

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

March 2025

Issue 110



Let's talk recruitment with David Taylor

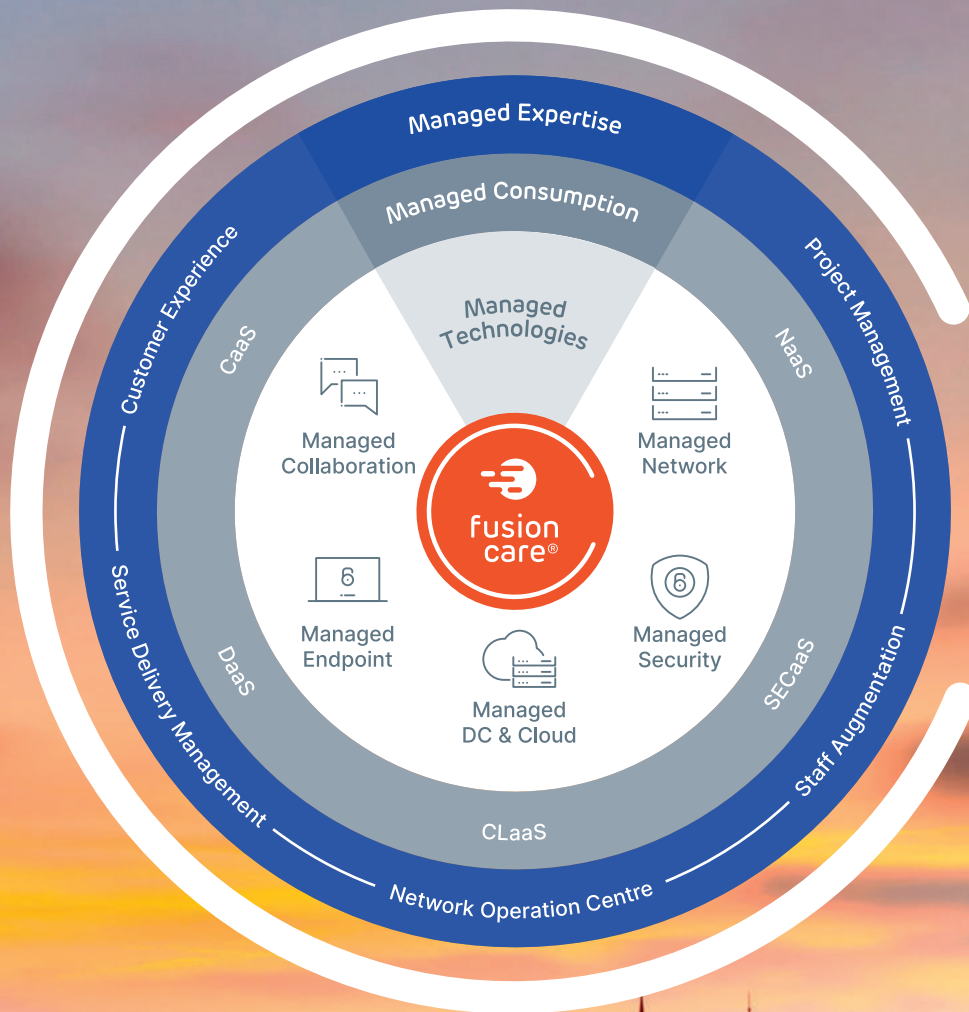
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L-R: Nathan Cockburn with Alan Sawyers

DESIGN : THE THINGS YOU

DON'T SEE

In the first in a series of insights into the world of design and web development, Alan Sawyers and Nathan Cockburn of AS Design talk about the 'hidden' side of their work that clients seldom get to see.

When people see a design, they see the final product — a beautiful website, an eye-catching logo, or a sleek brochure. But most clients don't see the things that go into making this happen behind the scenes.

Here are some of those things...

Thinking time is still working time

One of the most overlooked aspects of the design process is thinking time. Whether it's a logo, website, or social media content, the time spent brainstorming is crucial.

Alan said: "It's not just about sitting down and drawing something straight away, you need to think about the client's brand, the audience, and the objectives. Sometimes the best ideas come while out and about, or lying in bed, but that is still work, even if there's no mouse clicking involved. In fact I've always said to Nathan, 'if you're thinking about work, you're working.'"

This thinking time is part of what clients need to pay for, even though there's no immediate visual result.

Drafting: the road to 'final version' (and sometimes 'finalfinal version')

Any designer reading this will know the pain of 'Final Version' often

being far from the actual final version. And it's never the first version either. Drafting is another hidden part of design.

Nathan said: "Clients see the end result but not the versions that I didn't like or Alan didn't think would work for that client, and for every really good idea we're happy with, there are several that weren't good enough and that's before we even send them to the customer."

Gathering elements: more than magic

It's easy to look at a finished design and assume that the elements — fonts, colours, images, and graphics — just magically appeared there. In reality, building a cohesive design involves carefully selecting and harmonizing each of these elements.

