success is possible for them. It’s the same for people at the top of their game, like those in board-level positions. At some point, they believed it was possible to reach the next level—and they didn’t give up.

When you think about it this way, it seems simple.

This is why it’s so important to harness the mindset of entry-level people within a team.



Jude Daunt

If they don’t believe in themselves, they’ll likely get overwhelmed. They’ll feel like they can’t do something, sabotage their own efforts, and work below their full potential.

I know this from experience. When I didn’t believe in myself, I often felt like I wasn’t good enough. If I had a specific goal I wanted to achieve, I would procrastinate, skim-read information, and pretty much wing it. This led to mixed results. Even if I achieved something good, I’d still pick it apart, focusing on where I thought I messed up. And if something did go wrong? I’d beat myself up, believing it was because I wasn’t good enough.

When you believe you’re not good enough, you focus more on your ego than on the goal. You’re only half-focused on what you want to achieve, and because of that, you

don’t get the best results. You end up keeping yourself small, thinking it’s because you’re not enough.

But if you stay focused on the end result—like those who practice manifestation—you’ll keep working toward your goal. You’ll problem-solve along the way, and you’ll take aligned action, because at no point do you believe it’s not possible.

Imagine bottling that energy and giving it to everyone on your team.

**If you’re interested in becoming an Unbreakable Mindset Coach visit Unbreakable Mindset Academy [www.unbreakablemindsetacademy.co.uk](http://www.unbreakablemindsetacademy.co.uk)**

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*Ben Whitfield*

# Christmas festivities in Newcastle set to take a huge leap forward

*By Ben Whitfield, Director of Communications at NE1 Ltd*

The countdown to Christmas is well and truly underway in Newcastle. Festive plans and announcements are coming in thick and fast and seasonal pop-ups are starting to appear across the city.

**One of the most exciting developments in this year's festive calendar is the dramatic expansion of Newcastle's Christmas Markets. An entire festive Christmas Village is being created in Old Eldon Square, with the area completely transformed for Christmas.**

Traditional market stalls will be surrounded by a whole host of new family-friendly activities and seasonal experiences, transforming the area into a winter wonderland with lots of activities for families, including Elf Workshops, a Santa Stories Tipi, a performance stage for seasonal presentations and screenings, and a beautiful vintage carousel. Interactive and hands-on sessions including wreath-making masterclasses will be held alongside local crafters and makers selling their creations.

The new additions are designed to give families more reasons to visit, with more things for children to do at the market and in the city, one of the key recommendations from customer feedback in previous years.

Newcastle's Christmas Markets will also take up their customary position on Grey Street, with stalls surrounding another new festive addition, the city's own 'North Pole'. Positioned at the base of Grey's Monument, a series of luxury heated igloos will create a stunning installation and the swankiest spot for a festive pit-stop where visitors can sip mulled wine and nibble on a grazing board while enjoying the fabulous festive views down Grey Street and surrounding area. As well as looking amazing, the igloos will create a sensational seasonal experience for people to book a cosy dome and start a new festive tradition with friends and family.

With the Alpine-inspired Moosenwirt bar also returning to Grey Street for a third year, the area will be at the heart of the festive celebrations.

To deliver Newcastle's Christmas, NE1 will again be assisting Newcastle City Council, and local operators EVNT Inspirations, and together we have worked hard to scale up the festivities.

There is a huge appetite for Christmas celebrations in the city and region and tremendous potential to expand and improve the city's seasonal offer. Christmas is \*the\* key period for businesses in retail, hospitality and leisure and we are committed to creating and curating a high-quality, city-wide experience that celebrates and emphasises Newcastle's key strengths and distinctive attributes while showcasing some of its most iconic and innovative businesses.

Over 1,350,000 people visited the markets last year, generating a total spend of nearly £57 million and providing a huge boost for the city.

Regionally, Newcastle's Markets are a strong pull, with 60% of visitors travelling between 5 and 20 miles into the city centre, however, there is still scope to widen the catchment by providing an experience which draws visitors from across the country, something we know is possible.

Last year only 6% of visitors to the Markets were from outside of the region, compared to 52% in Edinburgh, which is renowned as one of the UK and Europe's top festive destinations.

Working with local operators and the City Council to expand the appeal of the Markets, and with local traders to populate the stalls, we are confident we can produce a Christmas experience in the heart of the city that is unique to Newcastle and unlike anything you'd find elsewhere.

It will take a lot of hard work, ambition, careful planning and buy-in from across the city, but this year, we've taken a big step in the right direction. We can't wait to unveil Newcastle's Christmas 2024 and to start the celebrations, knowing that this is just the start and we are already planning what we can do bigger and better for 2025 and beyond.

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



## Gingerbread Street: new initiative helps homeless this Christmas

Local businesses are being invited to join TV presenter George Clarke, homeless charity Oasis Community Housing and lots of gingerbread at The Biscuit Factory on 3 December 2024, as part of an exciting new event this Christmas: Gingerbread Street.

**The first of its kind in the region, Gingerbread Street is a gingerbread building competition with a difference. Local businesses will deploy their best amateur - or professional! - bakers and builders to create a gingerbread house, factory, shop or other everyday building.**

The confectionary constructions will be judged by architect and TV presenter George Clarke and head pastry chef at 21 Hospitality, Helen Doyle. All competition entrants will be invited to the exclusive judging event at The Biscuit Factory on 3 December.

All of the biscuity buildings will be displayed alongside each other to make up Gingerbread Street, an edible installation that will remain on display for families to visit throughout December.

Local schools will also be constructing small non-edible houses for the exhibition, thanks to workshops organised by George's

own charity, MOBIE (Ministry of Building, Innovation and Education).

Gingerbread Street is being coordinated by Gateshead-based Oasis Community Housing and sponsored by Lovell Homes, aiming to raise awareness of homelessness and the community that is needed to make people feel they have a home.

Oasis Community Housing's Chief Executive, Sarah Lister, explains: "Ending homelessness is about more than putting a roof over someone's head. Building community around people is at the heart of what we do, so every individual feels safe and like they belong. We wanted to bring that message to life and so, with a dusting of Christmas spirit, we have Gingerbread Street!"

"Already a project with real community support, we can't wait to see businesses' creations and the public's feedback to this exciting new event - which will help us



continue making life-changing differences to people facing homelessness across the region."

Spaces are still available to get involved in Gingerbread Street, with applications closing on 20 November 2024. All competition entry fees will go towards Oasis Community Housing's 'Giving a Home' Christmas Appeal and will also be doubled, thanks to the charity's partnership with the Big Give. Three plot sizes are available on the street, ranging from £400 to £1,000.

**To find out more about the competition, contact Hazel Ditchburn on 07869 283728 or visit [bit.ly/GingerbreadStreet](https://bit.ly/GingerbreadStreet)**

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## Behind every great man are hundreds of greater women - why I have always been an Ally

*"There is no limit to what we, as women, can accomplish."*  
— Michelle Obama

These powerful words resonate deeply with my life as a male ally, a son, a father, a husband, and a colleague. Supporting women, in every sense, has been a guiding force in my life. This is why I am delighted that we are helping launch Northern Business Women as part of ABC Awards and the broader Inclusion By Default Campaign. My journey to becoming an ally began with the first and most influential woman in my life—my late mother, Salim.

### A Tribute to My Mother: Salim's Legacy of Strength and Compassion

Growing up, my mother was the beating heart of our family. She wasn't just the one who nurtured us, but also the powerhouse behind our livelihood. Salim worked 18-hour days to make sure our needs were met, but it didn't stop there. Beyond providing for our family, she reached out into the community, inspiring countless others through her tireless work ethic and compassionate spirit. My mother wasn't the type to rest. She made sure the people around her—especially women—knew they could achieve more than they ever thought possible. She was an advocate for opportunity, a woman who broke boundaries and never sought recognition for it. Yet, her legacy lives on. I'm immensely proud that she is commemorated on the Destination Tyneside Wall at the Discovery Museum, a testament to her indomitable spirit and contribution to our region's history. Her story has shaped my own life and career, constantly reminding me of the importance of providing support, creating opportunities, and advocating for the rights of women. In every venture I've undertaken, my mother's influence has been ever-present, and I've tried to embody her values in my personal and professional life.

### Raising My Daughter: Becoming a Single Parent Ally

As I started to develop my career and progress in my roles, initially within a Call Centre and then with IT and Innovation, I faced the responsibility of raising my daughter as a single parent. Parenting can be one of life's most rewarding yet challenging tasks, and raising a daughter as a single father added an extra dimension to that. I wanted her to grow up knowing that she could achieve anything. More than that, I wanted her to believe in her own strength and resilience. Coming from my own experiences I recognised the power of education and secured a private education for Yasmin as early as I could afford to. Being a single father made me even more aware of the unique challenges women face in this world. I knew I had to support her not just as a father but as an advocate for her dreams. I took it upon myself to help her navigate societal expectations while ensuring she never felt limited by them. From her education to her career aspirations, I've strived to be the ally she deserves—always encouraging her to be unapologetically ambitious and strong.

### The Support of My Wife: Creating Space for Equality

Being a male ally doesn't just happen in the public sphere; it's deeply rooted in the relationships we build at home. My wife has been my unwavering supporter and partner in life. She has enabled me to dedicate myself to causes outside of our family—volunteering countless hours every week to help others and engage in community work. Without her belief in what I do and her willingness to shoulder the load, none of it would have been possible.

In return, I've always made it a priority to support her ambitions and choices. Equality in a relationship isn't just about sharing tasks—it's about encouraging each other to pursue personal goals and recognising the equal importance of each other's dreams. It's about recognising that, in many cases, women carry additional burdens—whether through societal expectations or gender norms—and it's our duty as men to alleviate and challenge those.

### My Younger Daughter and Granddaughters: Shaping the Future

Being given the privilege to become a father again for my 6-year-old daughter and the grandfather to three brilliant granddaughters, my role as an ally has only deepened. I see in them the promise of a future where gender equality is not a distant goal but a lived reality. Each of these young women embodies the traits I've worked to champion: resilience, intelligence, and kindness.

My relationship with them is one of mutual learning. They remind me of the progress we've made, but also how far we still have to go. They will inherit a world that is more equal than the one my mother lived in, but the fight for women's rights is far from over. I want to ensure that.

### Collaborating with Remarkable Women: A Lifelong Commitment

Throughout my career, I have been privileged to work alongside remarkable women across the public, private, and third sectors. Whether in a call centre where the vast majority of colleagues were women, in leadership roles or on the ground level, I've witnessed firsthand the incredible impact women can have when they are given the opportunity to lead and the support to succeed.

One of the most rewarding aspects of my professional journey has been supporting and mentoring women, helping to break down barriers and challenge the status quo. Whether collaborating with my own female led team to help launch the AWESome Campaign, supporting Simone Roche MBE as an advocate on Northern Power Women, championing the Lifted Project or working with a vast number of entrepreneurs and community leaders, including Brogan, Gill and Sharon to help launch this magazine, I've made it my mission to be a vocal and active supporter of women's rights and equality.

### The Progress of Women's Rights: Achievements and Challenges

In reflecting on my journey as a male ally, it's essential to consider the broader context of women's rights and gender equality. Over the past century, we've witnessed tremendous strides in women's rights. From gaining the right to vote to entering the workforce in unprecedented numbers, women have transformed society in countless ways. But the work is far from over. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report, it will take 132 years to close the gender gap globally. Women still face significant challenges, from the gender pay gap to underrepresentation in leadership roles. In the UK, women earn 15% less than men on average, and only 34% of board positions in FTSE 100 companies are held by women.

These figures remind me of the responsibility we all share in advancing gender equality. As men, we have a critical role to play—not as saviours, but as advocates and allies. Supporting women's rights isn't just about standing on the sidelines; it's about taking action, challenging discrimination, and working together to create a more inclusive world.

### A Commitment to a Better Future

The journey to becoming a male ally is ongoing. It's shaped by the women in our lives—mothers, daughters, wives, colleagues, and friends—who inspire us to do better. For me, it started with my mother, Salim, whose legacy I carry with me every day. It continues with my wife, my daughters, my granddaughters, and all the incredible women I've had the privilege to work with. But it's not just about the women I know. It's about creating a world where every woman can thrive. As men, we have a responsibility to support this change. By being allies, advocates, and supporters, we can help to ensure that the future is one where gender equality is not just an aspiration but a reality.



WINNER

### Kam Chera

Kam Chera is unique in the world of North East business, in so far as he has been successful across a whole range of industries. From catering and hospitality to the creative arts, ensuring that the Asian culture is platformed across the region.



WINNER

### Nicki Clarke OBE

Nicki has experience of working across numerous sectors – she's been involved with many different cultures and ways of doing business. She is an active Volunteer, Director, Trustee, was awarded an OBE in June 2022 for services to Business and Social Enterprise in the North of England.



WINNER

### Amit Bahanda

Amit Bahanda has over 15 years of Supply Chain expertise, part of Spice FM and ABC, has excelled in organising our Awards and championing our community inclusion campaign. His leadership and dedication drive successful project deliveries and community engagement.

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**Aman Chahal**

Aman Chahal is the dynamic CEO of TaperedPlus, a leading company in the UK flat roofing industry. Since co-founding the business in 2014, he has driven innovation, growth, and sustainability, positioning TaperedPlus as a national leader in tapered insulation solutions.



**Kevin Sung**

Bonded Agency is a pioneering digital and media solutions provider dedicated to achieving exceptional results through the power of connection. Guided by the mantra "Only Connect," the agency fosters deep relationships to create personalised, results-driven strategies for clients.



**Hasan Hamid**

Hasan is the Group Director of HQ Group, leading the company's diverse brands towards growth and innovation in the food and beverage and digital marketing sectors. Under his strategic guidance, brands like Burger Drop and Bubbl Tea Bar thrive, with plans for new launches like Is Doner.



**Wenyan Sharp**

Wenyan Sharp is the U.K. Marketing Director at SolaX Power, where she leads innovative marketing strategies for sustainable energy solutions. She also serves as an Enterprise Advisor for the North East Combined Authority and Director at Galaxy Industrial Supplies Ltd, showcasing her expertise across multiple industries.



**Williams Ali**

WilliamsAli was established in 2019 by Phil Williams and Abu Ali. They are committed to being a long-term, reliable and trusted presence in the North East market. The brand is synonymous with quality, success, and excellent outcomes.



**Reema Nayyar**

Reema Nayyar is the director and founder of Quantum Seven Law, a national conveyancing firm specializing in residential and commercial property transactions. Established in 2023, the firm has quickly gained a reputation for its high-quality service and dedicated team, becoming a trusted name in the conveyancing market.



**WINNER**

### Sneha Rachel Sam

Sneha Rachel Sam is the Co-Founder and COO of METS Technologies, UK, where she is revolutionizing education through technology in Maths, Engineering, Technology, and Science. Her leadership empowers others, making her a role model in traditionally male-dominated industries.



### Binu Kizhakail Skriah

From humble beginnings in Kerala, India, to becoming a successful entrepreneur in the UK, Mr. Binu Kizhakail Skriah's journey is a true testament to resilience, hard work, and the pursuit of dreams. Growing up in a financially struggling family, Binu had only one school uniform and little in the way of material wealth. However, he was rich in ambition and determination



**WINNER**

### Uma Malhotra

Uma Malhotra is the dynamic Managing Director of Cover Beauty, a thriving enterprise with six successful beauty businesses. Her inspiring journey from Wolverhampton to leading a multicultural team of over 35 employees in the North East showcases her resilience, vision, and commitment to women's empowerment and inclusivity.

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**Abu Ali**

Abu Ali, co-founder of WilliamsAli Corporate Finance, has made a significant impact on the North East business community since establishing the Newcastle-based corporate finance boutique in January 2019 alongside his business partner, Phil Williams. They specialize in mergers and acquisitions (M&A) and funding advice.



**Dr. Muhammad Wakil Shahzad**

Dr. Muhammad is an Associate Professor and Head of Subject in the Mechanical and Construction Engineering Department at Northumbria University. He is a globally recognized expert in water generation and circular economy, holding endorsements from the UK Royal Academy of Engineering under the Global Talent program.



**Bhuvnesh Majupuria**

Bhuvnesh is a Chartered Certified Accountant and qualified Insolvency Practitioner, serving as a Restructuring Director at a national business advisory firm. He plays a vital role in mentoring and training within his team, and is actively involved in the local community as a school governor and through professional networking initiatives.



**Ahmed Eqab**

Ahmed's career in the UK began in a local computer shop, leading to a role at EDS as a service desk agent for the DWP. Over 20 years, they managed large-scale technology programs across multiple industries, including healthcare, retail, utilities, and government sectors, with expertise in IT strategy, business transformation, and project management.



**Rizwan Shahid**

Rizwan is a dedicated professional with a strong focus on inclusivity and community empowerment. With extensive experience in tech recruitment across the North East and Yorkshire, Rizwan has launched numerous initiatives aimed at increasing opportunities for underrepresented communities.



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WINNER

### Sajda Nawaz-Bhatti

Sajda Nawaz-Bhatti is the Head of Policy & Performance at Newcastle City Council, recognised for her exemplary leadership and commitment to advancing public service. With over 5 years in her role, she has significantly improved service delivery and community engagement through strategic policy development.



### Samuel Ubanatu

Samuel Ubanatu is a dynamic leader whose career is marked by significant roles and contributions across various sectors. As the Child Workforce Director and Board Trustee at the Northbourne Youth Initiative, a Northeast Youth Charity, Samuel has played a pivotal role in shaping the lives of young people.



### Saira Usman

Saira has had a career centered around customer service, making the happiness and comfort of others a core part of her identity. However, in October 2021, she sought fulfillment beyond her job and began dedicating her personal time to making a difference in the community.



### Khaled Musharraf

Khaled Musharraf is a dedicated community leader and the first Green councillor for Elswick, Newcastle, having secured 1,190 votes in the recent local election. He is a dedicated leader in community development, political advocacy, and sustainability, with extensive experience as an Independent Consultant and a commitment to social causes.



WINNER

### Akmal Ahmed

Akmal Ahmed is a Leading Aircraft Engineering Technician (LAET) in the UK Navy, specialising in the maintenance and operational readiness of the advanced F35 Lightning II aircraft. As a trailblazer for the South Asian community, he excels in a highly technical role, ensuring mission success and mentoring junior technicians.





### Neeraj Sharma

Neeraj Sharma is a trailblazer in the charity world and a fierce advocate for neurodiversity. Born and raised in the North East of England to parents who ran a corner shop, Neeraj's deep sense of community and entrepreneurial spirit were instilled early. His journey into leadership started young, with a knack for taking on responsibility and a hunger for making real change.



### Indian Association North East

As an anchor organisation, IANE has established itself as a vital force in the North East, uniting various cultural groups and serving as a beacon for cultural awareness, inclusion, and education. Their dedication to organising large-scale, impactful events has cemented their place as a leader in community engagement.



### Alosh K. Jose

Alosh K. Jose, founder of Cricketqube, has dedicated himself to making cricket more accessible in the UK, particularly for underserved ethnic minority communities and older adults in the North East. A passionate cricketer from India, Alosh's work has positively impacted community health and well-being, with Cricketqube engaging over 1,000 participants annually.



### Westerhope Convenience Store

Westerhope Convenience Store exemplifies the spirit of community support and generosity, making it a standout candidate for the Public Sector Award. This local establishment has become a cornerstone of compassion and aid in its area, demonstrating a profound commitment to serving those in need.





**Dr Sreejith Raveendran**

Dr Sreejith is an Assistant Professor/ Senior Lecturer in Biotechnology at the School of Health and Life Sciences, Teesside University, UK. Dr Sree leverages advanced bio-nanotechnological platforms to create novel nanotherapeutics targeting cancers, explicitly focusing on endocrine-related cancers and glioblastoma.



**Aisha Purvis**

Aisha is the visionary behind Sensmart Ltd., a pioneering company in the health-tech sector. With over ten years of managerial experience and a background in healthcare, Aisha launched Sensmart to address critical issues in clinical nutrition.



**Meena Arora**

Meena Arora is a distinguished Global Medical Affairs Drug Development Scientist working as Vice President Global Medical Affairs and Research and Development focussed on Cancer Research. She has over two decades of experience in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors.



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# abc AWARDS 2024

THE MOST INCLUSIVE CELEBRATION IN THE NORTH EAST

## FURTHER HONORARY AWARD WINNERS

CONNECT, SUPPORT AND PROMOTE - #INCLUSIONBYDEFAULT



WINNER

### Ash Aggarwal Lifetime Achievement Award

Ashok has dedicated over 40 years to serving the NHS as a pharmacist and business owner, leading 15 pharmacies under the Ashchem Chemists banner. Known for his inspirational leadership, humility, and unwavering commitment to his community, Ashok's work has had a lasting impact on healthcare across the North East of England.



WINNER

### Surbhi Vedhara Northern Business Woman Award

Surbhi is a Managing Partner at Sweeney Miller Law. With over 14 years of experience in commercial property, Surbhi's leadership and client-focused approach have made her a standout in the legal community.



WINNER

### SBV LAW: Bhavesh Vasa Peoples Choice Award

Bhavesh Vasa, originally a criminal lawyer in Mumbai, pursued a Master's in International Commercial Law at Northumbria University in 2004, enhancing his commitment to providing top legal services in the UK.





WINNER

## Zoë Hingston

Zoë is a dedicated advocate for diversity, equality, and inclusion with roles across policing, arts, sports, and education. From the first female chair of the Police Ethnic Minority Association to Head of EDI at Newcastle University, she strives to create equitable spaces and uplift underrepresented voices in the North East.



WINNER

## Show Racism The Red Card

Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC) is the UK's leading anti-racism educational charity, dedicated to combating racism and promoting inclusivity through impactful educational initiatives. Founded in 1996 by Shaka Hislop, SRtRC engages over 50,000 individuals annually, driving positive change through football.



WINNER

## Durham Miners Association

The Durham Miners' Association (DMA) is a symbol of solidarity and community, championing working-class values. Through events like the Durham Miners' Gala and services for retired miners, the DMA fosters inclusion and continues to uphold its proud legacy.



WINNER

## Fiona Surrey

Fiona Surrey founded FSM Ltd., a social enterprise using technology to drive social impact. After a career in retail management and tech training, she now helps businesses develop tools to measure social impact aligned with ESG standards and enhance brand campaigns.



WINNER

## Sunderland University

The University of Sunderland, committed to Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Responsibility (EDISR), recently launched an Institute for Economic and Social Inclusion. Its strategy integrates inclusivity across all student and staff experiences, promoting a supportive environment.



WINNER

## John McDonald

John McDonald is a seasoned Disability Consultant with over 20 years of experience in the healthcare sector. Following his diagnosis of bowel cancer and hydrocephalus in 2016, John underwent treatments that resulted in challenges related to fatigue and balance. Despite these, he has developed coping strategies that allow him to lead a fulfilling life both personally and professionally.



WINNER

## The Special Lioness

Founded in 2017 by two mums of children with life-limiting conditions, The Special Lioness is a charitable organisation that provides support and solidarity to families facing similar challenges. Offering a welcoming community for parents and carers, they focus on creating lasting memories and joyful experiences for families navigating difficult circumstances.



WINNER

## Stephen Lewis Elms

Stephen Lewis Elms is a trailblazer in community leadership and inclusion, making history as the first person of Windrush descent, the first Jamaican, and the first Black individual to be elected in Sunderland. His groundbreaking election in 2024 marked a significant milestone for the city, reflecting his dedication to representing diverse communities and championing inclusivity.



WINNER

## Dialogue Society

The Dialogue Society is a registered charity dedicated to fostering dialogue and understanding between diverse communities. Established in 2020, the North East Branch has organized over 50 large-scale community events, engaging more than 5,000 individuals. Their initiatives, including Community Christmas Events, Iftar and Diversity Dinners, and Cultural Awareness Days.