Alan said: "It's not just about picking any colour or font, everything has to align with the brand or project, and that takes time. We might go through dozens of fonts or colours or fonts before finding the right fit." Nathan added: "And not to mention we don't always get these elements from clients, we very often have to source the fonts, find or take new photographs and even have to re-draw logos."

Feedback that isn't design-related

One of the most surprising things for designers, when they first start out, is how much time can be spent on feedback that isn't actually

based on the design. Often, clients request “design changes” that involve rewording content or adding details to copy they provided in the first place.

Nathan said “This can be frustrating, when a client asks for design revisions, and we end up spending time tweaking copy instead, it adds to the project timeline.” Alan added: “This is time we should – but almost always don’t – charge extra for.”

Communication is key

Effective communication between designer and client is essential. Designers can spend a lot of time helping clients articulate their vision and refining ideas through ongoing discussions.

Alan said: “Sometimes clients don’t know what they want until they see what they don’t want, and it’s our job to help guide them toward a clear direction, which can take several rounds of feedback.”

Every email exchange, clarification, and feedback request adds time to the project. What seems like a simple conversation is actually a vital part of the creative process.

More than just “pretty pictures”

Design is about more than making things look good. It’s about problem-solving, communicating ideas, and creating a visual identity that resonates. Clients should remember that what they don’t see – the thinking, drafting, gathering, and interpreting feedback – are all integral parts of the design process.

Alan said: “We put a lot of ourselves into every project, even the parts that aren’t visible to the client. Every piece of work has layers of thought, revisions, and hidden effort behind it.”

Next time you admire a well-designed website or logo, remember: what you see is just the tip of the iceberg.

AI is helping us help clients

The emergence of AI over the past few years has made various aspects of many businesses and roles easier - and design is no different. Nathan said: “We use AI every day, but we already did even before it exploded - it just wasn’t called AI. Modern tools help us to generate ideas, formulate plans and do a lot of things generally a lot faster.”



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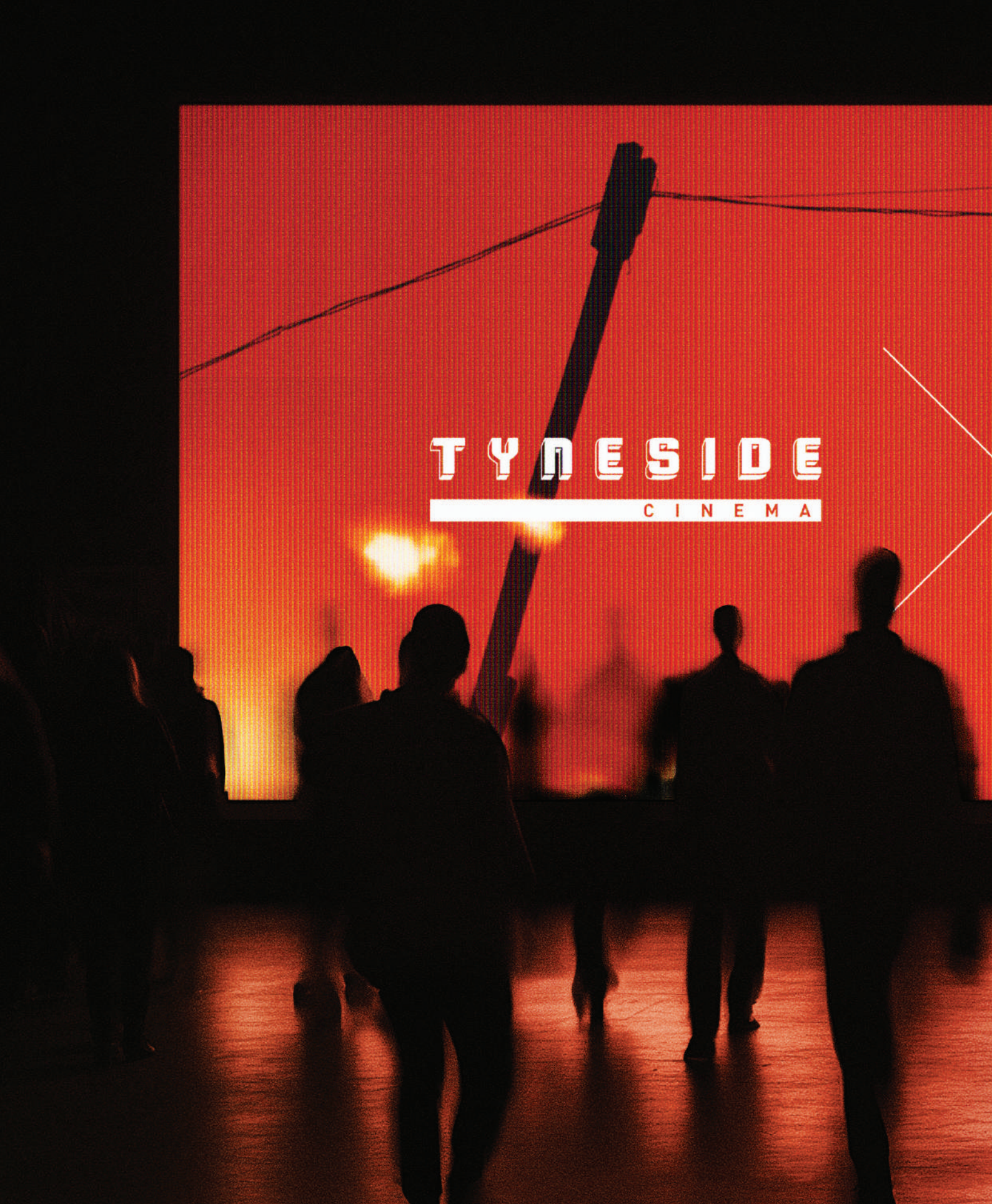
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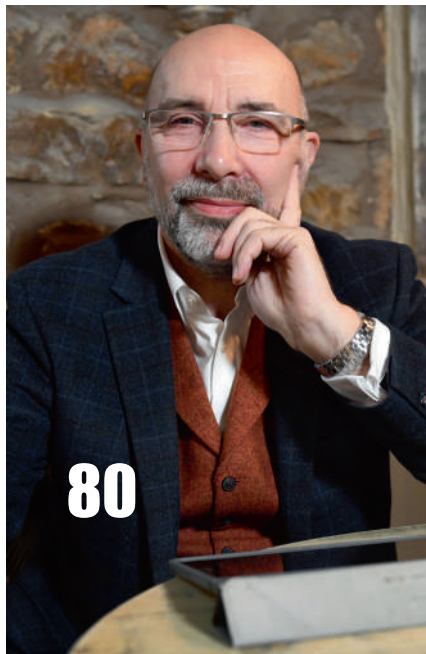
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Foreword