WINNER

## NUFC Foundation

The Newcastle United Foundation is dedicated to promoting inclusivity and community engagement through sport and education in the North East of England. As the charitable arm of Newcastle United Football Club, the Foundation creates opportunities for positive change, focusing on education, health, and community involvement.



## EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES, FOSTERING INCLUSION

ABCConnexions is driven by a simple but powerful goal: to **connect, support, and promote** the minority and wider communities across the North East and beyond. Since 2009, we've championed equality, diversity, and inclusion through our wide-reaching programs, helping individuals and businesses thrive in an ever-changing landscape.

Our mission is to ensure that every person and every business regardless of background has the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Whether through business support, skills development, or community engagement, we are dedicated to making a real difference.

### Our Impact:

- Over 13,890 businesses supported and counting
- Helped launch over 1,000 start-ups
- Helping create 6,000+ jobs across the region
- Helped raise over £600,000+ raised for charities.
- Training and upskilling over 11,520 individuals

With a wide range of initiatives, from our Inclusion By Default campaign and Roundtables to our ABCurry Club, we are working to create a more inclusive, innovative future for the North East.

# THANK YOU TO ALL OUR SUPPORTERS...

Thank you all of our supporters, especially The Grand Hotel Gosforth who helped to make this event such a success again this year. It truly was wonderful to see so many people together in one room, having fun and celebrating together.

ABCConnexions goes beyond the awards ceremony. We would be delighted to have you as part of our special community and become more meaningfully engaged in our shared ambition of making the North East the most inclusive region in the UK by the end of 2025.

**Inclusion**  
**'By Default'**

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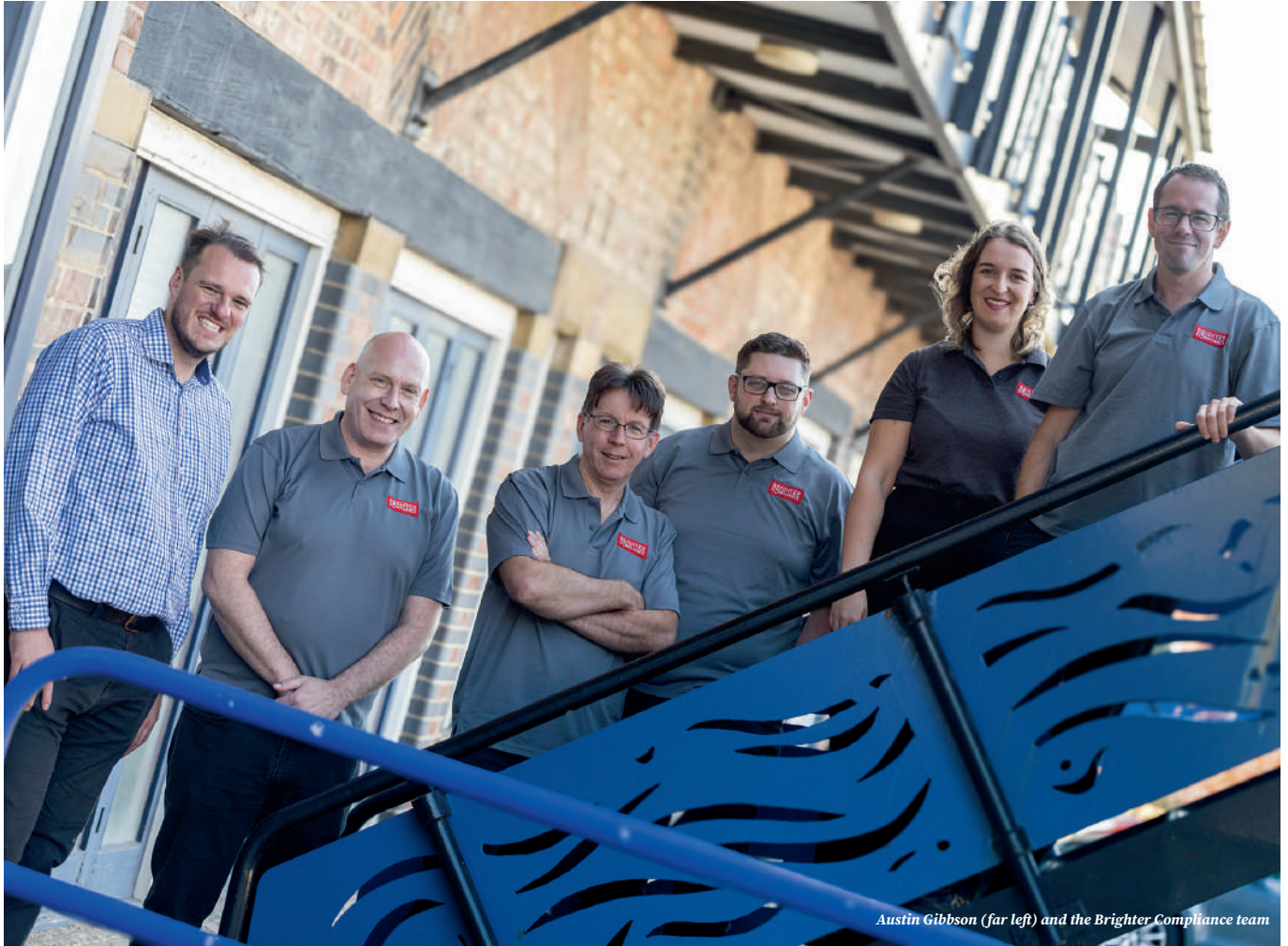


ABC Awards Official Photographer:  
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Tracy  
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For more information about ABCConnexions, the ABC Awards 2025, our Inclusive Innovation Framework, please visit:  
[www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)

# The future is bright for compliance company as they launch innovative new software



Austin Gibbons (far left) and the Brighter Compliance team

North Tyneside based Brighter Compliance is leading the way in ISO management systems as they introduce their flexible and convenient 'ISO Hub' software.

**With a team of industry-leading compliance experts within the business, the company supports clients looking to gain and maintain ISO and PAS standards. The new software will enable those clients to easily manage their documentation, processes and quality management systems.**

Launched in 2020, the business has experienced considerable growth, now employing eight full-time members of staff along with utilising the knowledge and experience of consultants throughout the UK.

Providing a range of services including ISO and PAS support, internal auditing, fire

door inspections and fire and legionella risk assessments, the team are delighted to bring their new ISO Hub software to the market.

Managing Director, Austin Gibbons, who has over 10 years experience within compliance consultancy, commented, 'As businesses look to gain competitor advantage, improve efficiencies and tender for lucrative local authority and private sector contracts, they increasingly find themselves entangled in a web of complex standards, regulations and audits.

Maintaining compliance, particularly with ISO standards, can be both time-consuming and resource intensive, our ISO Hub software is designed to streamline and simplify the process of adhering to the internationally recognised standards.

With three flexible packages available, starting from only £95 a month, the software is ideal for businesses that have expert internal consultants or for those requiring extra support with regard to management reviews, document design and training.

At its core, the software addresses a significant pain point for businesses: the

complexity of managing ISO standards. Whether it's ISO 9001 for quality, ISO 14001 for environment, ISO 45001 for health & safety or ISO 27001 for information security, each standard has its own unique set of requirements.

Companies often struggle to keep up with updates, document control, internal audits and corrective actions which is where ISO Hub can be seen as a game-changer in consolidating all ISO related tasks into a single platform.'

Austin continued, 'Our team have collaborated closely with IT experts and our clients to ensure the software is user-friendly and accessible for varying levels of technical expertise. Unlike other compliance management tools that can be overwhelming, ISO Hub's layout is intuitive, customisable and can be tailored to the client's needs.

We're looking forward to implementing the software for our clients to improve efficiencies and maintaining the high standards that ISO certification bring.'

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

# Don't let your fire safety go up in smoke!

ProFire Safety and Training will help you stay safe...and legal.



**Fire is a tricky beast. Anyone who has witnessed an out of control fire can't help but to have been terrified by the speed in which flames can spread and intensify.**

Sadly, hardly a week goes by without news relating to a house or apartment block fire where some people have been hurt. There are fires at schools or factory units where the buildings can be lost with devastating consequences. As well as the potential for fatalities, fires can cause massive disruption to employees, families, transport...some companies won't be able to continue trading...and for a lot of people their lives will never be the same again. A 2020 government study estimated the total economic and social costs of fire at £12bn for the year.

"People who live in an apartment block, stay in a hotel or work in a factory, shouldn't need to worry about fire safety," said ProFire MD Will Fatherley. "It should be an automatic guarantee that a building is safe and the people who maintain it are competent to carry out their duties. Accidents will always happen in the home, workplace, school, etc, but if a fire does break out, will trained staff be there to help and will the precautions and systems be in place to prevent loss of life or loss of the building?"

If a fire breaks out and there isn't someone around who knows what to do...why?

Have the people who live or work there been told what to do in the event of a fire...if not, why not?

If there is wrong or insufficient safety systems in place...why?

If mistakes were made during construction...why?

And who is ultimately responsible?

"These are questions that need to be answered because every primary fire will have some sort of investigation from the fire service, police and / or insurance companies. For every fire the bottom line is there is a reason why that fire started, why it possibly got out of control; and why people may have been hurt. Then in the aftermath of that fire the why, potentially, laws or regulations may have been broken and procedures not followed correctly.

Here at ProFire Safety and Training we operate as a consultancy to help companies avoid fires in the first place by showing what needs to be done and what measures should be in place. We'll train the people who will help in the event of a fire and also help you stay within the law and keep your staff and customers safe.

We have an incredibly experienced team. The vast majority of them have served in the fire service and have racked-up decades of working on fire prevention as well as attending fires and witnessing the very real consequences. They've worked on fires of all sizes and seen how quickly the flames and smoke can get out of control....but they've also witnessed how easy it would have been to either stop the fire starting in the first place or what could have been done to stop it spreading."

So...what can ProFire Safety and Training do for you and your company?

To start with they will visit your premises and make an assessment of what's already in place and what needs to be done. ProFire work across all building types from schools (they currently have 80 of them on their books), factories, care homes, warehouses, hotels, apartments and power stations. They work with clients who own old established buildings; they work with new builds and they now work closely with architects to ensure that property is going to be safe from concept to occupation.

They'll train all of the staff to ensure that key people know what to do and what measures should be taken in the event of an emergency. Providing the tools to implement a safe and viable and evolving fire safety strategy.

"We're now busier than ever. Last year our turnover rose by 35 percent. We now have a fulltime team of 12 and expect that to grow over the next year. We are also working more and more on a long-term basis with customers. We regularly visit their businesses and keep staff fully trained and up to date as well."

Interested? You should be because many of you reading this will have a legal responsibility to ensure the safety of employees, customers and residents.

Contact Will and his team at ProFire and they'll show how they can keep staff safe and keep you on the right side of the law.

**Email enquiries@pro-firesafety.co.uk or call 0191 516 6106. You can also visit them at Unit 81-83T, Riverview, North East Business and Innovation Centre, Wearfield, Sunderland, SR5 2TA. You can also find out more information by visiting their excellent website...www.pro-firesafety.co.uk**





*Will Fatherley*

# 5,000 Newcastle Pensioners could be 'missing out' on Attendance allowance

7,090 Newcastle pensioners with health issues are receiving AA - 293 in Kenton, but 5,000 more could be "missing out" on this non-means-tested benefit aimed at those aged over 66. Nationally, 1.1m eligible older people are not claiming AA according to recent research by the think tank Policy Into Practice.

**AA is a benefit that helps older people with disabilities, illnesses, mental health conditions or long-term health problems who need support with personal care or supervision.**

The weekly £72.65 money helps those pensioners to stay independent at home, or for other type of assistance.

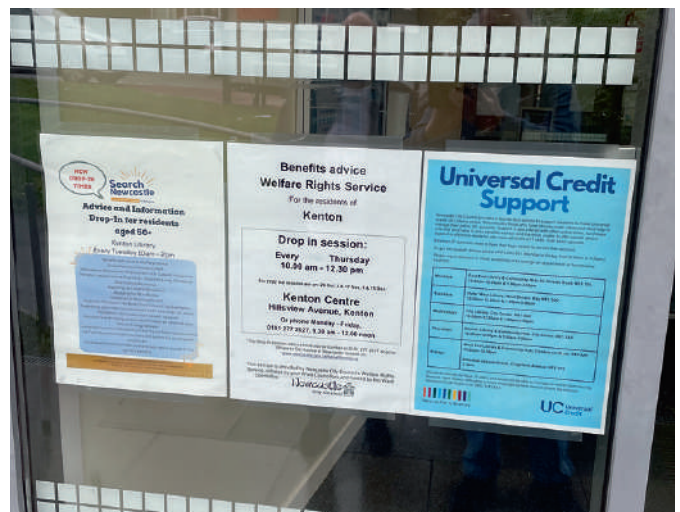
Coun Stephen Lambert, Ged Bell and Paula Maines said: "We've helped a number of older residents with AA application forms and believe hundreds more in Kenton could be 'missing out' with an estimated 5,000 across the city not claiming it. AA is one of the most 'under-claimed' benefits in England with 1.1million missing out on up to £5.2 billion a year according to Policy Into Practice. This is often due to misconceptions around what it is and who qualifies."

Residents need to be of pensionable age - over 66. Income is irrelevant. AA is not means-tested. Residents need to have a condition that means they need 'help' or 'supervision' with day-to-day activities including help getting washed, eating, using the toilet and help informing carers that they need to be understood. What many people

don't realise is that they don't need to actually be receiving this help or supervision. What's important is that older people may think they need help due to the seriousness of the health condition.

AA is a non-means tested benefit and many pensioners rightly claim it if they have long-term health related conditions. But many don't in spite of the cost of living crisis. Eligible older people can spend the money however they like such as paying fuel bills, getting meals delivered, covering taxi costs and equipment in the home to enable them to stay independent.

**It's important that older people claim AA. They can get help by contacting Age UK, The Search Project, Citizens Advice Newcastle or the council's welfare rights services.**



The continued adventures of...

# Ziggy and Cally!



Hi everyone, the nights are drawing in and it is getting cold. I really feel it in my old bones and have to wear a coat when I go out. I tend to spend more time by the fire now and Cally does most of the running around. Cousin Dexter is coming for a sleepover this weekend so looking forward to that. See ya.

**Q. Can you suggest any safe woodworm fluid for an attic which has worm holes? We would be concerned for our children's health particularly. We have installed modern Velux windows and need to protect these from any live woodworm. What would you suggest?**

**A.** I cannot recommend any woodworm fluids. They are all nerve poisons. Your worm holes are probably many years old. They are actually 'flight holes' of the adult beetles leaving

the wood. There is no justification for using insecticides unless you have definitive evidence that there is a continuing active infestation, and that this cannot be dealt with by normal construction methods, i.e. central heating and ventilation. Your new Velux windows are unlikely to be affected by wood-boring insects – the timber in them is kiln-dried and sealed with a water-based varnish.



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through my Dad's good pal Michael at Northern Insight on micahael@northern-insight.co.uk



# Champions of North East Business

The purpose of Durham Business Group is to support and champion businesses, and business people, in the North East of England – building relationships, fostering collaboration, and celebrating success.

Established in 1981 as a non-profit organisation to support small businesses, our range of members and clients now embraces everything from one-person start-ups to large corporates, but our focus on promoting North East business – and the values that inspire what we do – remain unchanged.

“What a privilege it is to be part of this incredible business group - quite an exceptional event made more special with the genuine friendships. Simply wonderful!”

Jan Dale, Director, Urban Base



Executive Group members at Ad Gefrin

**Celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2024, The Executive Group brings together North East senior directors and decision-makers in a relaxed, non-sales environment.**

We hold regular lunch events in stunning and unique venues across the region, with an emphasis on creating trusted long-term relationships. Membership is capped at 50 companies, to allow those connections between peers to deepen and flourish.



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We have a modern, comfortable coworking area with hot desks for hire at our Portland House HQ in Durham, DH1. Occupying a bright and dedicated area within our refurbished upstairs office suite, they're perfect if you're looking for a safe, welcoming and flexible place to work, away from the dining table. While you're here working with us, you benefit from free on-site parking, and inclusive access to tea, coffee and wi-fi – at the same time as being part of a vibrant and diverse business community.

Contact Alison Gittins, CEO Durham Business Group • [alison@durhambusinessgroup.co.uk](mailto:alison@durhambusinessgroup.co.uk) • [www.durhambusinessgroup.co.uk](http://www.durhambusinessgroup.co.uk)

# World Mental Health Day

How to approach mental health & wellbeing in the workplace every day of the year.

**Open LinkedIn on any given day, and you'll see it is awash with heartfelt posts about mental health, mindfulness talks, and yoga in the boardroom – but amid a burnout epidemic, where should we as business leaders focus our mental health efforts to truly support our teams?**

In the current economic climate, it is more important than ever for businesses to adopt sustainable models for business resilience and growth. To achieve amazing results, companies have to take an honest look at their team culture and walk the talk, not just talk on websites and social media channels. True culture is more than the perks that you offer; it's how psychologically safe your people feel within the organisation, and that's what delivers results.

In general, people are feeling pretty beaten up at the moment. The cost-of-living crisis, the negative news cycle and increased stress at work are really affecting people and it can feel difficult to press pause and regroup. It is our role as leaders to create the space that supports colleagues to find a way out of that mindset and give them a chance to reflect and reconnect with colleagues again in a meaningful way.

We're right in the middle of burnout epidemic, and the best way to beat burnout is to prevent it in the first place by creating a thriving team. But how?

- **Create vitality** - to put it simply, give people a sense that what they are doing on a daily basis makes a difference.

- **Growth through learning** - while learning can also give a competitive skills advantage, it also sets in motion a virtuous cycle; people who are developing their abilities are likely to believe in their potential for further growth.

Vitality without learning will be fun (for a while) but certainly won't achieve business goals and will quickly become tedious to a motivated and ambitious workforce. A culture solely focused on learning, without



Ivan Hollingsworth

vitality, will lead to burnout. Fostering a culture that embraces both will enable your people and your organisation to truly thrive.

Although many firms offer positivity initiatives and mental health benefits to attract talent, surface-level perks like wellness apps or pizza Fridays don't address deeper level issues in the workplace. So what can businesses do to meaningfully address these issues?

## 2. Consider skills that you need to develop in your management team

There are three attributes to look for in good managers and leaders, and all of these are trainable; a listener, a collaborator, and a coach. Listening is crucial in leadership, especially if we want to understand the needs of our diverse workforce. By truly listening, we can better understand the differences within the team and listen with an intent to understand and develop.

## 3. Go beyond the mindfulness app

When we are in a state of stress we are trapped in a fight, flight, or freeze response and our ability to collaborate and innovate is inhibited. Research from Oxford University

shows that there is a direct correlation between businesses that take wellbeing and employee happiness seriously and increased profits, valuation, and how well they perform on the stock market.

## 4. Focus on meaningful connection and trust

When we trust our teammates we are much more likely to be authentic, collaborate, and ask for help if we need it. Take the time regularly and consistently to check in with their people, not just about how they are at work but how they are more broadly in their lives.

Taking two minutes to show some kindness is hugely underrated when it comes to leadership and people in positions of power and I hope the theme of 'Mental Health in the Workplace for this year's World Mental Health Day 2024 is a catalyst for this to change in workplaces in the coming years.

**Get in touch with Ivan at [ivan@centric-consultants.com](mailto:ivan@centric-consultants.com) to talk about how you can have meaningful conversations about mental health and wellbeing in your business.**

# The UK lost 86 million workdays due to migraines, costing the economy a whopping £1 billion!

**Migraine sufferers can miss more than 16 workdays annually and affect one in seven people in the UK. Research undertaken by the National Migraine Centre suggests more than 50% of those with chronic migraine feel their employers are not supportive of their condition.**

Caring for patients with migraines and chronic headaches is a common symptom for those under chiropractic care. Poor posture and back pain can also lead to migraines. At Gosforth Family Chiropractic, over 35% of our patients seek help for low back pain.

Employee burnout is at its peak, so for employers, prioritising health and wellbeing is a priority. Embracing chiropractic gives you strategic advantage, embracing a move that rewards and motivates your team, potentially prevents absenteeism, and cultivates a positive workplace culture. It signals a commitment to staff wellbeing, driving productivity and profits by unlocking your team's potential.

For employees - imagine relief from the tension that haunts your back, neck, and shoulders. Envision fewer headaches and improved concentration without the mental fog. Chiropractic care revitalises energy levels, stimulates feel-good hormones,



reduces stress, and enhances efficiency.

Based near Regent Centre in Gosforth, Newcastle, Dr Jacob Palmer DC, uses a variety of techniques to treat conditions that impact the nervous system and can help you with musculoskeletal issues you may have tried to heal through alternate methods. Our Chiropractic adjustments fine tune the nervous system to work in harmony with the

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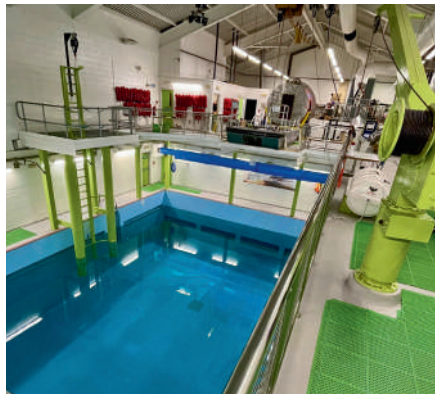
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 central

# South Shields Marine School is the oldest nautical training school in the world

South Shields Marine School is a world-renowned centre of excellence for marine education and training. Founded in 1861, the internationally renowned marine school offers a variety of commercial marine courses from short to Honours degree level.



“

*...South Shields Marine School is the oldest nautical training school in the world, with students from across the North East, UK and 113 different countries internationally. We are proud to say that we significantly boost the economy in the region and will continue to do so...*

*Simon Ashton, Principal of South Shields Marine School.*

“

*...By understanding the training needs of the marine shipping industry, we have expended and enhanced all our simulation systems to include fully integrated Bridge, Engine, VTS, DP, and GMDSS simulation...*

*Jon Milner - Head of School, Deck Officer Certification, South Shields Marine School.*

[www.southshieldsmarineschool.com](http://www.southshieldsmarineschool.com)  
[SSMS@tynecoast.ac.uk](mailto:SSMS@tynecoast.ac.uk)



“

*...Our Marine and Offshore Safety Training (MOST) centre offers every training course required to work at sea, including a multi-million pound environmental pool capable of recreating the harshest weather conditions any seafarer could face...*

*Michael Speers, Head of School for MOST at South Shields Marine School.*



L-R: Jon Milner, Simon Ashton, Chris Gray





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## Kindness makes its mark on the Clean & Tidy Home Show

The domestic market is driven by the need to keep up with trends from the must have theme of the season to having a sparkly clean home.

### Homes that are Instagrammable!

It is one of the biggest influencer markets with high-profile individuals aligning themselves with home brands and delivering their own ranges and products.

The global household cleaning market is valued at \$362bn and the global market size for home furnishing is \$948bn.

Hugely valuable in a monetary capacity.

But! At the cost of something far greater.

When it comes to its impact on people and planet, the industry is significantly damaging.

Furniture and decoration consumption has joined the fast fashion scene. Made from fabrics and materials that damage the environment in its production that live for many years in landfill negatively impacting the eco-system. As with all fast markets, the abuse of humans is significant, equivalent to modern-day slavery.

Cleaning products and décor are fuelled by harsh chemicals that not only harm wildlife, nature and the environment but are toxic to human life; they cause illness from lung conditions to skin conditions and play absolute havoc with our hormones, and gut bacteria. And this is before we get to the level of plastic involved.

So, I was delighted to take Kind Currency to the show in London Excel to disrupt the conversation in the sector, inspire change, provide support and knowledge for people to make conscious choices and champion the kind brands at the event.

I was joined by industry experts on the panel for Sustainable Living: Choices for a Thriving Home, Community, and Planet:

- **Sarah Green of Borro** – a children's clothing rental platform.
- **Sophia Lorimer of Fine-Tuned Wardrobe** – a sustainable stylist that empowers women.

- **Helena Mansell-Stopher of Products of Change** – building circular economic business models.

Sharing with the audience the need for creating homes and lifestyles that are sustainable, that build better communities and protect the future.

It was truly wonderful to see kind brands from our community such as Composty, amongst the big unethical players in the industry. With a footfall of 16k and an international reach of over 100k, it was a fantastic platform to inspire kind action.

Huge thanks to the welcoming hand from Clean & Tidy Home Show and kindness of the Founder Penny for bringing kind businesses and the conversation for kind action into the space. With nearly four million tonnes of plastic waste from the domestic market going into landfill every year in the UK alone. With one tonne of plastic waste creating 2.9 tonnes of carbon emissions, our homes have a big part to play in easing the climate and human crisis.

Are you a business wishing to do more to protect people and the environment but need a helping hand, Kind Currency makes it easy and simple to do your little bit.

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

# Businesses put their heart into the community



**Three North Tyneside businesses have been recognised for their significant contributions to the local community, as finalists for the prestigious Heart of the Community Award, part of the annual North Tyneside Business Awards.**

**The award celebrates businesses that have made a meaningful difference in the area, with nominees selected by members of the public.**

The finalists, North East Nipple Project from Wallsend, The Willow Chippy in Wallsend, and I Love North Shields in North Shields, were shortlisted by the Business Forum's management group after reviewing dozens of nominations from the community. The

winner will be announced at the North Tyneside Business Awards ceremony on 14th November at the Village Hotel.

Each of the finalists were nominated by members of the public and each has contributed significantly to local people in their area.

The North East Nipple Project based at Wallsend Town Hall was founded by Megan Jones and Amanda Patterson and offers realistic areola tattoos at no charge to those who have undergone breast cancer surgery. "We help restore confidence," said Megan. "This treatment is often the beginning of a fresh start, and we're incredibly proud to be nominated."

"We give up time every month to run the project and it's lovely to know we are making a difference to someone's life with our work," added Amanda.

Wallsend's Willow Chippy is known for its commitment to the community. Gary Little, along with his sons Andy and Michael, supports numerous initiatives, from grassroots football to providing meals for the homeless. "We're overwhelmed by this

nomination. Our focus has always been to give back to the community, and this recognition means so much to us," said Gary.

I Love North Shields was created by Simmie Harper and is a local magazine highlighting the unseen faces and stories of North Shields. It's gained significant community support and Dutch born editor and founder Simmie who moved to North Shields in 2023, says, "This nomination is an honour. It's been incredible connecting with the community and sharing stories that often go unnoticed. I feel privileged to represent such a wonderful town."

Michael James, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, said, "This award is very special as it comes directly from the people who benefit and use these businesses. Every one of them is already a winner but the public will vote for the award winner. Voting starts on 1st November and will remain open until 6pm on 14th November. Best of luck to all, and I look forward to welcoming them at the ceremony."

**Cast your vote at**  
**[www.northtynesidebusinessawards.co.uk](http://www.northtynesidebusinessawards.co.uk)**

*The North Tyneside Business Forum is run by a management group made up of members from various industry sectors in the Borough and gives support in the form of networking, events and signposting for growth and development. Membership is free and open to any business of any size with a trading address within North Tyneside. The Business Forum is supported by, but not run by North Tyneside Council. The Forum is FREE to join and is for any business with a trading address in North Tyneside.*



L-R: OPUS MP Directors: Phil Thompson, John Christie, Gavin Richardson and Daniel Lowes with the EQ5 building in the background

## 50 jobs saved and first significant project completed

Newcastle-based, OPUS Major Projects (MP), has safeguarded 50 jobs and completed its first significant project.

**OPUS MP was formed in 2023 by Gavin Richardson, managing director of OPUS Building Services, a Boldon-based mechanical and electrical contracting specialist, after he spotted the opportunity to strengthen OPUS Building Services with local resources, when Integral UK announced it was to cease tendering for main contractors within the North East and nationally.**

OPUS Building Services approached those facing redundancy, to join OPUS MP. This has resulted in a significant increase in capacity and has secured 50 jobs, including six apprentices. The business has already completed projects for key clients and is expecting a turnover in excess of £10m in its first year, with a strong order book and healthy pipeline of opportunities.

The 50-strong team is led by directors Daniel Lowes, John Christie and Phil Thompson along with the company's founder and fellow director, Gavin Richardson.

Within weeks of its formation, OPUS MP was awarded a £1.7 million contract to complete works on EQ5, a former Barclays wealth management building, which is situated on Newcastle Quays and boasts 35,000 sq ft of office space and related facilities, laid out over a total of five floors.

OPUS MP was brought in to design and deliver the mechanical and electrical services, from RIBA stage 0, to a full refurbishment of the building, with a client aspiration of EPC A & BREEM excellent. The concept was to decarbonise and fully redesign the building to the highest quality, placing an emphasis on environmental, social and governance targets. The installation comprised of the full mechanical and electrical services CAT A fit out, including IPS systems delivered and installed by its sister company, Hebburn-based, Laminform, due to the quick turnaround of the project.

Several projects are now in progress,

including the refurbishment of Ward 18 at North Tyneside General Hospital on behalf of IHP (Integrated Health Partnership). This project showcases the increased capacity of the Group drawing on the healthcare expertise of Opus Building Services and Opus MP team tier 1 main contractor experience to support the project and the client's wider strategy.

Gavin Richardson, said: "OPUS MP has hit the ground running and we are proud to have safeguarded the jobs of 50 highly skilled people working within the region. This not only secures the future for these employees and their families, it also means that, from day one, OPUS MP has had a fully cohesive team with a professional and strong work culture."

Director, Daniel Lowes, said: "We are a team of directors, each offering specific industry insight and knowledge of major projects. We possess the excitement and drive of a new business, whilst bringing with us the experience, maturity and capacity of one that has been around for many years.

"The faith shown from our loyal client base has enabled us to quickly develop the business and showcase our technical capability and craftsmanship. The progress to date is just the start of what is set to be a very successful future for OPUS MP."

**contact/web details?????**

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

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## Banks Group Gets The Investors in People Gold

**Property and mining firm the Banks Group has become one of just a handful of North East businesses to gain a gold level accreditation from Investors In People for its performance in people management.**

The County Durham-headquartered firm has held an IIP accreditation for more than two decades, achieving silver accreditation in 2018 and maintaining it in a further assessment three years later.

Having increased its investment in learning, development, leadership resources and managing and rewarding performance

over the last three years, the family-owned firm has now achieved its best ever IIP assessment result.

Feedback from the IIP assessors noted the "convincing case that Banks Group had progressed to the Gold Award," the company's "strategic thinking in the development of people development and management practice" and its "leadership's ambition to improve and seek different ways of working."

The assessors' report also highlighted "good management relationships based on respect" and the feeling that "people are generally enthused and excited about the future."



## Tyneside firm secure multi-million-pound contract to deliver Newcastle Building Society's flagship branch

**The six-storey branch will open in the shadow of Grey's Monument as part of a multi-million-pound commitment to high street financial services and advice from the firm. Gateshead-based Arcas Building Solutions will undertake the construction and transformation of the branch, which is expected to open in 2025.**

The Team Valley company has delivered hundreds of projects across the North East including Newcastle's Hard Rock Café and the revamped Alnwick Playhouse.

Michael Nesbit, Managing Director at Arcas Building Solutions said it was one of the firm's "most exciting and ambitious" projects to date.

"Since launching in 2010, we've developed a strong track record for delivering projects on time, within budget - and most importantly - to the valued satisfaction of our clients," he said.

"Our diversity and ability to deliver on projects of any size and within any sector has made us one of the most trusted names within our field. Clients know they can trust us to deliver projects ranging from commercial and industrial units to hospitality venues and school projects."

"This project is one of our most exciting and ambitious to date, and it is a genuine pleasure to work with Newcastle Building Society, a North East business that is bucking the trend of high-street branch closures by investing in its communities."

## Altoria Homes: Pioneering sustainable luxury living in Northumberland

**Altoria Homes, a Northumberland-based luxury home developer founded in 2016 by Alan and Victoria Fleming, is building solid eco foundations with its dedication to environmentally friendly construction and sustainability.**

Their new development, designed with the environment in mind, is designed to be as energy efficient as possible, featuring electric vehicle chargers, air source heat pumps, and underfloor heating reaffirming Altoria Homes commitment to green living.

In a bold move to further boost their sustainability efforts, Altoria Homes has partnered with local entrepreneur and Stannington farmer Michael Dungait, founder of Green Acres, an initiative that offers carbon offsetting solutions through local action. Rather than relying on large-scale international carbon-offset programs, Green Acres focuses on localised efforts such as tree and hedge planting, bee hive cultivation, and grassland management. This partnership allows Altoria Homes to visibly reduce their carbon footprint right in



their own backyard.

"Building homes that not only meet the highest standards of luxury but also contribute positively to the environment has always been at the core of what we do," says Alan. "Our partnership with Green Acres allows us to take that commitment even further, ensuring that our developments have a lasting, positive impact on the local environment."

Through the collaboration with Green Acres, Altoria Homes has already planted 150 trees, helping to offset the carbon produced during the construction process. These eco-friendly initiatives, combined with state-of-the-art energy systems like underfloor heating and air source heat pumps, ensure that Altoria's homes set a new standard for sustainability in luxury living.

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# Appointment as preferred supplier to John N Dunn Group



Stephen Bilclough, chairman at John N Dunn Group and David Wadds, operations director at Carney Consultancy

**Building services company, John N Dunn Group, which is undertaking a period of strong growth and diversification into the renewable energy sector, has appointed Carney Consultancy, as preferred health and safety consultant.**

**A Carney team led by operations director, David Wadds, will assist both the Silverlink-based company - which specialises in plumbing, heating, electrics and low carbon solutions - and its supply chain, to comply with ever-changing regulations.**

Established in 2002, Carney Consultancy has a focus on construction and engineering, providing health and safety consultancy and training.

David Wadds, operations director at Carney Consultancy, said: "John N Dunn Group is a well-established and successful, home-grown, North-East business, with ambitious plans for growth. While it is very customer focussed, its main priority is the health and safety of its employees, subcontractors and suppliers. It is a great cultural fit for us and we look forward to building a strong working relationship with the site management team, supporting them across all site locations from Scotland through to Yorkshire."

John N Dunn Group works on a wide range of projects from large construction schemes through to reactive maintenance and has

built a strong reputation over many decades with many major UK housing developers and associations and commercial contractors.

Stephen Bilclough, chairman at John N Dunn Group, said: "Carney Consultancy has a proactive approach when it comes to offering health and safety advice, working extensively in the construction sector. We have known the team for a number of years and they have an excellent track record of delivering for clients.

"It is important to have a fresh pair of eyes that will keep us abreast of changes to policies and procedures, review management systems and be on hand to offer compliance guidance.

"Working with Carney Consultancy, we want to enhance our culture and evaluate safety procedures, so they are continuously improving. We will engage all team members by working closely with middle management and the wider workforce. As a conscientious contractor, the safety and wellbeing of our employees, subcontractors and suppliers is our number one priority, so the added value

that Carney provides is of great benefit to us."

The appointment of Carney Consultancy, coincides with John N Dunn Group upskilling its workforce to take advantage of increasing demand for air source heat pumps in the residential property market.

The firm has completed a major training programme, which has seen 40 members of its team gaining new industry accreditations from the British Plumbing Employers Council (BPEC) that allow them to safely undertake work on advanced energy systems.

The team is working on a number of air source heat pump installation schemes, including new large-scale residential developments in the North East, Yorkshire and Scotland and it is actively looking to bring in further contracts. It is part of John N Dunn Group's ongoing diversification to take advantage of growing opportunities within the low carbon and renewable energy technologies sector.

The company is already an Office for Zero Emission Vehicles-approved installer and is active in the photovoltaics sector, installing solar energy systems on a growing number of both domestic and commercial properties and is Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS) accredited for the installation of solar PV and heat pumps.

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

# COSY COMFORTS...

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# Building a Legacy – BDN places lasting social impact at the heart of project plans



Previously named as ‘one to watch’, Building Design Northern Ltd (BDN) is a company that’s not only developing some of the largest and most impressive commercial, industrial and residential schemes for UK clients, but one that is also placing social impact (and the importance of it) at the heart of what it does best.

**The northern architectural, engineering and project management firm boasts an impressive portfolio of manufacturing, retail, local authority and property clients from British Steel, B&Q and Subsea Energy Solutions to Sunderland City Council and the UK Government for example, providing expertise that includes initial planning, conveyancing and architectural design to structural engineering, bespoke build and final fit-out – stages zero to seven in industry terms.**

Delivering nationally, this has included designing and building a new £26m, state-of-the-art service centre for British Steel in Skinningrove, North Yorkshire, a new B&Q store in Carmarthen, Wales, a 42,000 sq ft storage, distribution and HQ facility for Durham Animal Feeds in Newton Aycliffe, and more recently, the launch of its own Sheepfolds Stables development, a new £4m social, leisure and hospitality venue in Sunderland. BDN has also been contracted to design a new art gallery, bistro and events space in Cumbria as well as provide framework services to Carbon Circle, an existing client providing engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) expertise out of its head office in Oslo, Norway.

*A percentage of profits from BDN’s large-scale commercial projects (including a £26m service centre for British Steel and a storage, distribution and HQ facility for Durham Animal Feeds), is also enabling the firm to deliver vital charitable and social impact projects including Super Brad’s Pad in Scarborough and a dementia garden at Barrow in Furness Hospital.*



However, in contrast, it is also the smaller community-based projects that BDN has undertaken as part of its company ethos that arguably will have the strongest, more personal and longer lasting impact for many, especially at a grass-roots level.

The company, with offices in both the North East and North West, has designed and built a dementia garden for patients at Barrow in Furness Hospital, is developing 'Super Brad's Pad' - a respite holiday home in Scarborough for children with terminal illnesses on behalf of the Bradley Lowery Foundation, and is designing a new building extension to a current office site, including disability access and facilities, for the Veterans in Crisis charity, amongst others.

All are or have benefitted from a dedicated company policy that reinvests a percentage of profits from larger contracts back into helping other smaller projects in the areas they serve, with BDN giving up their time and services gratis. This has made a significant difference to many charitable organisations where new facilities are required, and their care or support services are needed more than ever, but funding is low so every penny counts.

Managing director, Richard Marsden, explained, "What's most important is how we can make a real difference, and by that, I mean ways in which our work can really have a positive impact, not just in terms of what we can design or build or deliver commercially, but more so, how the communities we're working in or with will benefit long-term once we're gone. It's really thinking about how our expertise and values can be used in ways that will create change for good and have a positive social impact, and by reinvesting as a company in this way, our teams - every single employee, can feel proud on a personal level of what they have contributed to. It makes a huge difference, especially for these communities, our staff and each project's end users."

Building Design Northern Ltd was founded in 1983 primarily as an engineering firm but



soon grew to incorporate architectural and project management services a few years later. This meant that clients had an expert 'one stop shop' for all planning, technical design, engineering, build and project management requirements.

Since 2019, and following an MBO by current MD, Richard, the firm has grown from 7 to 33 employees spanning its Sunderland HQ and Ulverston offices but working across the UK. This also includes the 2023 acquisition of leading residential architecture practice, Fitz Architects, which specialises in unique, bespoke-build and design-led properties for private clients.

Richard added, "We're niche in terms of being able to offer three very different disciplines - architecture, structural/civil engineering and project management, together combined under one roof as one company. It's high-level, concept-to-completion expertise, and for existing as

well as prospective clients, many are now looking for a trusted delivery partner from start to finish without having to outsource multiple times and project manage multiple organisations.

"We have large commercial retail chains and manufacturing clients who need everything from conveyancing, planning, 3D modelling and new build structures, to decommissioning stores going back on the market. It's varied depending upon requirement, and we also work closely with many authorities, regeneration and development companies within the wider build sector to fulfil their own contracts as an added resource.

"It's 40 years since BDN's formation, and we're hopefully creating a legacy for another 40 plus to come."

**For more info, please go to [www.bdnltd.com](http://www.bdnltd.com) or email: [hello@bdnltd.com](mailto:hello@bdnltd.com)**



“

*...The longer a dispute drags on, the more costly and complicated it can become...*

# In Conversation With...

## Exploring GFW's Expert Witness and Dispute Resolution Services

We sat down with Robyn Peat, Chairman at GFW, to discuss the firm's long-standing expertise in providing Dispute Resolution and Expert Witness services, and the unique value these services bring to the North East.

**Robyn has over 40 years of experience as an Expert Witness and Arbitrator and is also an accredited member of the RICS Arbitration Panel, RICS Expert Panel and CAAV Panel of Arbitrators together with the RICS adjudication panels for CPO and Telecoms.**

**Robyn, can you start by explaining what Expert Witness services are and why they're important in the property sector?**

Absolutely. An Expert Witness is an independent professional who is called upon to provide an opinion on a matter in which they are recognised as an industry expert, such as property or land disputes. Their role is to provide unbiased, expert opinions in legal matters, often in court or arbitration. In the property sector, disputes can arise over valuations, planning disagreements, option agreements, and much more, and an Expert Witness can help resolve these issues by presenting clear, factual evidence. The key is that we act impartially, even if we're instructed by one party, our goal is to assist the court or tribunal in making an informed and fair decision.

**How do these services fit into GFW's broader offering?**

At GFW, we pride ourselves on offering a comprehensive range of property services, from agency and valuation to consultancy and management. Our Expert Witness and Dispute Resolution services are an extension of that offering. In the North East, where land and property disputes can often have significant financial and community impact, having access to an experienced expert can save both time and money. With the backing of our experienced team, we're able to offer professional insights into a variety of cases, across a range of disciplines, ensuring clients receive high-quality, reliable advice.

**What types of disputes do you typically assist with?**

We see a broad range of disputes, the most common being valuation issues—these might be disagreements over the value of land, property, or assets in relation to a sale or development. There are also disputes related to planning permissions, which can be particularly complex in rural areas, where agricultural and residential interests intersect. Option agreements and overage clauses, where parties have future claims on property sales, are another area where we're frequently called in to support. These cases often involve intricate contract details, and we bring our depth of experience to ensure that all parties are treated fairly.

**Does the North East present any unique challenges in terms of Dispute Resolution?**

Yes, definitely. The North East has a rich mix of urban, rural, and coastal landscapes, each of which presents its own challenges. In rural areas, disputes often centre around agricultural land and planning permissions. Ongoing

changes in agricultural subsidies and regulations creates uncertainty which can then lead to disagreements. Contrarily, in more urban areas of the North East, we're seeing a rise in development-related disputes, particularly as cities like Newcastle, Sunderland and Durham continue to expand. In both cases, having a local expert who understands the specifics of the region is invaluable.

**How does GFW's approach to Dispute Resolution stand out in the market?**

We bring a very tailored, robust approach to each case and are uniquely positioned to offer not only the technical expertise but the local knowledge that's so crucial in property disputes. No two disputes are the same, so we take the time to thoroughly understand the details before providing advice. One of our key strengths is that our expertise spans across all facets of the property sector. Our dedicated team of in-house experts, including Richard Garland and Andrew Entwistle, have expertise in areas ranging from Development, to Commercial and Rural, which allows us to offer specialised guidance, especially in complex cases involving development valuation and planning disputes. We also benefit from a deep knowledge of the local area and market conditions. We know the lay of the land, in every sense, which enables us to provide context-specific advice that clients find incredibly valuable.

**Can you elaborate on the role of an Arbitrator or Determiner in these disputes?**

An Arbitrator or Determiner is appointed to make a final decision in a dispute, based on the facts presented by both parties. This role differs from that of an Expert Witness, who is typically called upon to provide impartial advice during a legal process. A Determiner acts more like a judge, with both parties agreeing to be bound by their decision. In the case of Independent Determination this can be a quicker and less costly route than going to court, especially in property disputes where both sides may want a swift resolution. We're unique at GFW in having two qualified Expert Determiners within our Dispute Resolution team, both of whom take private referrals and are part of the RICS Dispute Resolution Panel.

**What would you say to anyone currently dealing with a property dispute in the North East?**

Don't hesitate to seek expert advice early in the process. The longer a dispute drags on, the more costly and complicated it can become. By working with GFW, you'll be getting clear, unbiased advice from professionals who not only understand property law but also the specific challenges of the North East market. We're here to help resolve disputes quickly and fairly, so that everyone can move forward.

**For more information on GFW visit [www.gfwllp.co.uk](http://www.gfwllp.co.uk)**



Paul Fairlamb

## Commercial Property Market Shifts: Challenges and opportunities under Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Government

*By Paul Fairlamb, Associate Director, youngsRPS*

As the UK adjusts to a Labour-led government under Keir Starmer, significant reforms in planning, energy, and leasehold laws are set to reshape the commercial and residential investment property market.

**Labour's manifesto outlines ambitious goals to address sustainability, housing supply, and fairer leasing structures, all of which will impact developers, landlords, and investors. Forty government bills were announced in the King's Speech, but how do these stack up against Labour's proposed changes?**

### **Planning Law Reforms: Unlocking Development Potential**

One of the most transformative elements of the Government's policy is the overhaul of planning laws, aimed at streamlining the process and facilitating the development of commercial and residential space. For property owners and investors, this could unlock new opportunities on previously landlocked or under utilised sites.

The Government's focus on affordable housing may pressure commercial developers to offer mixed-use developments or incorporate affordable housing in exchange for planning permission.

The Planning and Infrastructure Bill underscores the government's commitment to removing bottlenecks and accelerating key infrastructure projects. The English Devolution Bill will also empower local leaders to manage local growth. While these changes may expedite projects, they could also introduce stricter sustainability standards, requiring developers to integrate green infrastructure and meet environmental targets.

Balancing growth with environmental responsibility will be central to future planning reforms.

**Energy Law:****The Push for Green Commercial Spaces**

For commercial property owners, this could mean tougher regulations to improve energy performance. Minimum Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) standards are expected to tighten, which could push poorly performing properties off the market unless retrofitted to meet new standards.

The King's Speech referenced the Great British Energy Bill, which will solidify the legal framework for advancing clean energy and reducing carbon emissions by 2030. While initial compliance costs could be seen as burdensome, the opportunities for investors are substantial. Developers who prioritise sustainability could benefit from government-backed financing options and attract tenants aligned with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals.

**Renters' Rights: Fairer Deals for Residential Tenants and Landlords**

The Renters Reform Bill, carried over from the previous parliament, focuses on tenant protection. One key reform is the abolition of "no-fault" Section 21 evictions, making it harder for landlords to regain possession without specific reasons. The bill also introduces stricter regulations on rent increases and mandates higher health and safety standards for properties. For investor landlords with residential portfolios, these changes could lead to greater compliance obligations, but they also offer opportunities to retain tenants and enhance reputations for providing secure, high-quality rental space.

**Leasehold Law Reforms: Transforming Traditional Lease Structures**

One of the most headline-grabbing promises from the new Government is the reform of leasehold laws. The Freehold and Leasehold Bill, and Leasehold and Commonhold Reform Act, aim to dismantle the current leasehold system, making it fairer for tenants. For residential property investors with long-term lease agreements, this could represent a seismic shift.

The move toward commonhold ownership, where tenants share ownership of the building, may reduce the control residential landlords exert over multi-unit properties. While this might be challenging for landlords accustomed to guaranteed lease income, developers and investors could find new

opportunities by redeveloping properties under more equitable ownership structures, appealing to businesses seeking long-term stability without the restrictions of traditional lease agreements.

**Challenges and Opportunities for Investor Landowners and Developers**

The property industry faces an evolving landscape under the new Government, with significant implications for property investors and developers. Adapting to tighter energy laws and new leasehold structures, while navigating stricter planning regulations, will be key challenges.

However, the opportunities are equally significant. The Government's commitment to infrastructure development, regional economic growth, and green energy investment creates fertile ground for forward-thinking developers and landlords. Those willing to embrace new standards can expect improved tenant relationships, long-term cost savings, and increased demand for sustainable, energy-efficient spaces.

At youngsRPS, we are closely monitoring these developments and advising clients on how best to navigate this period of transition. Of course we do not have any great detail on these policies yet and it will be interesting to see which of the government's proposals make it into law and if they will bring about positive change to the market. As the market evolves, proactive planning and a focus on sustainability will be essential to future success.

[youngsRPS.com](https://www.youngsRPS.com)

“  
...The property industry faces an evolving landscape under the new Government...”



Neil Turner

## Why we love great buildings

*By Neil Turner, Director,  
Howarth Litchfield*

**I have just had the pleasure of visiting the United States and going to visit some houses designed by the American architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. They say never meet your heroes, but his buildings do not disappoint.**

**The man was able to create visionary architecture over an exceptionally long career, building and designing some fabulous houses. I visited Fallingwater, built in 1936, which is next to and over a rocky waterway. Its terraces cantilever over the water and steps also descend down to it - absolutely brilliant.**

I also visited three other smaller houses built in the 1950s, all designed by Wright, much smaller than Fallingwater at around 140sqm - typically the size of a modern, large, detached house in the UK.

Each house perfectly suited its site and represented the brief given by the clients and owners of the buildings. Some were timber, another brick and one of precast concrete blocks.

I have written previously on the value of employing an architect and equally the importance of other members of the design team and the contractor. Each person has a part to play in creating a new development or house.

However, the one thing that none of the other professionals (within the team) can do is come up with the first idea, the concept, the vision. That is not being arrogant or pompous. The architect's role is to listen to the client and create a brief. The written brief is then developed through drawings and models into a three-dimensional form. The architect's unique role is to create 'something' - to see ahead, starting at the list of requirements. All the other disciplines react to those first ideas in their combined efforts to move them from a design idea to a built form.

The role of the architect is being constantly challenged and 'nibbled' at the edges by other disciplines, each claiming that a spreadsheet or Excel list can replace the creativity of a designer.

Throughout my career the design process has changed, so that the architect now has to consider a far wider range of issues - from the site conditions to the complexities of the planning system and the ecological and bio diversity potential for the site - all of which must be considered before even contemplating the design strategy, materials and budgets. Add to this, the increasing (and rightful) importance of sustainability and re-use (carbon footprints) of materials in our designs, then the current challenges increase.

It was clear from my visits to the Frank Lloyd Wright houses that he worked in a



very different era; his relationships with his clients could be challenging as he insisted on his way or not at all, in a manner that would be hard to imagine in these times. The budgets usually exceeded the initial estimates by some margin and that certainly wouldn't be tolerated today.

But there was no denying the beauty of what was created by Wright and the joy of walking around wonderfully designed houses. His clients tended to live in their houses for many decades which says something for their success.

So perhaps the lesson for 2024 is that you do need to invest in a building project for it to be a real success. Budgets are always important and can't be ignored. But to create beautiful and successful buildings you do need a talented architect along with an appropriate budget. Give him some freedom for creative thought, layout or materials - and you never know you might just be rewarded with something special that continues to delight long after the bills have come in.

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Phil Gilbraith and Jonathan Graham from Optimisation Solutions.

Photo Credit: Tom Banks

## Optimisation Solutions

A new breed of business support in the Tees Valley.

**Two experts with a combined 30 years of experience across diverse sectors have launched a business designed to strengthen the hospitality and construction industries across the Tees Valley.**

Optimisation Solutions is a unique business support service in Hartlepool.

Jonathan Graham, a seasoned hospitality professional, and Phil Gilbraith, an expert in health, safety and management systems, saw a need for truly bespoke support for businesses, moving away from the limitations of off-the-shelf solutions.

Through the duo's different career backgrounds, Optimisation Solutions' holistic approach means they don't just focus on one aspect of a business.

The company considers the entire operation, from supply chain and internal processes to sales and customer experience, and even refurbishments.

"We aren't going to tell businesses to serve oysters and chateaubriand," Jonathan said, highlighting a commitment to providing tailored strategies that precisely match each client's needs.

He added: "Having run pubs, hotels and restaurants, also a brewery and distillery over the years, this was an ideal opportunity to pass on my knowledge."

Optimisation Solutions offers a refreshing local, relaxed and personal approach,

removing traditional stereotypes and barriers within the respective industries.

They tap into their extensive network of contacts across hospitality and construction to help businesses optimise their supply chains. That ensures access to high-quality resources at the best possible prices.

Through in-depth analysis, opportunities are identified to reduce costs without sacrificing quality or efficiency.

Jonathan's deep understanding of the hospitality sector, combined with Phil's analytical expertise, allows them to develop innovative strategies to increase sales and drive revenue growth.

Phil's background in management systems through health and safety in the oil and gas and petrochemical industries ensures businesses can have robust systems in place for smooth operations and regulatory compliance.

He said: "We also help local construction SMEs from varying backgrounds with their health and safety management. This is often costly and over-bearing when utilising large, national companies.

"We support them with their internal compliance and applications to external industry accreditation schemes, which facilitates growth and being able to bid for larger contracts."

This 360-degree perspective allows Optimisation Solutions to identify opportunities for improvement and growth that others might miss.

"We saw a gap in the market," Phil said. "Many local businesses lacked the connections to access the national network and the specialised expertise they needed to thrive.

"The formula is our experience and knowledge. I have an extensive catalogue

of documents and management system packages that have taken years to collate and polish. These can be streamlined and adapted by identifying what your business needs."

Optimisation Solutions aims to bridge that 'gap', providing access to the resources and support that businesses need to succeed.

Jonathan, 50, and Phil, 42, are passionate about supporting businesses in the Tees Valley. Their local knowledge and understanding of the challenges faced by businesses in the region enable them to provide relevant and impactful support.

Given their extensive knowledge and success stories, SMEs across the industry seeking help to grow can also request fully-funded support from Jonathan and Phil through the Tees Valley Expertise programme.

The pair are experts on the Tees Valley Expertise programme, headed up by Mark Beard delivered by Orangebox Training Solutions on behalf of the Tees Valley Mayor and Combined Authority, and the Tees Valley Business Board. Support is fully funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

Phil said: "The Expertise programme is aimed at helping businesses across the Tees Valley grow and the skills we offer to businesses, funded, fits with our model. We can help.

"We are both very passionate about our retrospective industries and helping other businesses grow. If we can condense 30 years of experience into helping others that would be fantastic."

**For further information check out [optimisationsolutions.com](https://optimisationsolutions.com) or [teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/business/expertise](https://teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/business/expertise)**



The Lynas Engineers team with Rob Lynas, sixth from left.

## Supply chain takes flight in buoyant Tees Valley

Founder hails its vital role within built environment.

**The Preferred Partners supply chain, which was established in 2021 to encourage collaborative working throughout the built environment, is starting to gain traction in the buoyant Tees Valley region, supporting the delivery of approximately £12m of projects to date.**

Rob Lynas, managing director of Lynas Engineers and founder of Preferred Partners, believes it will play a vital role in supporting SMEs to access higher value projects because it is enabling smaller companies to engage informally and in person with organisations much larger than their own to collaborate over tendering for projects together.

As a multi-disciplinary supply chain, Preferred Partners can now claim 45 companies as members, many of which come from the local area including Esh Construction, and MGL Group, while others are national firms with northeast offices.

Meanwhile, Lynas Engineers has also gone from strength to strength after moving to Cargo Fleet Offices in Middlesbrough a year ago. Building on its enviable client base which includes several local authorities and leading regional companies such as Sembcorp, Mandale Developments, and Seymour Civil Engineering, the

firm specialises in civil and structural engineering design and project management with a particular emphasis on infrastructure and drainage design.

Recent project wins for Lynas Engineers include an appointment to provide design capability to ESH Construction in the delivery of a large active travel scheme in Rotherham and also the delivery of a 2km link road for Middlesbrough Council where they will provide design, supervision and project management.

Commenting on the growth of Preferred Partners and his own business, he said: "This summer and last, Preferred Partners hosted a networking event, Constructing Links, in partnership with our sales and marketing partner, Just Williams. It was a sell-out success and dozens of businesses from across the region came together to discuss and challenge embedded and often outdated practices.

"The event facilitated a great deal of knowledge transfer into the network along with information about forthcoming tenders and opportunities through our key speakers and panellists. We have received tremendous feedback since the event. Delegates left feeling that everyone in the room was 'on the same page'.

"The team we have built at Lynas Engineers is deeply embedded in a collaborative way of thinking and working, which is delivering some great results for us. In fact, collaboration forms the cornerstone of our ambitions for the future, and we hope it will be responsible for shaping a new way of working across all sectors."

Another significant building block helping to shape Lynas Engineers' future is apprenticeships. Lynas Engineers has built its team using non-traditional routes with the vast majority of its staff starting off their careers as apprentices – a model to which Rob is absolutely committed because it has led to a very close-knit, award-winning team today.

He continued: "At a time when skill shortages continue to hamper the construction sector, we are continuing to invest in apprentices and graduates. Giving young people the chance of an apprenticeship is a vital part of the solution to ensure the construction industry has a strong future.

"Over the last three years, we have experienced 45% growth including the appointment of six new members of staff, four of which are apprentices, and we have supported the delivery of over £35m of projects. In the years ahead we are looking to diversify into renewables and the retail sector and with our existing formula for success, I am confident about the future."

Current headcount stands at 15 and Lynas Engineers plans to create two more jobs in the coming year.

[lynasengineers.com](https://lynasengineers.com)



Simon Dovaston, Wickes representatives, and Steve Felmingham – Franchise Centre for Access4Lofts.

## Top of the Ladders

North East Franchisee wins National Franchisee of the Year Award

**Simon Dovaston, the owner, and operator of franchise operation; Access4Lofts Newcastle, and Durham has been awarded the prestigious title of Franchisee of the Year at the 2024 Access4Lofts Annual Summit. This national recognition is a testament to Simon's commitment to quality, customer service, and excellence within the home improvement sector.**

Access4Lofts is a leading provider of loft access and storage solutions across the UK, offering expert installations for loft hatches, ladders, boarding, and insulation.

With over 60 franchisees across the country, the competition for this award was fierce, highlighting the significance of Simon's achievement.

The Franchisee of the Year Award is given to the franchisee who demonstrates exceptional business growth, customer satisfaction, and consistent dedication to the brand's core values. Simon's business, Access4Lofts Newcastle and Durham, has grown substantially over the past year, with an ever-expanding customer base and numerous glowing reviews from clients who appreciate his professionalism and attention to detail.

On receiving the award, Simon commented: "I'm incredibly honoured to receive this award. It's been a challenging but rewarding year, and this recognition means so much to me. I'd like to thank my team, my family, and of course, my customers for their continued support. At Access4Lofts, we pride ourselves on providing a top-quality service, and I'm thrilled to be part of a franchise that shares these great values."

The annual summit is a key event for the Access4Lofts franchise, bringing together franchisees from across the UK for networking, training, and celebrating the year's achievements. Simon's win underscores the importance of local business owners who, like him, go above and beyond to meet customer needs and uphold the brand's reputation.

Steve Felmingham, Managing Director of Access4Lofts, praised Simon's achievement: "Simon's dedication to providing excellent service to customers in the Newcastle area has been outstanding. He is a shining example of what we strive for in all of our franchisees, and we couldn't be prouder of his achievements."

**For more information on Simon Dovaston and Access4Lofts Newcastle and Durham, please visit Access4Lofts Newcastle. To learn more about the Access4Lofts franchise, visit Access4Lofts Franchise. [access4lofts.co.uk](https://access4lofts.co.uk)**

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## Precursor continues Newcastle recruitment drive with North East fund backing

**An ambitious cyber security firm is continuing to build its North East presence with the help of a six-figure investment from the North East Fund.**

Precursor Technology Group provides a full range of cyber security services which help businesses stay secure, including cloud security, continuous security testing, backup and restore solutions, and incident response and penetration testing, through which the firm's security experts test companies' susceptibility and resistance to cyber attacks.

Precursor opened a new 24x7, 365 days per year, Security Operations Centre based

in Newcastle earlier this year as part of its expansion outside its home Yorkshire region, creating an initial ten jobs in the process.

And it has now worked with regional fund management firm NEL Fund Managers to bring in the investment from the North East Growth Capital Fund Supported by the European Regional Development Fund to help it continue to attract the expertise needed to meet growing client demand.

Founded in 2018, Precursor Technology Group works with a wide range of public and private sector organisations, and is certified by the UK's leading cyber security accreditation body, the Council of registered Ethical Security Testers (CREST).

The Security Operations Centre based in Newcastle has already gained the CREST certification, positioning them in an elite group of organisations worldwide who are certified at that level.

The Precursor management team was introduced to NEL Fund Managers by its chairman, well-known North East entrepreneur and tech investor Neil Stephenson, who has since agreed to become Chairman of the Group.

Neil and his business partner Stuart Bramley who are both prolific Angel Investors contributed to the funding round and are actively supporting the business.



## North East tech firm ushers in a new era of end of life planning

**Newcastle-based secure data environment provider, KEEPL, has launched its first-ever product, KeepL Legacy. This innovative platform streamlines the administrative process of handling a loved one's estate, making it easier to pass on personal wishes and manage probate. KeepL Legacy offers families peace of mind by simplifying these often complicated and emotional tasks.**

With complex estate probate fees reaching up to £10,000, KeepL's innovative service simplifies the process by offering individuals a trusted, secure platform to manage their most important documents. This not only provides peace of mind but also helps families save both time and money when they need it most.

Designed for those who want to ensure their affairs are in order before they pass away, KeepL Legacy allows users to securely store essential information and personal documents, such as wills, property deeds, insurance policies, and financial information in a single, highly encrypted platform.

Upon a person's passing, access to stored documents is seamlessly granted to a nominated, pre-approved guardian with just a click, following a strict account identity verification process. By subscribing to the service for an annual fee of £18, families are relieved of the often daunting task of searching for critical documents during emotionally challenging times.

Led by Founder and Owner Christopher Campbell, who previously founded and successfully sold Emergent Network Intelligence (ENI) to the prominent insurance data firm Verisk Analytics, KeepL aims to eliminate the overwhelming administrative burden that often accompanies a loved one's passing.

## Succorfish moving into oil & gas sector With unique MyGearTag technology

**North East technology firm Succorfish is moving into the global oil & gas sector after adapting its proprietary acoustic location device MyGearTag for use hundreds of meters under water.**

Developed primarily for the offshore fisheries industry, MyGearTag uses miniaturised modem technology to enable users to find 'ghost' fishing nets and other lost equipment over a three-kilometre radius.

Working with global sealing provider Eastern Seals in Ashington over a six month period, Succorfish has adapted MyGearTag's casing, which is crafted from recycled fishing nets and weighs just 500 grammes, to enable it to withstand the pressure levels found in the waters around the bases of oil and gas rigs.

The adapted equipment has been tested at Cramlington-based, UKAS-accredited oil



and gas testing facility IKM, with successful 'hold' tests completed at depths of 300m and 650m.

A 'destructive' test was also undertaken to a depth of more than 1,500m, with the MyGearTag unit's internal electronics still responding after its completion.

Succorfish has now opened discussions with a number of leading service providers in the oil and gas sector about the practical applications for the upgraded technology, which could include identifying where storage spaces on the seabed are located, monitoring for moving rig anchor lines and marking the location of lost equipment that can be recovered at another time.



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*Charlotte Mann*

## Join the Movement: Why Brave & Heart became a B Corp Certified Company

We asked Charlotte Mann, Graduate Account Manager at Brave & Heart, to break down their B Corp journey, and explain why all businesses who want to balance profit and purpose should consider joining the B Corp movement.

### What does it mean to become a B Corp?

B Corporations are companies that value purpose and profit in equal measure. From empowering women in our company to shine in technology roles to helping companies reduce their digital waste through our digital decarbonisation project, we've always been an agency with a purpose.

This year, we committed to focusing on this positive impact by joining a global community of B Corps that believe business can be used as a force for good.

For us, this B Corp certification is more than a badge; it's a long-term commitment to operate in ways that benefit not only shareholders but workers, communities, customers, and the environment. It's a reminder of the importance of taking an ethical approach to business.

We are now one of 8,000 B Corps globally, and only 2,000 in the UK, working together to make a better world a reality, and ensuring that long-term value is a priority, and profits are balanced with a positive impact on all people and the planet.

### Why did you decide to become a B Corp?

Getting our B Corp status hasn't been an easy process, but it has been incredibly rewarding, and being a B Corp means a few different things to us:

First of all, never being complacent. The certification and re-certification process pushes us to continuously improve our social and environmental impact.

Plus, as a growing company, the structure of B Corp gave us a framework to make business decisions that ensure our growth is positive and ethical. In a way, it's helped us to start as we mean to go on.

And, simply, B Corp aligns with our values.

### How does B Corp Align with your values and why is that important?

As a values-driven company, it's important to us that everything we do represents those values – Be Modern, Be Collaborative, Be Supportive and Be Focused.

**Be Modern:** By harnessing the power of business, B Corps take collective action to shift our current economic system from profiting only the few to benefiting all. At Brave & Heart, we wanted to participate in the shared vision to create an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy that works for everyone.

**Be Collaborative:** B Corps work together as a community of leaders who use business as a force for good, and our B Corp status means we collaborate with clients with the certitude that we're bringing purpose and positive value to the table.

**Be Supportive:** It's a real point of pride for us that we scored exceptionally highly on the "workers" section of our B Corp verification process. As well as supporting our clients, being supportive also means being there for our employees, from our commitment to being a Living Wage™ business to our focus on employee training and our enhanced benefits package.

**Be Focused:** B Corps keep their social and environmental impact at the forefront of their decision-making, and the re-certification process means that B Corps are always held to a high standard of governance.

### How did you find the certification process?

B Corp is the only global certification that measures impact over five key areas of business: governance, workers, community, customers, and the environment.

The certification process was rigorous, but thanks to numerous initiatives and processes put in place since we began back in 2014, we were able to achieve a high score in our verification process.

For example, we commit to giving back to our community through our partnership with NESF, a North East based charity close to our hearts which aims to break down barriers for young people to enter careers in STEM.

As a remote company, we are also conscious of our impact on the environment and have insured our carbon footprint is kept to a minimum through partnering with an ethical e-waste disposal company and incentivising our employees to make greener travel choices.

We have always strived to serve as a partner for our clients and bring purpose to our employees, and we're beyond proud to have achieved B Corp status, because we feel like it's a tangible representation of how we have achieved this.

### Why should other companies join the B Corp Movement?

We believe that B Corp is the future, and we'd love for you to join us there.

While most B Corp consultancy services are designed primarily to meet the needs of large and multinational companies seeking certification, as a small business, we're perfectly placed to help other small businesses improve their impact.

And if you're already part of the community, Brave & Heart now offer other B Corps a complimentary consultation and an ongoing 8% discount on their standard rates.

As the world around us continues to change at a rapid pace, we need B Corps now more than ever.

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

“

*...we're beyond proud to have achieved B Corp status...*



## What does security architecture do?

By Dan Morrison, Lead Security Architect

It's hard to be confident that your business is not only protected, but that you're protecting the right things, making the right security decisions, spending your security budget in the right places, and getting the most out of your security technology.

**By understanding goals and priorities specific to your business, security architecture can determine the exact controls and technologies that provide the most protection, ensuring you have the right processes and policies to support it, and the feedback and assurance you get is all working. Not only that, but by understanding your business' goals, a well-designed security architecture can even turn security into a business driver, not just by protecting your objectives but helping you to achieve them.**

But what does a well-formed security architecture look like? The 'physical' appearance will be different for every organisation, but ultimately it provides you with a framework where your IT security is:

**Business-driven:** Your controls, choice of products, alignment with standards – all your cybersecurity decisions – are made with the business' objectives in mind. Security is not a blocker, but an enabler of business; and it might even create new opportunities.

**Risk-focused:** Understand what's important and what needs to be protected most, helping to quantify risks to assets, and apply proportional, measurable controls to it – not just once, but for as long as you need it to.

**Cost-optimised:** With the volume of tools and job titles in the market it's too easy to over or under-invest, and it's not always clear you're getting value for money. Security Architecture provides clarity on your security spend, streamlining your technology, and ensuring you're getting the desired return on your investments in line with your risk profile and business needs.

**Comprehensive but adaptable:** Security Architecture often starts with IT or security teams, but should eventually encompass the whole business. This doesn't mean every team becomes cybersecurity experts, but that security decisions account for everyone's needs. It also acknowledges that businesses aren't static; a well-formed architecture adapts to business changes, providing a secure framework without needing constant redesign.

**Measurable:** Like businesses, security isn't static. A strong architecture will provide metrics for security performance, benchmarked against your expectations, giving you assurance that all controls, tools, processes and decisions are continuously providing the right amount of protection, and gaps are highlighted before they become a problem.

Dan Morrison



**Traceable:** Why did you buy Product X or apply Control A? Your business has many stakeholders, so you might not have these answers, but a well-formed security architecture ensures that decisions can be justified to all, and that you have acknowledged their needs, in their context in the process of protecting the business. Your CEO probably doesn't care that your antispam solution has blocked 1,000 phishing emails, but they do care that the business isn't appearing in the news because of a breach. Your security architecture will demonstrate why your antispam is important beyond its immediate outcomes.

Security Architecture is more than just technology. It considers strategy, policies, processes, operations and people; looking at the big picture and drilling down into the detail to continuously ensure you're doing 'enough' security in all the right places, at all the right times in a measurable and justifiable way.

**To find out more about how we can assist you in managing, improving or developing your security architecture, contact the cyber team [cyber@waterstones.com](mailto:cyber@waterstones.com)**

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# A celebration for...

## Steve Long

### *A Decade of Service, Leadership, and Advocacy at Forfusion*

**Steve Long, a former British Army Warrant Officer, recently celebrated a decade of service at Forfusion, where he holds the position of Professional Services Director. Steve's contributions to the Tyneside-based IT consultancy are significant, particularly his role in shaping its commitment to veterans through the Armed Forces Covenant and the Civilian Work Attachment Scheme (CWA), which he spearheads within the organisation.**

Steve's journey with Forfusion began in 2015, when he transitioned from a 24-year military career into the private sector. His extensive experience in telecommunications, leadership, and project management, earned during multiple deployments including in Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, made him a natural fit for the firm's expanding project management team. In his military career, he held roles such as Communications Manager for over 400 personnel, leading a team of 100 specialist operators, and managing an 80-vehicle fleet.

When Steve joined Forfusion, it was a smaller company with big ambitions. His ability to apply military precision to project management quickly made him an indispensable part of the team.

CEO Steven Forrest notes, "Steve's calibre and experience are exceptional. From day one, he has helped us strengthen our reputation for high-quality IT service delivery, particularly in sectors requiring secure services, like government".

As Forfusion grew, so did Steve's responsibilities. He was promoted to Head of the Project Management Office in 2018, where he played a pivotal role in developing Forfusion's Project Management as a Service offering and his leadership ensured the delivery of tailored, high-quality solutions to both public and private sector clients.

Beyond his formal role, Steve's impact on Forfusion extends into the firm's culture and values. A proud advocate for veterans, he has been instrumental in aligning the company's ethos with support for the armed forces community, including playing a key role in Forfusion becoming a signatory of the Armed Forces Covenant - a commitment to ensuring that those who serve or have served in the UK Armed Forces are treated fairly.

One of his proudest achievements is the establishment of Forfusion's Civilian Work Attachment Scheme. Many of their employees owe their positions to this initiative, which helps service leavers from the UK Armed Forces transition to civilian careers. Through structured work experience, participants gain insights into IT roles and access training, mentoring, guidance on CV writing, job searching, and interview techniques, with personalised feedback to improve employability.

Under Steve's leadership, the company was awarded the prestigious Armed Forces Covenant Silver Award, recognising its efforts to support veterans.

Steve added: "I'm passionate about helping others transition from the Armed Forces to Civvy Street, as I know from personal experience how unsettling and uncertain this time can be. I've supported ex-forces personnel in my spare time for many years, including advising on career plans, working with them to improve CVs and helping them to take their next steps. Thanks to Forfusion's support, we can extend this work and help even more people by investing in initiatives like the Civilian Work Attachment Scheme."

Earlier this year, Steve was appointed Professional Services Director, a role that sees him contributing further to the firm's strategic direction. His promotion is a testament to his unwavering commitment to Forfusion's success and the values he has helped instil in the company. As his colleagues and the wider business community recognise his 10 years of service, it is clear that Steve has not only been a driving force behind Forfusion's growth but also a leader who fosters opportunity and inclusivity.

**To find out more about Forfusion, visit: [www.forfusion.com](http://www.forfusion.com)**



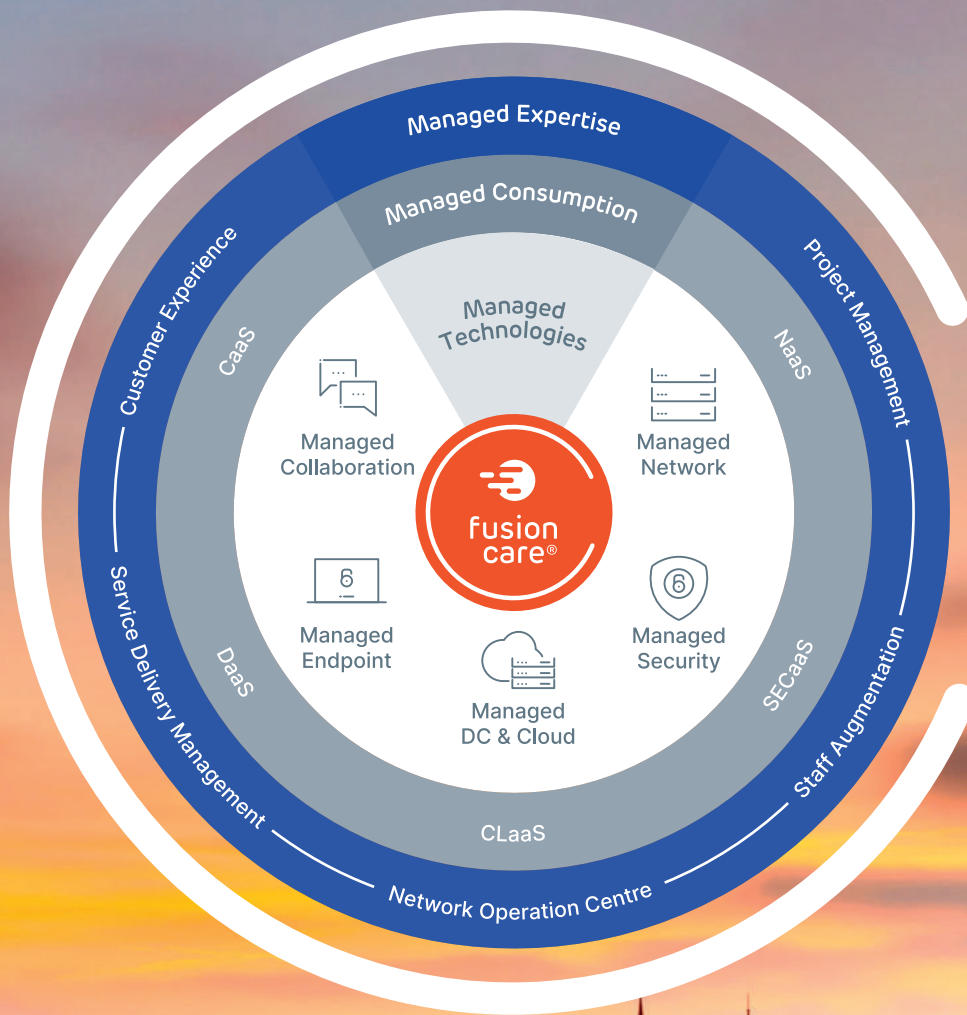
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*...Steve's calibre  
and experience  
are exceptional...*



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Eclipse Wholesale Team at their Gateshead office

## Celebrating 20 Years of Eclipse Wholesale

Eclipse Wholesale, a Gateshead based telecommunications wholesaler, celebrated a significant milestone this September – 20 years in business.

**Founded in 2004 by Managing Director, James Drake, Eclipse Wholesale has grown into a leading player in the UK's telecoms industry. To mark this special occasion, an anniversary event was held at Newcastle's Quayside wine bar, St Vincent, where partners, suppliers and long-standing friends gathered for a memorable evening of celebrations.**

Supported by key partners Zen, 8x8, ITS and Zest4, the event was a fitting tribute to the company's two-decade journey. Guests enjoyed an evening of entertainment, including music from the acoustic duo Sophistrio and comedy from local comedian Matt Reed. The occasion provided an opportunity to reflect on Eclipse Wholesale's journey, celebrate current successes and look forward to the future.

### Eclipse Wholesale's Journey

Eclipse Wholesale began with a mission to support underperforming resellers by offering better service and communication solutions. Over time, the company evolved into a trusted partner for small to medium-sized businesses in the channel. A key turning point in Eclipse's journey was transitioning to a channel-first strategy, focusing exclusively on serving

resellers and dealers within the channel. This move allowed the company to scale rapidly, increase revenue and solidify their place within the channel.

Reflecting on this shift, James Drake noted, "The decision to go channel-first was the most significant milestone in our 20-year journey. It allowed us to grow our team, expand into new regions and deepen our relationships with our partners."

This change also broadened the company's geographic reach, with one of the most notable expansions occurring in Scotland in 2023.

### 2024 Highlights

The 20th anniversary comes on the heels of Eclipse Wholesale's most successful financial year yet. The company saw a 26% increase in revenue, a 33% expansion in its team and welcomed 48% more partners. The company's innovative self-service portal, introduced in 2019, also played a key role in this success, with over 90% of resellers actively using the portal to date. This has significantly improved the partner experience, highlighting the company's commitment to providing their partners with the tools and support they need to grow.

Eclipse Wholesale has also expanded their mobile offerings, adding all major networks to their portfolio, whilst seeing impressive growth in unified communications and voice services, particularly through their partnership with 8x8. These areas are set to continue driving the company's growth alongside connectivity in the future.

### Commitment to Core Values

In the run-up to the anniversary event, Eclipse Wholesale worked with Soul2Sand to create a stunning 80-foot sand artwork of the company's logo at Beadnell Bay. This collaboration exemplified one of the company's core values of teamwork, as every

member played a crucial role in bringing the sand masterpiece to life, highlighting the importance of each individual in our collective success over the last two decades.

During the event, James Drake announced Eclipse Wholesale's new charity partnership with Guide Dogs for the Blind. The company has committed to carrying out a series of fundraising activities over the next year, starting with a 100km dog walk in October which took their total to over £500. The next event, a Christmas Coffee Day in November, will offer guests an opportunity to enjoy festive treats whilst being greeted by our fluffy friends and supporting the cause.

James Drake comments, "I'm thrilled to announce Guide Dogs as our charity of the year. I wanted to find an organisation close to our hearts and it is crucial to me that we use our platform to give back to our local communities. I'm delighted to see that we've already raised over £500 in our first month of fundraising."

### Looking Ahead

As Eclipse Wholesale looks to the future, their primary vision is to become the UK's leading channel aggregator for small to medium-sized channel partners. They aim to achieve this by expanding their connectivity, unified communications and mobile offerings while continuing to support partners in transitioning from old legacy services to modern solutions during their switch off project.

James Drake concluded, "The last 20 years have been an incredible journey and we've achieved so much as a team. The future for Eclipse Wholesale is bright, revenues are growing, our team is expanding, and our products and services continue to evolve. We know who we are and what we want to achieve."

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

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## A celebration of 20 years for Eclipse

Eclipse Wholesale, a leading telecommunications wholesaler in the North East, celebrated 20 years in business this September with an event in Newcastle.

Supported by partners Zen, 8x8, ITS, and Zest4, the celebration followed their most successful financial year, with a 26% revenue increase, 33% team growth, and 48% more partners. Held at St Vincent on the quayside, guests enjoyed food, drinks, and entertainment from acoustic duo Sophistrio and comedian Matt Reed.

Managing Director James Drake announced Guide Dogs for the Blind as their charity of the year, launching a 100km fundraiser with £500 in donations.

Visit [www.eclipsewholesale.co.uk](http://www.eclipsewholesale.co.uk) to see more.





# Personalisation 2.0: the next generation of customer experience

By Claire Cundill, CBO, Leighton

When it comes to personalisation, it's no longer enough to rely on simple recommendations or targeted emails.

Customers expect experiences tailored to their individual needs, and businesses must deliver if they want to keep up. With the advent of advanced technology creating deeper, more effective customer engagement, we're seeing the boom of 'personalisation 2.0'.

## What is personalisation 2.0?

Also known as 'hyper-personalisation', personalisation 2.0 goes beyond basic tactics like "customers who bought this also bought that." It taps into data from multiple sources like browsing history, purchase behaviour or real-time interactions to provide unique, highly targeted experiences. AI, machine learning, and data analytics are at the core, allowing companies to personalise at a much deeper level.

Instead of generic recommendations, personalisation 2.0 predicts what each customer wants before they ask. It's proactive. For example, an e-commerce site might automatically adjust its homepage to highlight the exact products a returning visitor is most likely to buy, based on past behaviour. This level of personalisation feels natural and intuitive to the user.

## Moving beyond basic tactics

Personalisation 2.0 takes customer engagement to new levels by moving beyond surface-level techniques. You're no longer limited to predefined segments. With real-time data and predictive models, you can dynamically tailor content for each customer.

Imagine a user browsing a travel website. Instead of seeing the same deals as everyone else, they're shown packages based on their

previous searches, preferred destinations, and even real-time travel trends.

This approach is about context. Each interaction matters, and businesses can tailor experiences based on a customer's intent, whether they're shopping, researching, or simply exploring.

## The role of AI and machine learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) are key drivers behind personalisation 2.0. These technologies enable businesses to predict what customers want based on patterns in their behaviour. AI-powered tools analyse customer data to suggest products, services, or content at exactly the right time.

For example, a streaming service might use machine learning to recommend shows based on a user's viewing history and preferences. But it doesn't stop there. The system continues to learn and refine its suggestions as the user watches more content. This creates a feedback loop where the service becomes more attuned to the user's tastes over time.

AI helps personalise experiences across channels, whether that's an app, website, or

even an in-store interaction. The result is a seamless experience that feels custom-made for each person.

## Challenges and considerations

Personalisation 2.0 offers clear benefits, but it's not without challenges. Implementing these advanced techniques requires a solid data infrastructure. Without reliable, well-organised data, personalisation efforts will fall flat. Companies also need to manage data responsibly, ensuring privacy and compliance with regulations like GDPR.

Transparency is critical. Customers need to know how their data is being used and should always have control over what they share. Trust is key. If users feel uncomfortable with the way their data is handled, they'll disengage.

Personalisation 2.0 is already reshaping how businesses engage with customers. By using AI and real-time data, companies can provide more relevant, meaningful interactions. The result? Higher customer satisfaction and better business outcomes.

[leighton.com](https://leighton.com)



Claire Cundill



## Feeding Families Annual Charity Gala Dinner

Over £8,000 was raised this year at the annual Feeding Families Gala Dinner, all of which goes to the families needing help in the North East region affected by food poverty.

Held at the Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park, with special guests The Ryton Singers, the return of the Award-Winning North-East Magician, Graeme Shaw, Host Gary Phillipson, and entertainment from the fabulous band Storm - it really was an amazing night to remember.

Guests were welcomed with an exclusive drinks reception, a delicious 3-course meal, which was followed by an evening fun and entertainment for all.

CEO of Feeding Families, Juliet Sanders said: "This yearly event ensures we can support more families experiencing food insecurity within our region and we're extremely grateful to the sponsors and everyone who donated prizes as well as attended the ball itself."

**For information on Feeding Families and how you can help – Email: [info@feedingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:info@feedingfamilies.org.uk)**



## Lauren's career develops from Photographer to Branding Strategist



Newcastle based Lauren McWilliams, a talented and successful photographer, has transformed her career after leaving a stressful role as a trainee probation officer. Struggling with mental health issues, she made the brave decision to reinvent herself and found her true calling as a photographer. Today, Lauren is not just a photographer; she's a Visibility Strategist who helps entrepreneurs, coaches, and small business owners amplify their brands.

Lauren explains, "I help my clients think beyond just the photos—they learn to use their images as part of a larger strategy to build their personal brand and stand out in a crowded online space. It's about being

authentic and establishing yourself as the authority in your field."

Her role as a visibility strategist means that she doesn't just take photos; she helps clients develop comprehensive strategies for leveraging those images. "When I started, I noticed clients had stunning photos but weren't sure how to use them effectively. I teach them how to tell the stories behind those images and use them to fuel their business goals."

Her clients are already seeing the benefits of her programmes, such as Visibility Rebellion, a unique membership that combines mindset coaching, strategy, and content creation.

## Hunters Join Forces to catch web businesses

Friends Claire Hunter from Gateshead and Richard Hunter from Newcastle have announced an exciting new business venture, combining their distinct expertise in social media marketing and software development to create Digital Hunters, a comprehensive digital services company.

Richard Hunter brings a wealth of experience in technology to the table. He started his first business at 14 years old, building computer equipment. His experience lies in building innovative online brands and software development.

Claire Hunter's journey into digital marketing began in a rather unconventional manner starting out as a personal trainer. After breaking her leg she spent six months on crutches during which time she realised the world was going digital, and personal trainers needed to catch up on marketing tactics.

Digital Hunter offers a variety of services including web development, app development, and all aspects of digital marketing such as Facebook ads, Google



ads, TikTok ads, and email marketing. "If it's digital, we can deliver it," Claire said.

The duo is currently working on a unique project aimed at assisting individuals with disabilities. "We're collaborating with disabled people, some of whom have cerebral palsy and are also personal trainers, including Paralympian athlete Stephen Miller from Cramlington. They are also working alongside Ken Rogan, the driving force behind Fenham based KR Fitness C.I.C. and AdaptAbility.Fitness to develop their robust online

The work involves creating a custom delivery platform that is fully accessible and user-friendly for disabled individuals.



## Occupational Psychologist turned Copywriter

Sharon Jones, a Blyth resident with a background in psychology, is making a significant impact by offering professional copywriting services to help businesses grow and thrive.

Having recently moved to Blyth, Sharon quickly fell in love with the town and is now passionate about supporting its businesses through her expertise in communication and business development.

With a master's degree in occupational psychology, Sharon has a solid foundation in understanding the needs of businesses and their clients. Her career includes extensive experience in management and leadership, which she now channels into helping businesses with strategic copywriting to improve their customer outreach. Sharon officially launched her copywriting business this year after undergoing retraining in 2023, which also allowed her to be more flexible in supporting her young autistic daughter.

Sharon works closely with local businesses, not just from her home but by meeting with them in person to understand their unique challenges and offer tailored solutions. She explains, "What I love about Blyth is the sense of community. I've met a lot of businesses, like mine, that are relatively new or pushing hard to succeed. I want to help them grow, and copywriting is just one way to do that."

Since relocating to Blyth in 2020 to be closer to the coast, Sharon has developed a deep affection for the town. "It's a beautiful place with a rich history, stunning architecture, and such warm people. It's filled with potential," she shares. Sharon envisions Blyth becoming a hub for local businesses to prosper and aims to help put the town on the map with her copywriting services and business support.



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## Horizon Works bolsters delivery team with senior appointment



North East-based international B2B marketing company Horizon Works has recruited a new PR and communications specialist as it gears up for further growth in 2024.

Lauren Ford has joined the company as a Client Partner, in a role which will see her lead on campaigns and projects across Horizon Works' client portfolio.

Lauren has more than a decade of experience in marketing and has extensive expertise in communications strategy and brand development, PR, public affairs, reputation management and crisis communications.

She has worked for several North East-based communications agencies, supporting clients across sectors including infrastructure, transport and education, and spent part of her career as a PR Manager for Arriva UK.

Horizon Works, which is based at Northumberland Business Park near Cramlington, Northumberland, offers integrated marketing services including strategy, PR, design, digital, website development and SEO, and supports regional, national and global organisations.



## Mediaworks expands client roster with major client wins

Over recent months, Mediaworks embarked on a journey that would redefine its presence in the industry. As the warm months rolled in, so did a wave of new and prestigious clients, each bringing unique challenges and opportunities.

It all began with the announcement that Tombola, one of the leading online gaming companies, had chosen Mediaworks to support with their creative development. This partnership was a significant win, setting the stage for what would become a season of growth and transformation.

As if that wasn't enough, Odeon, the iconic cinema chain, joined the Mediaworks family. In an era where digital presence is as crucial as the box office, Odeon's decision to trust Mediaworks with its organic search strategy was a clear indication of the agency's growing influence. But the momentum didn't stop there.

The veterinary industry also came knocking, with VetPartners seeking Mediaworks' expertise to improve its CX and migrate their entire portfolio of websites across the globe to a more scalable technology stack.

Then came British Council, a beacon of cultural diplomacy and education, which further diversified Mediaworks' portfolio. Working with such an esteemed institution required a deep understanding of public sector dynamics and a commitment to upholding the Council's prestigious reputation. Mediaworks, with its rich history of delivering results, was more than up to the task.

Travis Perkins, a titan in the building materials industry, also recognised the value Mediaworks could bring to its digital operations. In an extremely competitive sector Mediaworks' comprehensive approach to integrated performance marketing strategies will help Travis Perkins maintain its leadership position.

And then there was Lumo, the forward-thinking train operator, eager to elevate its brand through creative social communication. In an industry that thrives on innovation, Lumo found in Mediaworks a partner capable of driving growth while staying true to its brand ethos.

## Evolved Group strengthens team with four new strategic appointments

As Evolved Group celebrates a decade of success in the digital marketing industry, the company is reinforcing its delivery and client service teams with the addition of four new team members.

To further strengthen its offering, Evolved Group has expanded its Digital PR team with the appointment of Maddie Crossling as Senior Consultant and two new Digital PR Executives, Andrew White and Rory Morris. In addition, Hester Gebbles has joined as Senior Account Manager, focusing on client relations and strategic account management. These new hires are a crucial part of the company's ongoing efforts to support and enhance client operations, ensuring the best service across all accounts.

This growth comes at a pivotal time for the agency as it navigates industry challenges following a turbulent year for the digital marketing landscape.

Evolved is currently investing heavily in the development of its sister brand, UpShift, which specialises in automotive



search marketing. The new hires solidify the foundations for company growth and strengthen their drive towards a true performance culture.

"We are thrilled to welcome our four new starters," said Ian McIntosh, CEO of Evolved. "Each has already demonstrated immense potential and seamlessly integrated into the team. The energy and attitude they bring have been warmly received".

The company aims to expand the team more in the coming months, as it continues to broaden its footprint in the automotive space.



# CBPR

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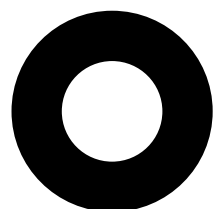
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*...Genuine  
connection is  
at the heart of  
any successful  
partnership...*

Anne Reynolds

# Marketing and Media Matters

*In the latest of this popular series of features we spoke to...*

## Anne Reynolds

*Founder of Blue Moon Marketing*

### Did you always envisage a career in the Media Industry?

Yes, I've always imagined a career in the creative world. From a young age, I was drawn to art and the idea of using media to shape stories, inspire others, and connect people in meaningful ways. While most of my family work in medicine, creativity was definitely my calling.

### What has been your career path so far?

My career began in Sweden. While studying Art & Media at Northumbria Uni, I sought placements overseas with agencies in Malmö, working with brands like Tetra Pak. Presenting to key figures at Tetra Pak one summer really ignited my passion for agency life and client pitching. After graduating, I joined DECIDE, specialising in client servicing for global brands like P&G and Shiseido. I then advanced to Account Director at Guerilla Communications. During the pandemic I was pregnant, and the experience gave me time to rethink what work-life balance really meant to me. It was here that the vision for Blue Moon - my own venture - began to take shape, alongside the birth of my daughter, Skyler.

### What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far?

I've coined my biggest challenges "the three Bs" - Baby, Business, and Belgium! I'm incredibly career-driven, and not afraid to say that I found juggling being a new mum and a new business owner extremely hard to balance. Both are my "babies", and both need to be nurtured to grow, but at times, I struggled to know how best to serve both. Adding to the complexity, we moved to Belgium during COVID for my husband's military service, with our daughter and Blue Moon both under a year old. It was a whirlwind, but it taught me invaluable lessons in resilience.

### Who do you respect most in your industry?

The person I respect most is my MD Michael Pagan. That's why I hired him! Michael is an extraordinary Chartered Marketer, and his passion for consumer psychology has shaped my career, especially in using research to remove subjectivity in design. Beyond his professional brilliance, his authenticity builds strong relationships. It's incredible to be able to work with him again.

### Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

I'm a combination of two characters! It's cliché, but in the early days, I definitely related to Andy Sachs from *The Devil Wears Prada*, learning the ropes (and often failing!) at serving some really demanding clients. I learnt so much about perseverance and growth. Now, I relate more to Emily Cooper from *Emily in Paris*. She too is surrounded by challenging situations but she's found her flow to manage it. Her quick thinking and out-of-the-box ideas for campaigns remind me why I love what I do and reinforce that anything is possible in the creative world. Blue Moon gives me the perfect space to channel my inner-Emily.

### What is your greatest strength?

My greatest strength is my ability to connect with people. It's something I've always valued, and it's no surprise that client relationships, communication strategies and the art of human experience are my specialties. Genuine connection is at the heart of any successful partnership, and being able to understand and relate to people on a deeper level allows me to create meaningful, lasting relationships, in business and beyond.

### What is your biggest weakness?

Being a perfectionist. It's caused many of a day of unnecessary stress and preventing progress being made by focusing too much on minor details. I'm working on it though (as every perfectionist always says!)

### What has been your proudest achievement?

My proudest achievement is my daughter. When Skyler was born on the night of a rare Blue Moon, she filled a space in my heart that I didn't know existed. Now, everything I do is for her.

### What are your future career aspirations?

I'm focused on growing Blue Moon into the number one fractional marketing agency in the UK, driving positive change for how businesses work and interact with agencies.

As a result of our proven fractional model, I now sit on the executive board as CMO for our client RE:GEN Group - a brand I created from my dining table in 2020, which has now gone on to become the fastest growing business in the North East two years in a row.

### How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?

I see marketing becoming more dynamic and interconnected. Data-driven marketing will enable hyper-personalised strategies, while sustainability and social responsibility will shape brand messaging. Of course, AI and automation will continue to streamline operations, enhancing creativity and strategic focus. I'd like to think brands will continue to prioritise community, authenticity, and building real connections in new and evolving spaces.

### How do you like to unwind?

I love to unwind with Reformer Pilates! The focus on breathing and movement helps me clear my head, and I always leave feeling refreshed and centred. Plus, it's a great workout that keeps me strong, which is a bonus.

[bluemoon-marketing.co.uk](http://bluemoon-marketing.co.uk)

# New clients for SASS see former journalists' business going from strength to strength!



Sarah Dale and Sarah Walker

**SASS media have recently begun supporting Croxdale Group Durham and Open Clasp Theatre Company in Newcastle with marketing content and PR support.**

**SASS media Ltd, which was set up just over two years ago by former journalists Sarah Walker and Sarah Dale, is going from strength to strength!**

The company has been shortlisted for no less than three awards this year, including Best New Business at the Tees Businesswomen Awards, as well as Best New Creative Business and Standout Achievement at the Best New Tees Business Awards.

However, the two Sarahs measure their success, not by the number of awards they are shortlisted for, but by what they are able to deliver for clients.

The pair also pride themselves on the

diversity of the sectors they work within, which is no less evident than with their two newest clients, Croxdale Group Durham and Open Clasp Theatre Company in Newcastle.

"We're really excited to be working in two new sectors for us – the automotive industry and the Arts," said Sarah Walker.

"These two clients couldn't have more different requirements for working with us, but we are relishing the challenge of supporting both, alongside our other longstanding clients, which include Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust and Benham Publishing.

"The diversity of our work is what makes it so exciting - and we are proud of the fact that our work sees us promoting organisations across the public, private and third sectors, as well as supporting the success of fantastic events in the region, such as the Saltburn Food Festival and the many brilliant Taste of Africa events across Teesside."

The Sarahs secured media coverage for Croxdale Group in their first month of working with the company.

With SASS's support, Croxdale has been featured in The Gazette, which shared the

success of the automotive centre's charity golf day for Butterwick Hospice, where more than £10,000 was raised for the vital charity.

Croxdale has also appeared in The Northern Echo, which covered the firm's recent £500,000 investment in new after sales, servicing and repair facilities, creating 20 new jobs.

SASS has also helped Open Clasp Theatre celebrate the honorary Doctor of Letters degree achieved by its co-founder and artistic director Catrina McHugh MBE.

The PR firm with journalistic flair is also supporting the company to promote its ongoing tour of the film version of the hard-hitting play Mycelial, written by Catrina.

The feminist theatre company, which aims to "change the world one play at a time" by tackling social issues and inequality through the Arts, has the ultimate goal of ending violence against women and girls.

**For more information, visit [www.croxdalegroup.com](http://www.croxdalegroup.com) or [www.openclasp.org.uk](http://www.openclasp.org.uk) [sassmedialtd.co.uk](http://sassmedialtd.co.uk)**



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# Katie Jago on the Future of Paid Search

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.

**Katie Jago, Paid Search Manager at Bonded, discusses her journey into paid search, the importance of feed optimisation for Google Shopping, and exciting developments in Performance Max campaigns.**



Katie Jago  
Paid Search Manager

It's all about making sure that the product listings are relevant to the user's search query to offer the best possible experience.

**“Connection is about finding common ground and taking the time to truly understand someone.”**

**Q: Are there any upcoming developments in paid search that you're excited about?**

**Katie:** Absolutely! The rollout of campaign-level negatives for Performance Max is something I'm really excited about. PPC professionals have been asking for this since the campaign type launched, and it's going to be a game-changer.

Having the ability to use negatives at a campaign level will help improve efficiency and give potential customers a more accurate view of what brands have to offer. We're expecting this feature to be live by the end of the year, and I can't wait to see the impact it will have!

**Q: What does Bonded's core belief of connection mean to you?**

**Katie:** For me, connection is about finding common ground and taking the time to truly understand someone or something. It's what drew me to Bonded - their focus on collaboration and working closely with their clients really resonated with me. I could see that Bonded fosters an environment where connection and teamwork are at the heart of everything they do - and it's something I wanted to be a part of.

**Q: Finally, who would be your dream client?**

**Katie:** Accessorize, I'm passionate about e-commerce clients and as a brand I love, it'd be great to work on their wide range of products.

**Q: Can you start by introducing yourself and your role at Bonded?**

**Katie:** Sure! I'm Katie Jago, and I'm the new Paid Search Manager here at Bonded Agency. I've been in the industry for five years now, working across a wide range of agencies and managing campaigns for clients in a variety of sectors.

With a background in Business Management, and a MSc in Digital Marketing and Data Analytics, I'm really passionate about using data to drive smart, effective strategies, and I can't wait to put these skills to work with Bonded's clients.

**Q: What are some common misconceptions people have about paid search?**

**Katie:** One area that often goes unnoticed is feed optimisation for Google Shopping ads. Many advertisers overlook how powerful a well-optimised product feed can be. Attributes like titles, descriptions, and even small details like colour and size play a huge role in enhancing a campaign.

Internal jargon can be a real issue, especially with product names and colours, but using feed rules or a supplemental feed can transform this language into something much more customer-friendly.

# Navigating Tomorrow's Digital Landscape

## At Bonded, we're always looking ahead.

Whether it's staying up to date with the latest digital marketing trends or creating spaces for industry leaders to share their insights, we believe that knowledge is most powerful when it's shared. At Bonded, connection is at the heart of everything we do—whether that's connecting ideas, brands, or people.

We launched our first-ever Future Trends Report earlier this year, in collaboration with media owners across the UK. Diving into the emerging trends shaping the media landscape, the report was met with such a positive response, we decided to turn it into a series of *Future Trend Festivals* held in Newcastle, Edinburgh and London. Bringing together speakers from major platforms like Meta, TikTok, Spotify, X, Pinterest and Thinkbox, these events shed light on the latest innovations within the advertising sector.

**“In such a fast-paced industry, staying at the forefront of innovation is key to truly connecting with your audience.”**

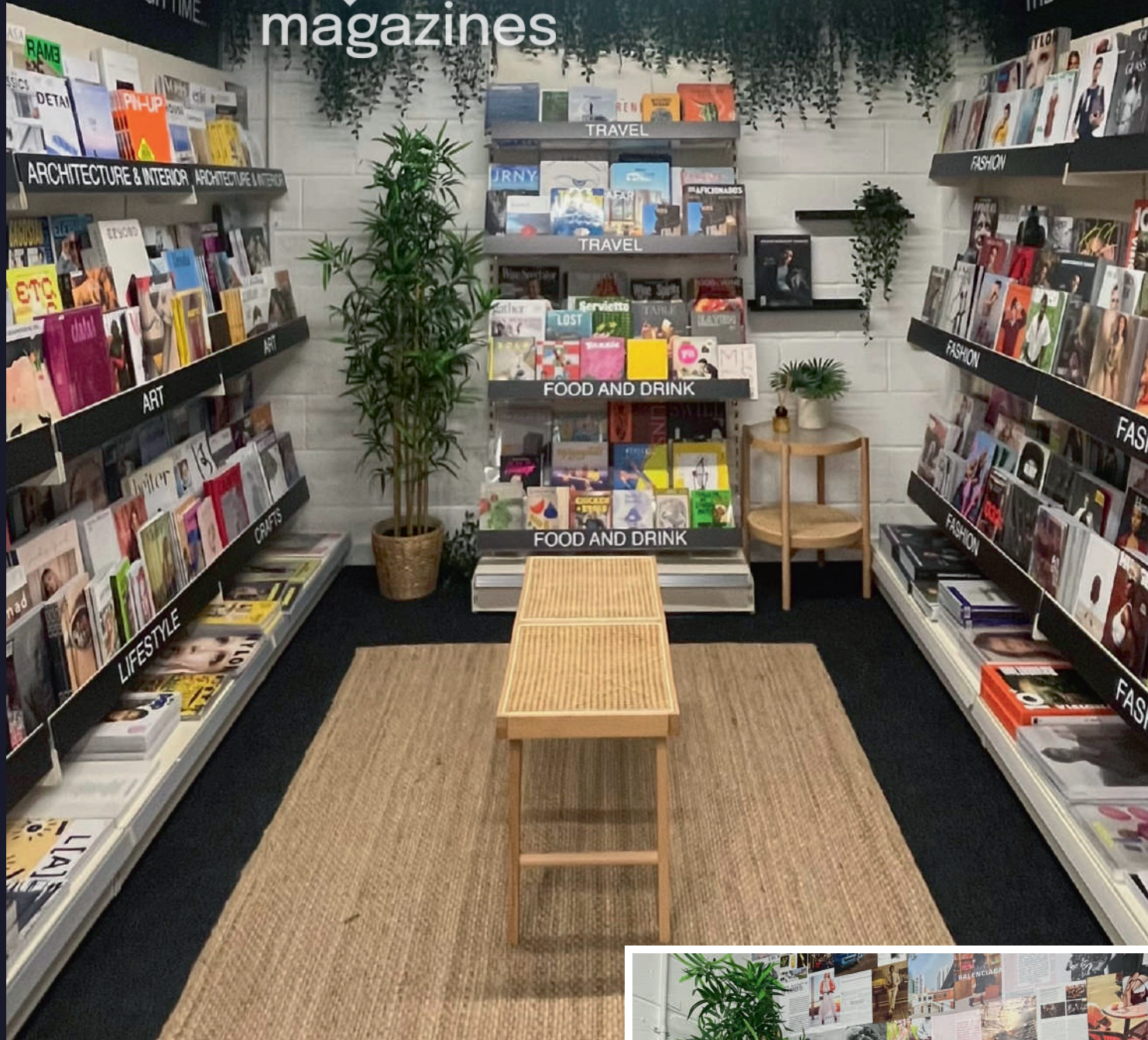
**Steven Underwood**  
Managing Director

At Bonded, staying ahead of the curve is critical, and we continue to share the latest insights through our blog. Each week, we sift through thousands of articles to curate Bonded Bitesize, rounding up the latest updates in digital and media. Alongside Bitesize, we publish in-depth explorations of key trends, topics, and innovations, keeping our clients and community informed and ready for what's next.

With the success of our first Future Trends Report, the team is already hard at work preparing next year's edition. Be sure to follow Bonded on socials to stay up to date with our upcoming events, catch the latest report, and keep informed on all things digital and media.

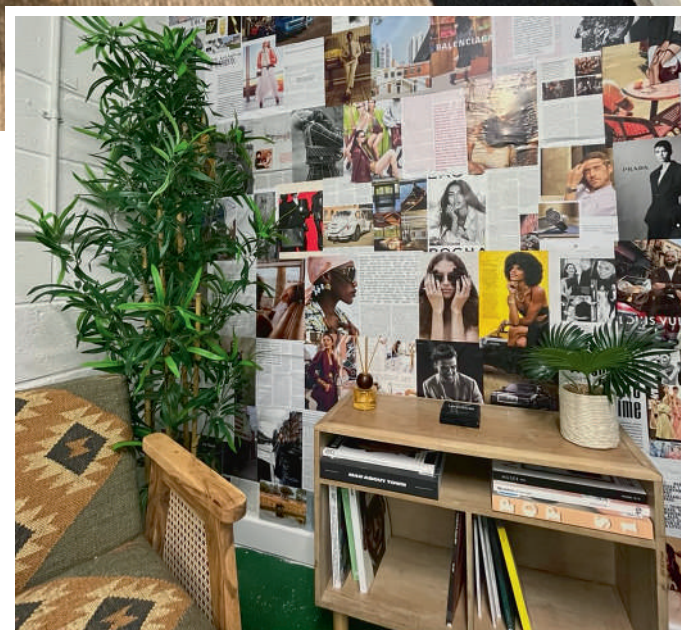


# UNIQUE magazines



## Inspiring tomorrow's creatives at Unique Magazines

Some individuals have an early awareness of their passions and future ambitions. This intrinsic desire, often referred to as our 'Tick,' is a deep-seated drive that awaits exploration. At Unique Magazines, our tick for print is prominent driving us to share the captivating world of magazines to the creatives of tomorrow.



**The transition from school to adulthood is pivotal. Whether it involves stepping into a career or embarking on university life, this transition is fraught with challenges and changes. From moving away from home for the first time, exploring new cities or fostering countless new friendships, this educational transition and journey is monumental, which often determines life paths and long-term careers.**

For students, this period is thrilling yet filled with obstacles. The relentless pace of assignments, exams, and deadlines aims to prepare them for future careers but can also lead to considerable stress. Recognising the importance of support during this journey, here at Unique Magazines, we have dedicated ourselves to creating an environment where students can feel recognised, inspired, and motivated.

Our independent magazine room, a haven for print enthusiasts, houses over 300 niche titles. This diverse collection ensures that there's something for everyone, covering a broad range of interests from film, media, and literature, to fashion, art, and architecture. It's a space to reflect everyone in unique ways, from all walks of life.

Recently, we've expanded with an exciting new addition in the works: our magazine lounge. Situated right beside our independent magazine room, which is overflowing with a diverse range of print, the lounge offers a relaxing escape. Here, you can kick back, immerse yourself in your chosen magazine and disconnect from the world for a bit.

The impact of our space and platform became evident when we recently welcomed a group of final-year fashion students from Teesside University. These students were in the throes of creating their own magazine as a final project, seeking to apply everything they had learned into a creative and distinctive publication. Their lecturer, Abigail Dennison, who is also the founder and editor-in-chief of Sunday Girl magazine, recommended our magazine room as a source of inspiration, as there truly is nowhere like it in the North East. This visit sparked a flurry of creative ideas among the students, although Abigail reminded them to push the boundaries further to uncover truly unique concepts for their final project. With the end of their degree in sight, our magazine room was their last little push to give momentum allowing them to achieve a grade they can feel proud of.

Inspired by this visit and the evident need for such a creative, open space, we recently launched a special initiative aimed directly at students: an opening evening with discounts on our range of independent magazines to help alleviate the financial burden of university life. Looking to the future, we are excited to expand our

# THE SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE



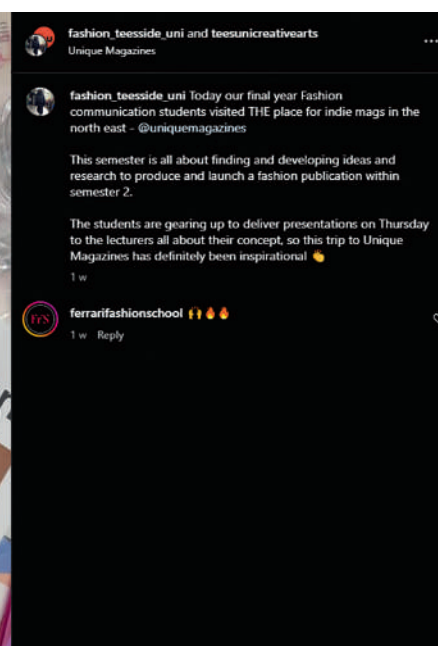
engagement through a series of events designed to create a supportive community for learning and growth. These include relaxed browsing evenings, magazine creation workshops led by independent publishers, and insightful talks from experienced designers, for local students hungry for knowledge!

At Unique Magazines, our passion for print runs deep. As former students ourselves, we understand the need for resources that not only motivate but also educate and inspire students on their chosen paths. By making print magazines accessible through

regular events in a dynamic and supportive environment, we aim to contribute to the educational journey of students, fostering their growth and aiding in the realisation of their future ambitions.

Supporting our local students and their pursuit of dreams not only enriches their lives but also strengthens the community. At Unique, we are committed to being a part of that support system, fuelling the next generation of creative professionals with the vast world of print.

**[www.uniquemagazines.co.uk](http://www.uniquemagazines.co.uk)**



## Are you utilising current client relationships?

Client case studies provide more than just feedback, they should be an integral part of your marketing strategy.

**While we're all aware that retaining current clients is a lot easier than securing new business, how many of us actually maintain regular and effective communications with our clients?**

Carrying out case studies is one way of receiving not only productive and constructive feedback for your business but can also be used as a crucial PR tool for your client too. This collaboration can also strengthen client relationships and build long-term trust between both parties.

### **Builds trust and credibility**

One of the primary advantages of a case study is the social proof it offers. They showcase the effectiveness of your product or service, providing concrete examples of success while helping to build credibility, trust and authority. The feedback can highlight areas for improvement, giving your business a chance to enhance the customer experience, innovate and refine your offerings.

In today's digital world, where customers are increasingly sceptical of brand claims, real-life examples of satisfied clients provide much-needed validation. A well-constructed case study demonstrates how your product or service helped a client achieve a specific outcome, which builds trust and credibility for potential customers.

### **Showcase tangible results**

A well-constructed case study focuses on specific outcomes, often highlighting quantifiable metrics such as increased revenue, reduced costs or improved efficiency. These concrete results resonate with potential clients who are seeking evidence of return on investment before making purchasing decisions.



Nicola Halse

Case studies tell stories about real people and businesses, making your brand more relatable. Start by giving an introduction to the challenge the client had, why they chose your business over your competitors, how your product or service solved their problem and the ultimate outcome.

By showcasing customer challenges, struggles and eventual success, you create an emotional connection with readers. This not only humanises your brand but also demonstrates empathy for your customers' pain points.

### **Benefits to your clients**

When approaching clients to request them to take part in any case study, it's important to provide them with a benefit to their own brand too. Providing links to the client's website via the online case study and mentioning their business in any social posts encourages the client to take part, knowing they will also receive valuable positive exposure.

### **They're a versatile marketing asset**

As with all forms of marketing, it's important to remember to utilise all content to support your overall strategy. Case studies are versatile marketing assets that can be used in multiple formats and channels.

Publishing them on your website can, when successfully optimised, improve your website's SEO performance, share them on your social media channels, include in email campaigns, extract positive feedback for use in testimonials or even use them in presentations. Their real-world relevance makes them adaptable for various touchpoints along the customer journey.

By showcasing success stories, they help build trust, engage prospective customers, and serve as versatile content across various marketing channels.

For businesses looking to strengthen their credibility and convert more leads, case studies are an invaluable asset.

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Veronica Swindale



Joe Bell, Senior Marketing Manager - CRM, Virgin Money

## Lifelong learning isn't just an option for marketers - it's necessary

You don't have to put your life on hold to study a valuable professional qualification. nesma's flexible approach to learning allows you to grow professionally without sacrificing the things that matter most to you.

As a Senior Marketing Manager, Joe Bell has found that leading marketing teams isn't just about managing tasks—it's about inspiring, motivating, and fostering collaboration. This led him to the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme, a masters level qualification specifically designed to sharpen leadership capabilities and help marketers guide their teams to success.

Veronica Swindale, nesma MD, asked Joe how easy it was to commit to this marketing masters level qualification whilst balancing work and personal matters...

### How easily did you slip back into a studying mindset?

The training materials provided by nesma were a great resource and helped break down and structure the tasks into smaller chunks. Before starting, I knew the expectations were to complete around nine hours per week, so it was less about getting into the mindset of studying and more about finding the time with work and a busy lifestyle. The great thing about CIM is that it's directly related to your day-to-day work, so it wasn't necessarily about learning something new – just how you apply the learning to improve business performance.

### How do you think the CIM Level 7 qualification has benefited you?

As I've worked in the same role for almost five years, I've only focused on developing my skills required day to day. It's great being a specialist, but this qualification has helped me step back and look at the bigger picture! It's given me a different perspective on my approach to management – and leadership. It's one thing to plan, coordinate and organise teams to deliver, but leadership is about inspiring and developing others – something I'm keen to learn more about.

### How do you keep your team innovative and motivated?

Virgin Money is fantastic in supporting employees to achieve CIM qualifications in partnership with nesma. Since my enrolment back in 2022, a further fifteen brand and marketing colleagues have, or are in the process of studying for a CIM qualification. Combined with our graduate programme, we value these new skills and the benefits they bring.

We have some fantastic marketers who have worked in financial services and/or Virgin Money for decades. However, seeing what some of our recently qualified colleagues create each week is incredible. We work in an intensely competitive market where challenger banks continue to step up their game; therefore, it's vital that we invest in our team and continue to be disruptive.

*“It's been over ten years since completing my CIM Level 6, and it has shown me (again) the importance of continuous learning. Our industry continues to evolve at an unprecedented pace, and it's vital to sharpen those tools before AI takes over! Seeing some of my suggestions for change over the past 18 months being considered is incredibly rewarding. The CIM Leadership Level 7 qualification is undoubtedly mutually beneficial for both student and employer.”*

Joe Bell, Senior Marketing Manager - CRM, Virgin Money

### How do you measure your team's success and evaluate their impact?

You can tell I'm a recent CIM graduate (I'm using a couple of business management models here)! I try to use them in every part of my job. The PR Smith SOSTAC® model helps me focus on business objectives before looking at how we approach things strategically and tactically. Having objectives gives us an aim or purpose and allows us to measure our success.

I use “we” a lot as I think it's important that individuals are not singled out for performance when a lot of what we do in marketing requires various teams to pull together to achieve the same thing. We also adopt a test-and-learn culture at Virgin Money, encouraging our team to try new things—even if they don't work. Sometimes, those small incremental gains can make a massive difference for individual customers and long-term commercial objectives, so we always try to improve to go beyond good enough.

### As a graduate, you will be part of the nesma learning community; what else will you do to expand your network?

Enjoying the company of my fellow learners has given me a push to get out and about more. There's a hive of activity in the North East and a talented group of marketers, which I'm keen to get involved with. The North East Marketing Awards is just one example of the top talent getting together and celebrating success – and it was great to sit with nesma at last year's awards.

I'm also speaking at a CRM event in London in October—the Think Summit. There'll be a few hundred marketers listening to what I have to say about my work at Virgin Money, and without my CIM qualification and work with nesma in the last 18 months, I doubt I'd be setting foot on that stage.

### And finally, what would you say to your colleagues at Virgin Money about studying with nesma?

Quite simply, it is important to embrace it and make the most of it. It's one thing to get the qualification for your CV, but another to spend those months/years working hard to learn new things. Balancing everything life throws at you is challenging, but it will be worth it in the long run.

Joe has proven that while the qualification demands a strong level of dedication, you can pace your learning and access tutor support to keep you on track. With time management and motivation, achieving a Level 7 qualification can be manageable and rewarding.

### Are you ready to advance your marketing leadership?

Contact Jen at 07734 222 254 or email [hello@nesma.co.uk](mailto:hello@nesma.co.uk)

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## ...Supporting our Charities...

*Movember is a charity event where men grow moustaches throughout November to raise awareness for men's health issues, particularly prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health. Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what charity their business/organisation supports and why?*



Off The Grid often works with other charities and community organisations to support some of the most vulnerable in our communities. We are particularly proud at present of a great partnership with St Anthonys Health Centre & Walker Medical Group in Newcastle. Deep End funding was granted nationally for pilot projects in areas of significant clinical need. In the North East this funding supported several really innovative projects to tackle challenging physical & mental health conditions.

Together we have developed an exercise referral pathway through the surgeries and the social prescribing link workers to get targeted residents of Walker with significant health conditions onto E bikes and get them out into the local area to improve both physical and mental health. Over 30 adult referrals to date have been identified and supported onto the programme. Researchers from Durham University have been tracking individual progress and the journeys of some of the participants. The initial signs are very positive with a more in-depth report on the impact of the scheme due early next year!

If you interested in what we do, or want to work with us just get in touch for a coffee and a chat on [paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk](mailto:paul@off-the-grid-cic.uk) or check out our website.

**Paul Kirkpatrick, [offthegrid-adventures.co.uk](http://offthegrid-adventures.co.uk)**

We support Oasis Community Housing which is a homeless charity in the north east. We particularly like the work that they do with women and families (although they also work with men.) With women they help them avoid homelessness or their children being taken into care. We support them as their values align with ours and we are always aware of the privilege that we have as home owners.

**Sue Shaw-Toomey, [www.toomeylegal.co.uk](http://www.toomeylegal.co.uk)**



Ever since St Oswald's Hospice started its sculpture trails I have been involved as an artist. I knew that this would be a wonderful way of creating something truly unique for a very worthwhile charity. St Oswald's is a hospice rooted in the North East. They provide outstanding, specialist and expert care to adults and children with life-limiting conditions.

The sculpture that I painted last year (Club Tropicana) raised over £5000 for the hospice and found its new home in the Keith Pattinson estate agents' head office. I was so happy to visit CT after the sculpture trail in his wonderful new home. Painting in colour and glitter for the first time was also an absolute joy and has inspired me to introduce colour in my new Calendar so that 2025 will be filled with colour and joy for everyone who has one.

Supporting charities like St Oswald's brings me so much joy and I am so thrilled that the sculptures I have painted so far have raised so much money for this wonderful charity.

**Corinne Lewis Ward, [www.powderbutterfly.com](http://www.powderbutterfly.com)**





One of the most joyous parts of my life is being a patron for the Sunderland mental health charity Headlight. I often say that the place is an island of sanity in a world of chaos. They are the most wonderful organisation who help people find a place to belong and be as well as possible.

Working for Headlight over the last decade has been a privilege and deeply insightful about how brave people can be, how they hold onto their humour even when they are suffering and how together we are stronger. I've always been a keen fundraiser and done just about every kind of event to raise money.

In my personal life, I try to make sure that we meet our tithe, always use gift aid and set up covenants when we support a charity so that they know the money will come each month.

I recycle lots of things and recently we donated my husband's bike to a wonderful organisation that mends them and then sells them at an affordable price and the profits go back to the charity.

Just a kind word can bestow a wealth onto a sad soul. Giving our time is another wonderful way to give and our resources add to that blessing.

*Dr Rebecca Dinsdale, [www.drrebecca.org.uk](http://www.drrebecca.org.uk)*



Christmas can be a particularly difficult time for many people, especially those facing homelessness or hardship. Our 'Feed a Friend for a Fiver' campaign is a simple but powerful way to show that someone cares. Last year, we were overwhelmed by the incredible generosity of our community, and this year, we hope to continue that spirit of giving to help even more people in need.

The People's Kitchen relies entirely on donations and local support and the charity has become a crucial lifeline for many—providing not only meals but also a sense of belonging in a safe, welcoming environment.

Donations to the 2024 "Feed a Friend for a Fiver" campaign can be made through The People's Kitchen website or via the JustGiving page at [justgiving.com/campaign/faffaf-2024](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/faffaf-2024). Every £5 donated will make a real difference, ensuring someone in need receives a hot meal and a moment of care this Christmas.

*Maggie Pavlou, The People's Kitchen*

*Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact [keith@highlightspr.co.uk](mailto:keith@highlightspr.co.uk) or call Keith on 07814 397951*

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**Contact Keith Newman for more details.**

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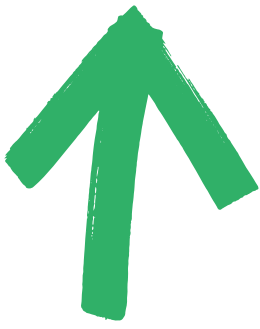


## Leading Link opens new Blyth offices

Leading Link, a Northumberland-based charity known for supporting young people through a wide range of innovative programmes, has relocated its offices to the heart of Blyth town centre.

To mark this important milestone, the charity recently hosted an open day, welcoming more than 40 representatives from community groups, funders, and local organisations to the new workplace.





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# Northern Leaders Trust pioneers enriching elective curriculum

Northern Leaders Trust has introduced a new elective curriculum, which they are rolling out across their two schools, Kenton School and Studio West.

**Developing its students' interests, providing new opportunities and preparing them for life after school, the elective curriculum offers every student the chance to participate in an activity of their choice for 35 minutes at the end of each day. The initiative is generating positive results and excitement across both schools.**

The elective curriculum offers a wide range of activities, from sports and creative arts to academic clubs and skill-building sessions, all aimed at enhancing the student experience. Students can choose from activities such as the 5k Running Club, Debate Club, Sewing, Film Critics, Studio Bakes and more. With a range of options to choose from, there is something to engage everyone, whether their passions lie in sports, creative arts or academic pursuits.

The initiative is available to all students at Kenton School and Studio West. This ensures that every student, regardless of background, can access the same opportunities to develop new skills and interests.



The introduction of this curriculum stemmed from a commitment to further engage students with their education and give them something to look forward to each day. UK qualification board, Pearson, recently reported that 1.5 million children struggle to engage with their learning, so the elective curriculum at Northern Leaders Trust stands as a proactive approach to address this statistic.

Staff were encouraged to offer activities they are passionate about, allowing them to share and pass on their interests to the students. In addition, student councils at both schools were consulted, ensuring that the choices reflected the students' interests. This collaborative process led to a diverse selection of activities being offered, enabling every student to find something they will enjoy.

Through the initiative, Northern Leaders Trust are not only promoting personal development, but also academic learning. Each activity has a set of learning objectives which are made clear to the students in order to help them understand the skills and/or additional qualifications they will gain through their participation.

The early results reflect that the initiative is already having a positive impact on both schools. Attendance has improved and students are excited about meeting and working with peers from other year groups. This is helping students develop confidence and communication skills that will serve them well in school, future employment and social situations.

Students have shared their positive experiences of the elective curriculum, with many expressing enthusiasm for their chosen activities. One Year 10 student, Tre, said "Positive Mental Health group is really nice to be a part of. You have more freedom than in lessons and the opportunity to make others feel good."

Another student enjoys the fruits of their labour, emphasising that "Studio Bakes is so much fun, I get to bake and then bring it home to share with people."

Year 8 student Joseph shared his excitement about Fantasy Football, saying, "We are building a team together, which is making us think about tactics." This feedback demonstrates the wide-reaching benefits of the elective curriculum, including the development of teamwork skills, creativity and enthusiasm.



Executive Principal at Northern Leaders Trust, Martyn Gordon, reflects on the importance of the initiative, while emphasising the Trust's commitment to offer every student a well-rounded education: "At Northern Leaders Trust, we are driven to deliver a holistic educational experience for every student that we serve. We challenge ourselves to ensure the full range of experiences is of the highest quality. We are incredibly proud of our academic curriculum, which is vitally important, but is just one element of the overall picture. Equally important are the experiences deemed to be extra-curricular and those that are less tangible: the ethos, high expectations and culture, which transmit subliminal messages to all in the school community.

For this academic year, we wanted to offer something additional, that would motivate and inspire our students to meet all of our expectations and complement their learning, which led to the creation of our elective curriculum.

"It was designed to provide our students with the opportunity to realise their full potential in all areas. We want education in our schools to be rewarding and life changing, by providing a wide range of activities which allows happy and motivated students to engage and achieve well.

Our broad and exciting elective curriculum is having a colossal impact, with improved attendance, punctuality, engagement, achievement and progress in both schools. Student and staff feedback has been incredibly encouraging and everything is indicating that our exceptional students will continue the highly positive trends from the last few years."

[www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/news/2024/06/pearson-school-report-2024](https://www.pearson.com/en-gb/news-and-policy/news/2024/06/pearson-school-report-2024)

[northernleaderstrust.org](https://northernleaderstrust.org)



## Newcastle High School for Girls named Finalist in the Independent Schools of the Year Awards

Newcastle High School for Girls has been named a Finalist in the Independent Schools of the Year Awards, after being shortlisted in July. These prestigious awards celebrate and recognise the exceptional achievements of independent schools across the country.

medium of film the girls shared their own dreams and aspirations which were an authentic reflection of how, at NHSG, we empower every pupil to achieve their goals, becoming the leaders, trailblazers, and world-shapers of the future."

"Newcastle High School for Girls is a vibrant learning community where every girl is celebrated as an individual and is encouraged to be the best version of herself—both academically and in her broader pursuits. It is a privilege to watch our pupils grow in confidence, character, and capability, as they head off to follow their dreams and shape the world for the better. The 'Dream Making to Trailblazing' campaign is a testament to the outstanding education we offer and the remarkable achievements of our pupils."

**Senior School Open Morning,  
Saturday 9th November**

**Junior School Open Morning,  
Saturday 23rd November**

**Please register online through the school's website: [newcastlehigh.gdst.net](http://newcastlehigh.gdst.net)**

**This recognition further underscores the outstanding quality of education at NHSG, which was also shortlisted for Independent Senior School of the Year at the TES Schools Awards earlier this year.**

The school's nomination highlights the remarkable educational journey that girls experience at NHSG—from their first tentative steps in nursery to confidently stepping out into the world after Sixth Form, ready to follow their chosen paths and realise their dreams which is so beautifully captured in their recent 'Dream Making to Trailblazing' campaign and which offers a glimpse into the unique educational experience at Newcastle High, one of the leading girls' schools in the country.

Amanda Hardie, Head of Newcastle High School for Girls, said: "We are absolutely delighted that NHSG has been named as a finalist in the Independent Schools of the Year Awards. Last year, we launched our 'Dream Making to Trailblazing' campaign to showcase the ethos of our school and the value of an all-girl education. Through a series of films, we captured the experiences

of individual pupils at each stage of their educational journey—from the very first days in nursery to their final steps in Sixth Form and beyond, as our alumnae go on to make their mark in the world.

The 'Dream Making to Trailblazing' campaign is a true reflection of what we deliver at NHSG every day. Through the



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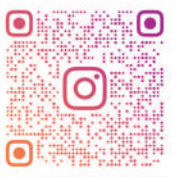
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# In Conversation With...

## The Journey Ahead

Now into her 3rd year at Newcastle Preparatory School Gemma Strong spoke to Michael Grahamslaw about the journey so far and plans for the school year ahead.

**So Gemma it is some time since we last met. How has the previous 12 month period gone for you?**

As ever, we are constantly evolving but we have had a fantastic year. We were preparing for a period of uncertainty with the impending VAT addition to school fees but I'm delighted to say we have gone from strength to strength. Our children leaving us in Year 6 had an abundance of offers, averaging at two places each at local independent schools which illustrates we are consistently going in the right direction. That has been immensely satisfying to myself and my team.

**What are your key goals this academic year and can you discuss any new programmes, initiatives or curriculum changes and how they may impact on student learning?**

We are determined to provide stability and a benchmark of excellence for all of our children. As a school we are working towards attaining a National Association for Able Children in Education Award and will hopefully have gained accreditation this time next year. We make learning challenging, relevant and exploratory for all learners. This approach is in place across our whole curriculum, including specialist subjects. Our hugely popular themed weeks will continue in a slightly different way this year, encouraging teamwork, challenge and resilience.

**How do you instil a strong sense of inclusion in school life amongst students, parents and staff?**

I think the simple little things go a long way such as being there every morning just to say hello. We also welcome honest feedback, both good and bad, and as part of this have encouraged parents to come into the school more often and see their children's classrooms, their work and ultimately, their school world. We also welcome parents to join in activities and events throughout the year. It is all about being approachable and having your door open for everyone. Children pop in to see me regularly; staff know I will be there no matter how big or small their query is. There is a place for everyone in our NPS family.

**How do you endeavour to support teachers' professional development?**

We do this through an ongoing programme of development which makes time for new learning and also gives the opportunity to work collaboratively and embed learning in their practice. All teachers are invested in individual development and many look at further national professional qualifications. We also support staff more holistically with regular wellbeing and career progression meetings.

**Can you share your approach to maintaining a balance between academic rigor and the emotional and social needs of students?**

Social and emotional development has to be the first priority otherwise you are fighting a losing battle and children will not be in a good place to learn. The fundamentals are ensuring that a child is safe, comfortable and in the right mindset. Once that is achieved, then the range of opportunities and subjects come into their own, allowing impactful learning and progress. Instilled in our culture is kindness. It is modelled by staff and expected of pupils.

**What is the most rewarding part of your role?**

When you see happy and excited children who love their school. It is then you realise that you are making a difference.

**What is your long term vision for the school and how do you see the school evolving in the coming years?**

We are celebrating our 140th anniversary next year so we must be doing something right. I want us to continue as a successful and popular co-educational, independent preparatory school, the only one in Tyneside, but strive to be better every day.

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Gemma Strong



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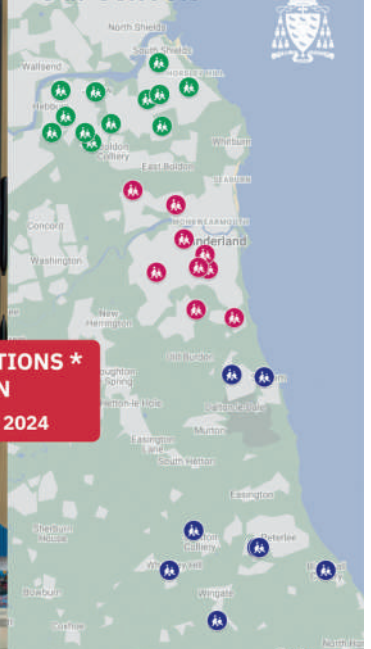


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## Tyneside Cinema and Crowne Plaza Hotel Newcastle link up for new partnership

**Tyneside Cinema, the Home of Independent Cinema in the North East, has linked up with the Crowne Plaza Newcastle in the first of a series of strategic partnerships for the venue.**

Over the next 12 months, Tyneside Cinema will host a series of exclusive Q&A events, championing independent filmmakers and bringing some of the UK and global cinema's best international talent to the North East.

The series started last month with a sold-out Tyneside welcoming director Daniel Kokotajlo to discuss his highly acclaimed folk-horror film *Starve Acre*, based on the

acclaimed novel by Andrew Michael Hurley and starring former Doctor Who star Matt Smith.

Nic Greenan, CEO of Tyneside Cinema, said: "Q&As at The Tyneside are such unique, memorable experiences, which people just can't get anywhere else.

"Having the Crown Plaza as our Q&A sponsor supporting what's going to be an exciting season of guests, allows us a charity to offer a unique stay and experience to filmmakers whilst visiting. This means that more writers, directors and producers can visit Newcastle."

Paul Borg, General Manager of the Crowne Plaza in Newcastle, said: "We are thrilled to engage in this partnership with Tyneside Cinema, a beloved cornerstone of the Newcastle community.

The Q&A Screenings supported by Crowne Plaza Newcastle is the first in a series of planned tie-ups between the Tyneside and business supporters as the cinema pursues its plans to bring even more cultural events to the city.

Question time – members of seminal UK reggae band The Cimarons will be taking part in the Q&A Screenings supported by Crowne Plaza Newcastle at Tyneside Cinema.



## Christmas All Wrapped up at Live Theatre

**If you're looking for a great Christmas night out with your family, friends or colleagues this December, book tickets to see *Present at Live Theatre on Newcastle's quayside for this 'alternative Christmas fable packed with humour and heart.'* THE STAGE 2019**

Playing from Tue 3 – Sat 21 Dec, this Alphabetti Theatre production in association with Live Theatre and Crisis Skylight is a high octane festive play with live music. Written and directed by Ali Pritchard, Malcolm Shields takes on the lead role of Dave with live music performed by alternative folk singer and cellist, Ceitidh Mac.

It's the 23rd of December and Dave is preparing his Christmas tradition – to party like it's 1994, the drinks are flowing, the music is pumping. Tonight's going to be a good night. Until the buzz from his phone stops the noise - bringing him back to the real world. It's a text that gives him the chance to create a new Christmas tradition and meet his grandson for the first time.

Don't miss this hit sell out show which has been further developed since its debut in 2019. Plus if you'd like to make a night of it, groups of four or more can also add on a VIP Party Package and enjoy Prosecco on arrival, dedicated party space, pre-show buffet and fun party pack!

For those looking for a festive treat for the little ones, be sure to check out *Blitzen On The Tyne* and Santa too!

Find out more and book tickets at [www.live.org.uk](http://www.live.org.uk)

## Joseph cast announced to join Joe McElderry as Pharaoh

**The full cast of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* who will appear alongside the previously announced South Shields-born X Factor winner Joe McElderry as 'Pharaoh' has been revealed and will take to the Newcastle Theatre Royal stage (Tue 10 – Sun 15 Jun 2025).**

Joining him as narrator is two-time Drama Desk Award nominee, who recently delighted audiences as Glinda in *The Wizard of Oz* at the London Palladium, Christina Bianco. Adam Filipe (*Titanic The Musical* (UK Tour); *Prince Of Egypt*, Original West End Cast) will join the production as Joseph, a role played by McElderry in the 2017/2018 UK Tour.

Completing the company are Hugh Cotton as Reuben and Will Haswell as Simeon. The rest of the company comprise: Aaron Archer; Bella Baldock; Daniel Bowskill; Imogen Bowtell; Taylor Bridges; Joseph Browlie-Johnson; Joseph Craig; Davide Fienauri; Ellie Greenway; Oliver Hawes; Kiera Haynes; Siobhan James; Ben Lancaster; Nicole Lupino; Bradley



Perret; Harvey Shulver; Jessica Sutton; Charley Warburton; Jenna Warne and Alex Woodward.

*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber's first major collaboration is a multi-award-winning show. It has been performed hundreds of thousands of times including multiple runs in the West End and on Broadway, international tours in over 80 countries worldwide and has become one of the world's most beloved family musicals.

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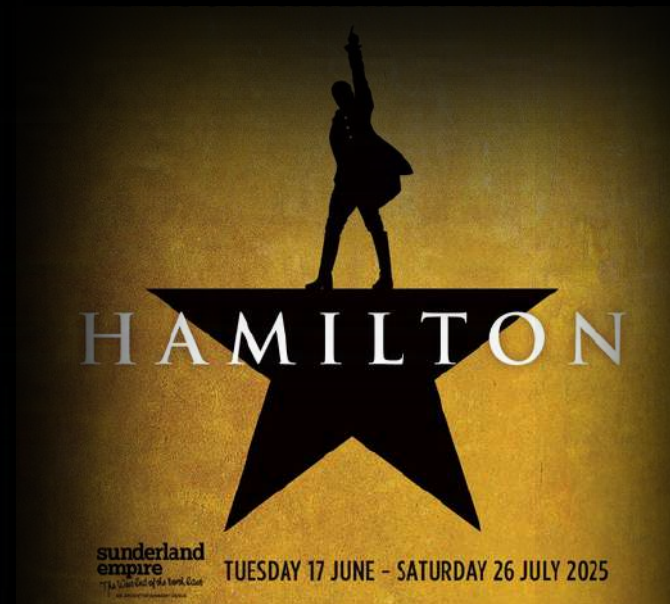
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## Lauren McWilliams

Lauren McWilliams is a Visibility Strategist who helps entrepreneurs, coaches, and small business owners amplify their brands. Here we find out what Lauren gets up to on a typical weekend.

### Do you ever have to work weekends?

When building my business one thing I wanted to change was working weekends. In my past career and jobs, working weekends meant I missed out on so much precious time with family and friends. So, I no longer work on weekends except for occasional time catching up with a deadline.

### Are most weekends the same?

Never! I love the variety of them. Some weekends will find me on an adventure somewhere (usually Northumberland) other weekends I have friends and family over and some are spent just doing nothing and resting at home.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

Yes, I have found it easier in recent years to

switch off when I have a good distraction like going on an adventure but if I am at home my mind is constantly thinking about my business and what I should be working on, new ideas and what's next. That can be both a blessing and a curse. In those moments some of my best ideas happen but I also feel the guilt of being at home but my mind not being fully present sometimes. That part I struggle with.

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

Editing is usually the big thing that can easily overflow into my weekend. Even though I don't take on any client work over a weekend I like to do my editing then as I have fewer distractions. To sit with my cup of tea, music on, and edit my client's photos.

### Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

100% a recovery lie in. I am not a morning person, especially in the winter. I have to ease myself up on a weekend. However, this summer I have done a few early morning sea dips which I thought I would hate but have actually really enjoyed with my friends.

### Big night out or a night in the house?

I used to love a party and thought I would never say this...but I love being at home. A night in with my husband watching our favourite films and tv series over going on a big night out. However, I do love getting everyone together and having a party for all the family and our friends every now and again it's a very social house!

### Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I am not a sporty person, but I love to watch Newcastle United. I have been to a few matches on my own, my husband is a season ticket holder so when I get the chance for a ticket, I end up taking it but means sitting by myself. If I don't get to go to St James', then I'll usually go to our local pub with my family to watch it.

### Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

A morning drive to the coast always finishes with a trip to Pablo Eggsgobao or for an evening then a visit to El Coto in the town for Tapas.

### How important is the weekend to you?

The weekend is important to me as it's my time for recharging but also spending quality time with my family and friends which I really value more than anything.

### What's the best thing about weekends?

I think it's the freedom of doing what you want and going anywhere. I have always seen it as a reset in my week to prepare me for the week ahead.

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

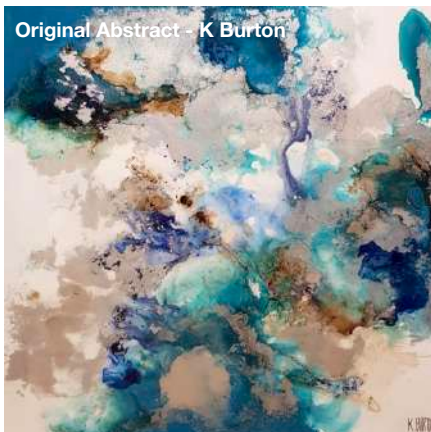
In our camper going on an adventure up the coast for a long walk and doing touristy things.

**For more information about Lauren McWilliams visit [www.laurenmcwilliams.co.uk](http://www.laurenmcwilliams.co.uk)**

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## And the winner is...

The North East Hotel Association (NEHA) once again delivered a highly successful Excellence Awards event last month.

**As a key organisation representing 50 of the region's leading hotels, NEHA plays a vital role in providing support, guidance, and fostering collaboration within the hospitality sector.**

Serving as the collective voice of the industry, NEHA advocates for crucial changes and ensures the concerns of hoteliers are addressed.

This year's gala, attended by over 350 guests, was a memorable occasion, held at The Fed Brewery. The evening celebrated outstanding achievements within the association, with 11 award categories honouring the exceptional efforts of individuals and establishments ranging from customer service to commitment to eco-friendly practises.

Guests enjoyed a sumptuous three-course meal with wines and entertainment in the form of a live performance by the band Storm, and the evening was expertly hosted by Charlie Richmond.

Led by Co-Chairs Anna Wadcock, General Manager of Maldron Hotel Newcastle, and Sarah Harrison, General Manager of Delta by Marriott Newcastle Gateshead & Durham, NEHA continues to prioritise skills development and talent attraction in the industry.

The Excellence Awards underscored NEHA's dedication to promoting excellence and fostering positive change within the region's hospitality sector.

The night was a true celebration of success, recognition, and inspiration, reinforcing NEHA's crucial role in driving the industry forward.

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## Keys to the Castle

By Michael Grahmslaw

The North East plays home to some truly unique venues although perhaps none are as historic as Lumley Castle Hotel. Wrapped in acres of leafy parkland, this 14th Century Castle has been beautifully preserved and remains the perfect destination for a weekend getaway.

**The hotel really comes into its own during the Autumn and Winter months and having visited numerous times since my first stay in 1993, Lumley holds a real soft spot for my wife Lisa and I.**

Our recent return felt long overdue, especially as I sought a brief respite from the busy world of magazine deadlines.

My journey with Lumley Castle began all those years ago when – doe-eyed and dark-haired – I was still finding my feet in the world of publishing.

I can still recall the infamous incident that has since become something of a legend in my career – ordering “turbo” instead of “turbot” at the castle’s revered Knights restaurant. As mortified as I was, the staff handled my blunder with such grace and humour that, despite wanting to disappear into the floor, I quickly felt at home.

The experience left an indelible mark, and Lumley Castle has been a favourite ever since, becoming the setting for many memorable office Christmas parties over the years.

The castle’s unique atmosphere and historical charm – think clandestine courtyards and suits of armour – create the perfect setting for any occasion but feel particularly magical as the seasons turn.

Now managed by the excellent Jeff Hodgson, who has injected his personal touch into the property, Lumley Castle continues to thrive. So, when Jeff invited me to revisit, I couldn’t resist the chance for an overdue return. After all, what better place to recharge than this hidden gem, just a short 25-minute drive from Northern Insight HQ?

Upon arrival, we were checked in with the warmest of welcomes. The hotel boasts 71 guestrooms across castle and courtyard. Decked in grand baronial style, these pay tribute to the castle’s rich history. Ours came replete with four-poster bed and regency wallpaper alongside a range of modern amenities.

The weak September sun bathed the courtyard in a golden glow as we enjoyed a couple of drinks and exchanged stories with a lovely couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary.

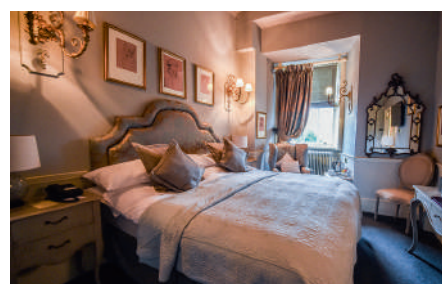
As the evening drew in, we prepared for dinner at the Knight’s restaurant and the very place where ‘Turbogate’ had taken place all those years ago. This time round, the meal would pass without incident!

I opted for the pastrami-cured salmon to start, followed by the obligatory fillet steak – cooked to perfection with all the trimmings. She who must be obeyed, enjoyed the black truffle ravioli and roast chicken gremolata. A shared bottle of pinot grigio complemented our meal beautifully, while I couldn’t resist adding a goblet of Rioja to accompany my steak.

Despite Lumley’s widely held reputation as a “Haunted House”, there was to be no apparitions this time and we both enjoyed an undisturbed and thoroughly restful night’s sleep. A cooked breakfast the following morning set us up for the journey home – and a day spent finalising Issue 105 – although it was with some reluctance that we peeled ourselves away.

You don’t need to travel far to have a good time – and this classy venue exemplifies that.

**For more information, visit [www.lumleycastle.com](http://www.lumleycastle.com)**





## Zero Waste – It's an art

Buy-the-Kilo in Tynemouth promotes plastic-free shopping, local produce and art.

**It's an interesting combination...but it has a theme which we should all try to follow.**

Most of you reading this will have a weekly household ritual, namely, putting out your rubbish bins. Next time you do it...here's a thought. Have a quick scan at what needn't have been wasted. With a bit of forward planning and some preparation, could you have got close to zero waste? Make it a New Year's resolution!

However, that is the driving force behind Jackie Sewell and her Buy-the-Kilo shop in Tynemouth.

"It's a simple idea but it's one which can save money and help protect the environment," says Jackie. "All customers need to do is ensure that they have clean containers and then fill them with a range of food like cereals, nuts, seeds, dried fruit, pulses, beans, tea and coffee. They can do the same with household cleaning fluids as well as personal items like shampoo, body wash and sanitiser."

Jackie got the idea when visiting her youngest daughter at university. She and her friends were leading a zero waste lifestyle and would only shop at a local market for

their fruit, meat and vegetables. Not only was she using fresh...and often locally sourced...produce, but she had no waste. Jackie loved the idea...discovered that plastic free shopping was unheard of in the region...and decided to do something about it. Buy-the-Kilo was born.

But there's also another reason to visit Buy-the-Kilo.

Jackie had an interior design business for over 30 years and has always had a keen interest in art. She wanted to use art as a way of highlighting the worldwide issue of plastic in the environment.

"Alongside our food, household and personal products, we always have some art on show. We have a monthly featured artist which enables them to exhibit their work. We staged an event called 'No Time for Waste' this year to show how people can become

part of the zero waste movement. We display art which has a serious message behind it. This year, for example, our art has followed the theme of Fast Fashion. Since we opened in 2019 we have exhibited over 50 artists from all over the world. We also invite local environmentally conscious businesses into the shop each week to sell their products."

So, do you fancy joining the zero waste movement as well as checking out some of the most thought-provoking art? Pop into Buy-the-Kilo and see what's on offer.

You'll find Jackie and her team at the wonderful Tynemouth Metro station. The shop is open Thursday – Sunday. You can also order on line.

**Visit her lovely website...**  
**[www.buy-the-kilo.com](http://www.buy-the-kilo.com) where you can see exactly what's on offer.**



# Newcastle's Christmas will bring seasonal magic



The festive season is just around the corner – and one of the North East's leading events companies is working with Newcastle City Council and NE1 to add their own brand of seasonal magic to the occasion.

**Plans for Newcastle's Christmas have already been announced with something to please everyone – from the youngest visitor to those who want to celebrate with colleagues or friends.**

And adding their own particular touch is EVNT Inspiration, the people behind the ever-popular pop-up Alpine Bar, Moosenwirt, which will once again be taking up residence right in the heart of Grey Street.

This year however EVNT Inspiration is making an even bigger mark on Newcastle's Christmas, teaming up with the council and NE1 to add in some real ho-ho-ho to ensure it's a thrilling experience for both adults and children alike.

Along with Moosenwirt the area around Grey's Monument is set to become the North Pole, thanks to the creation of a number of igloo pods which will sit on a raised platform – giving fantastic views around the area.

These pods – which can take up to 12 people – can be booked in advance or available on a first come, first served basis and are the perfect spot to enjoy some seasonal food and drink from the surrounding stalls.

This time round EVNT Inspiration have been commissioned by Newcastle City Council and NE1 to create Newcastle's Christmas Village at Old Eldon Square with a whole host of attractions to complement the Christmas Market taking place on Grey Street and Grainger Street.

From live music and children's entertainment at the Rocking Reindeer Stage through to sessions at the Elf School – complete with a graduation certificate – to Santa VR experiences, the village is set to be a major part of the festive programme.

And if that wasn't enough at the centre of the village is Santa Stories, a double tipi where children can really enjoy the magic of Santa, working with his elves to see if they're on his naughty or nice list.

Throw into the mix one of the last remaining vintage carousels in the UK and the result is a much larger Newcastle's Christmas

experience, and one which has really upped its game.

Mike Hesketh of EVNT Inspiration is delighted at the prospect of what the new attractions will mean.

"Moosenwirt is now a staple on the festive calendar and becomes more and more popular each year," he said.

"Now the additional elements we're working with Newcastle City Council and NE1 on, coupled with the attractions they're adding themselves means that coming to Newcastle city centre this Christmas will be an unforgettable experience.

Visitors will also be able to buy a unique limited edition Newcastle's Christmas Festive Mug featuring a custom illustration of the city which they can not only keep but will also be able to refill at a discounted price.

The activities begin on 16 November – the official launch of Christmas in the city – and run right through to Christmas Eve.

**Entry to Newcastle's Christmas Village is free but there are costs for the individual elements. Early booking is advised to avoid disappointment. For further information and to book for any sessions or for the pods at Grey's Monument visit [www.moosenwirt.co.uk](http://www.moosenwirt.co.uk)**





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# In conversation with...

## Matthew Casey

*Business Development Manager,  
Chaophraya Newcastle*

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

My career ambitions growing up were to get into a role where there was potential for me to develop and progress within an organisation. I always wanted to be in a role where I could gain further responsibility and help to grow a business and see it succeed.

### Tell us about your current role.

Currently I am the Business Development Manager for the Thai Leisure group that looks after Chaophraya in Newcastle. I am responsible for driving the corporate side of the business, this ranges from bookings that could be for small groups for Business meetings through to full Venue hires.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

I feel this is a difficult one to answer, I have only been in my current role for three months now, but I feel there has been a lot I have already worked on in this short period of time. I am proud of all events we at Chaophraya have been able to deliver and we have had brilliant feedback from our clients.

### What are you currently working on?

Currently I am working on a number of events with Christmas now just being a few short months away. A lot of dates for the remainder of the year are filling up which is great to see and is setting us up well to move into 2025.

### Tell us about the team you work with?

We have a great team all throughout the business. From our central team right through to each of our six restaurants. For Newcastle we are all highly collaborative and always bouncing different ideas of how we can get different events set up so they can all be unique in their own way. I really can't thank the team enough for all the hard work they do daily to deliver for not just Corporates but for all of our customers that come into the restaurant.



Matthew Casey

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

The best advice I've received is there is always something to be working on or someone to be speaking to. Being in a development role you have to be going out and meeting people and making those initial introductions and connections to set yourself up.

### What has been your biggest challenge?

Every booking in its own way has its challenges depending on the client's needs and wants but I don't know which one has been the biggest so far. I would say they have all been something that I have enjoyed and seeing it all come together that is the most rewarding part.

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

My heroes inside and outside of business, bit of a cheesy answer but I could go with

Amanda Staveley because of how successful she has been in business for one. But personally, for me it would be because of what she has helped to do with Newcastle United football club.

### How do you unwind outside of work?

Following on from the previous question, I love going to the Newcastle matches at SJP. I also enjoy going to the gym and keeping myself active. Most people who know me would say I am highly competitive when it comes to different challenges which I always enjoy.

### Favourite Book and Boxset?

I've never been one for books, however I do like a boxset... the Fast and Furious movies, with always having an interest in cars!

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

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### DATES

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### DATES

December 8th, 15th & 22nd

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### DATES

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## A homage to the Waldorf

We escaped the North for a break in London and we chose the Waldorf Hilton. Think old school glamour with a modern twist.

First let's talk about "Homage" the Waldorf Hilton's "classic dining with modern elegance" restaurant. It sounds strange, but the first mention has to go to the chef's freshly baked sourdough with whipped cashew butter.

This was the most divine food we have ever eaten. Wrapped in a crisp white linen napkin, we found it extremely hard not to eat the whole loaf, truly delicious and on another level, it really is all about the detail.

Chef Pawel has created a menu with a delicate and perfect balance of flavours and textures with dishes that not only look incredibly beautiful, but taste divine too. Accomplished chefs with the highest level of finesse.

"To be honest, for the food alone, this hotel is world class and though we could wax lyrical about the dark and mysterious Wild Monkey Bar (fabulous cocktails and whiskies) and the roaring twenties inspired Good Godfrey bar and the 'on point' service from Demetra and Selli, we implore you to book into this bucket list restaurant."

"The Waldorf Hilton oozes iconic old school elegance and is perfectly located in the heart of London theatreland and just a few steps from Covent Garden, the shops, vibrant cafes and people watching and it was so refreshing not to have to get taxis everywhere.

Book it. Go on do it and make sure you don't eat before you head to Homage!

**The Waldorf Hilton, Aldwych, London WC2B 4DD**  
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“  
*...The Waldorf Hilton oozes iconic old school elegance and is perfectly located in the heart of London theatreland and just a few steps from Covent Garden, the shops, vibrant cafes and people watching. It was so refreshing not to have to get taxis everywhere....*



“  
*...We loved the Bowler hat topiary at the grand Edwardian entrance as the doormen tip their hats to greet you....*



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# Places to go...Llandrindod Wells



The station is just known as Llandrindod these days. The Wells is a misnomer with a single dripping tap in a park comprising the Wells. With a population of 5,500, it is not as grand as it was in Victorian times when the population would be swelled by visitors staying in a variety of hotels and boarding houses.

**Often shortened nowadays to Landod, or even just Dod, it is not a place to spend a week if travelling by train along the Heart of Wales Line. One day, though interesting, is enough.**

(If you want to explore this area by train I would recommend staying in Church Stretton, over the border in England. From there you can go in three directions allowing day visits to Shrewsbury, Ludlow, Hereford and Dod.)

I approached from the south, from Swansea, having broken my journey in Llandeilo to explore the antique centre there with a range of rooms representing 55 dealers at the other end of Station Road.

I stayed one night in the Metropole, last of the grand hotels to remain trading. It fronts on to Temple Street and was deliberately built equidistant to the main spas, with two fine four storey turrets to the rear. The nearby Glen Usk, formerly part of the Thistle group, is closed up. There is a major museum in the town, the National Cycle Museum, but it is surprisingly open only on Monday and Tuesday, and Saturdays only in summer. I was there Thursday and Friday, when at least the town museum is open for spending an interesting half hour, and I could sample the Victorian architecture and independent shops.

I enjoyed a walk through the Rock Park and Spa to find the chalybeate (iron rich) spring which dribbled out of a marble stone and tap. A nearby notice suggested that it was safe to drink, but should not be stored: best drink straight away. I took some in cupped hands and it tasted ok, rather like the more effervescent spring I found in Tunbridge Wells (unpublished visit) earlier this summer.

"This fountain and the free chalybeate spring was given for the use of the public by the Lord of the Manor W. Gibson Watt, Esq., 1879"

In the past there were a range of different mineral springs to drink from, but now the chalybeate is the only one left.

The other interesting feature of Llandrindod is the man-made lake which takes about 15 minutes to walk around. This is used for fishing and model boating. The lake houses a sculpture of a water serpent and leaping carp, the scales of which are made of thousands of

copper plates initialised by local people. In May 2018, pedalo boats for hire were launched onto Llandrindod Lake, as part of a £158,000 regeneration project.

Llandrindod railway station is the busiest station on the single track Heart of Wales line. Five Transport for Wales trains run each way on Mondays to Saturdays, two each way on Sundays. The station was opened in 1865, as the terminus of a branch line from Knighton, but was linked through to Swansea by 1868.

It was on this line that I rode the 52 mile single track (with passing loops) route north east to Shrewsbury, on to Crewe and Manchester Piccadilly. Change of train (by tram) and on from Manchester Victoria via York to Chester-le-Street for the princely sum of £32.90, with railcard. I am still trying to find out whether my transfer between Piccadilly and Victoria in Manchester was free or whether I should have bought a tram ticket. I am still waiting for a response!

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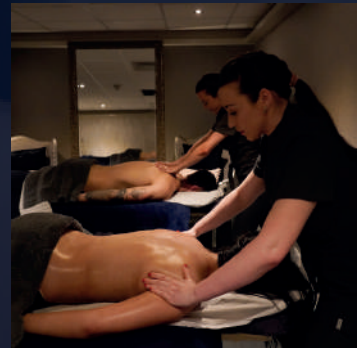
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## North East dental group crowned Best Team in the region

Staff at a leading North East dental group are all smiles after being named the best dental team in the region, in recognition of their outstanding commitment to patient care.

**The Honour Health Group, which has three dental clinics - in Jesmond, Ponteland and Stanley - has won the prestigious title of Best Team: North East at the national Dentistry Awards 2024.**

The group's Jesmond practice has also won the coveted title of Best Practice: North East.

The Dentistry Awards 2024 celebrates excellence in dental practice, recognising dental professionals for their achievements and advancements. This prestigious event highlights talent, innovation, and dedication in dentistry. Nominees are chosen for their exceptional skills, patient care, and community contributions. The awards not only honour individual and team accomplishments but also inspire continued excellence in oral health care.

For Honour Health's entries, the team provided examples of clinical excellence, marketing literature, team training and development information, evidence of team leadership and happiness, examples of how they go beyond the regular duty of care, how they connect with the local community, and patient testimonials.

Principal dentist Dr Onkar Dhanoya has been at the helm of the Honour Health Group for 38 years. He opened the first of the three practices in Stanley in 1986, followed by Jesmond in 2001 and Ponteland in 2015.

Dr Dhanoya said: "We are thrilled to have achieved this wonderful recognition at the Dentistry Awards. These accolades reflect what a truly talented, committed group of people we have working at Honour Health, and it is the perfect conclusion to a fantastic



year of continued growth and development for our team. It is a great privilege to fly the flag for the North East on the national dental stage.

"We are delighted to have been helping our patients achieve smiles they love for more than three decades now. We have always continually invested in our team, the latest equipment and facilities, and we are looking forward to embarking on exciting plans for 2025 and beyond as the world of digital dentistry continues to evolve."

The Honour Health Group has also been shortlisted in the categories of Best Patient Care, Best Practice and Best Team at the Private Dentistry Awards 2024. The winners will be announced at a London ceremony in November.

Dentists at Honour Health have a broad range of special interests, including endodontics, Invisalign, dental implants

and aesthetic dentistry. The clinics feature a wide range of advanced facilities including Itero scanners for digital treatment planning and Invisalign smile outcome simulations, a dedicated dental implant suite, an operating microscope for complex endodontic treatment, 3-shape scanners, intra-oral cameras, digital radiography and CBCT scans to aid diagnosis and treatment planning.

The Honour Health Group has invested in state of the art EMS Airflow hygiene systems for all three practices, which is the only system that is suitable for sub-gingival cleaning during hygienist appointments. Airflow quickly and comfortably removes staining and biofilm, for brighter, healthier smiles.

**For further information about Honour Health, visit [www.honourhealth.co.uk](http://www.honourhealth.co.uk)**



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## When the going gets tough...

Staying consistent with your fitness goals can be tough, especially when life gets in the way. Whether it's the demands of work, family, social ties, or simply lack of motivation, it's easy to skip a workout or slack on nutrition.

**The solution, accountability.** One of the most powerful tools to keep you on track is having someone else around you connected to your training. Whether it's your spouse or partner, a friend or fitness partner, a group who expects you to turn up or sessions or with a personal trainer – someone else who you feel in some way accountable to will keep you going when things get tough.

Here's why accountability can be a game changer in your fitness journey

### Motivation when you need it most

It's normal for motivation to fluctuate. On those days when you would rather stay in bed than hit the gym, a workout partner can be your greatest source of encouragement. Knowing someone is counting on you to train will give you that extra push to show up. Motivation may fade, but accountability will keep you going.

### Shared goals and commitment

When you share your fitness goals with someone, it creates a sense of responsibility. You've made a commitment to show up, not just for yourself, but for them. Whether you're training for a race, aiming to lose weight, or build muscle, working with someone who has similar goals can keep you focused on achieving success. Celebrating together can be a joint goal.

### Consistency is key

The hardest part of fitness isn't usually the workout itself, it's sticking to a routine. Accountability partners or fitness groups help establish a routine. With set times to meet, you're more likely to stay consistent because canceling feels like letting someone else down. Consistency is the foundation of results, and accountability is what keeps the habit strong.

### Variety

Training alone can sometimes feel repetitive, but with a training partner or group, you can try new exercises, share tips, and

rotate workouts. A good Personal Trainer will constantly introduce new exercises and routines to push you and keep you motivated.

### A support system

Fitness is not just physical, it's mental too. Having a partner or group provides emotional support especially on those tough days. Whether you're dealing with stress, feel like you're stuck in a rut, or facing setbacks, your accountability circle can offer advice, empathy, and a reminder that setbacks are part of the process.

### Progress Together

Whether it's hitting a new personal best, losing inches, or simply feeling more energised, sharing these successes makes them more rewarding.

### Find your accountability circle

You don't have to go it alone. Here's how to build an accountability system that works for you:

- 1. Recruit a Friend:** Find someone with similar goals, and schedule regular workout sessions together.
- 2. Join a Group:** Look for local fitness classes, running clubs, or online workout groups. The community aspect can be incredibly motivating.
- 3. Hire a Personal Trainer:** A trainer provides personalized accountability and ensures you stay committed to your goals. They will tailor your training to your ability and goals.
- 4. Track Progress Publicly:** Use apps like Strava or Fitbit to log your workouts and share them with friends for extra accountability.

**David's summing up**  
*Accountability is one of the most effective tools for staying consistent, motivated, and on track with your fitness goals.*

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## The Last Word

By Barry Speker OBE

Interference in the elections of other countries is generally frowned upon, especially when it affects our own democratic processes. Hence the protests about 100 Labour Party activists going off to the US to campaign for Kamala Harris in North Carolina, Pennsylvania and other key states.

**A post (now deleted) by labour's head of operations Sofia Patel, revealed that the activists were expected to pay for their own travel but that their accommodation would be 'sorted'.**

Nigel Farage, the only politician who does actively campaign abroad (for Donald) described the Patel trip as 'direct interference' and Elon Musk called it illegal.

However, it is an embarrassment for the country and certainly for the Government. Not only is it self delusional to imagine that this troupe of labour enthusiasts have anything which would resonate with US floating voters, but why should those voters care about the views of such interlopers? Americans care little about our views on the USA.

Inevitably the PM denies any interference

and acknowledges that the Government must be ready and willing to work closely with whichever candidate becomes President of our most important ally. Whether Mr Trump is convinced by his recent cordial dinner with Sir Keir remains to be seen.

An important and prize-winning film has not been allowed to be screened in Britain for five years. 'An Officer and a Spy' (in French 'J'Accuse') is based on Robert Harris's bestselling novel about the Dreyfus affair in late 19th century France.

The novel relates to the scandal in which Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a French army officer, was falsely accused of being a German spy because of endemic French anti-semitism.

The ban of the film is due to the scandal related to its director Roman Polanski, arrested in the United States in 1977 on sex charges and having fled to France on the eve of his sentencing.

The film won the grand jury prize in Venice and has been widely distributed in Europe, but not in Britain, although it will be seen at the UK Jewish Film Festival.

Should it be shown widely now? Whatever the charges against Polanski, Alfred Dreyfus was the entirely innocent victim of frenzied bigotry, and suffered a court martial and jail sentence which were a perversion of justice.

Can 'bad' people produce great art? Ezra Pound was a fascist. Dostoevsky, T S Eliot and Roald Dahl were vehement anti-semites. Oscar Wilde abused underage boys. The list of artists who have committed or supported evil things is endless. They are not all banned.

Polanski is now 91. The ban is no doubt to punish him. After his demise there will probably be no outcry about showing his films.

What is troubling is that the ban deprives us of the benefit of seeing the film. The qualities of the film and the book on which it is based are a separate matter from the demerits of the filmmaker.

An Officer and a Spy is not a film about paedophilia, sexual deviation or pornography. On the contrary it is a warning against the abuse of other human beings. We must be mature enough to distinguish between the art and the artist.

We were honoured to be at the wedding of Garho and Chanel Ng held at a stunning venue - The Old Barn, South Causey Inn.

It was an opportunity for Garho's proud Dad to put on a stunning show of the Lion Dance which Edmund has pioneered in the North East for many years - and the lion had a brand new outfit for the occasion.

For once, Garho was not participating in the athleticism of the lion dance or the drumming. A great time was had by all.

One can only despair at the continuing

ineffectiveness of the United Nations. Its misguided leadership persists in appeasing terrorist groups and terror states which commit horrific violence.

It was announced that secretary-general Antonio Guterres is set to meet Vladimir Putin in Moscow as part of the Russian leader's BRICS summit of 36 world leaders.

If he does attend, this will make a complete mockery of the UN Charter which enshrines that the UN and its member states are to maintain international peace and security, uphold international law... and promote "universal respect for, and observance of human rights".

Putin's "special military operation" in Ukraine, deemed illegal and immoral by the free world, is bringing untold suffering. A visit by the head of the UN to the Kremlin shows no regard for the rule-based order or the primacy of international law.

The failure by Guterres to attend Ukraine's first peace conference recently in Switzerland makes the visit even more perplexing.

The visit to Russia cannot avoid being interpreted as giving succour to an imperialistic autocrat - and of course Russia is a permanent member of the security council with power to veto any UN decision.

What does this say about the future of the UN in preserving world peace and defending other countries from invasion? Rachel Reeves' budget does not seem such a great problem!

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