FOREWORD

Welcome to the March issue of Northern Insight.

With Spring finally upon us and the lighter evenings in sight we are delighted to bring you another fantastic issue of the regions most comprehensive business and leisure publication.

Our cover star is David Taylor from Howie White Resourcing who are providing an alternative to database recruitment agencies.

We are also delighted to showcase the return of the popular fundraising show Sunday for Sammy which we shall be heavily involved with going forward.

In a packed business section we talk to Christopher Welch, Sintons Solicitors Managing Partner who outlines their plans for 2025.

For our popular Charity of the Month slot we look at the amazing work of The Bubble Foundation while in our new area feature we showcase many of the fantastic businesses within the Jesmond suburb of Newcastle.

On our travels we take a trip to the award winning Amaze Gourmet Spice in Monkseaton and make a welcome return to the newly refurbished Radisson Hotel in Durham.

We are also delighted to feature Chris Reay from Fells Kitchen creating a meal and a day to remember for Robson Green and his Grantchester co-star, Kacey Ainsworth.

Another issue we are very proud of. We hope you enjoy it.




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

Thanks to all our wonderful clients, readers and suppliers.



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New multi-million pound hub near Newcastle Airport to help businesses thrive and expand into global markets

A new multi-million pound business hub that will propel North East companies onto the global stage and attract vital investment to the region has officially opened its doors.

The 10,200 sq ft International Space Station (ISS) Airview is the newest addition to AirView Park, a premier business destination near Newcastle Airport that offers bespoke office spaces and national and global links.

Regional business figure Ammar Mirza CBE is behind the ISS which aims to help regional SMEs scale-up and take advantage of global trade and export opportunities in key markets, including South Asia, Turkey, the Middle East prioritising Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands.

The ISS offers businesses flexible workspaces, including scaleup co-working space, office suites and conference facilities, and can accommodate over 150 desk spaces.

Ammar Mirza CBE said: "It's incredibly exciting to see our plan for the UK's first dedicated International Trade Hub come to life, in partnership with strategic allies.

"Providing a physical platform that's underpinned by the three key enablers of growth - innovation, investment, and internationalisation."

Mike Clark, Director of Tynexe Commercial Limited, said: "ISS Airview is a prime example of how strategic investment, backed by regional devolution, is driving economic growth and creating new opportunities for businesses in the North East.

"Under the North East Mayoral Combined Authority, we have a renewed focus on enhancing infrastructure, attracting investment, and supporting businesses to expand into global markets.

"Developments like this reinforce our region's position as a dynamic hub for innovation and enterprise, strengthening our economy and creating high quality jobs for the future."

Mark Hunt, Chief Financial Officer at Newcastle Airport, said: "The opening of ISS Airview marks a significant milestone for the North East's business community."

ISS Airview is the latest addition to Airview Park, joining national homebuilder Bellway plc, architects Sadler Brown and wellbeing solution provider ART Health Solutions at the site.

Newcastle Airport is located just one mile from AirView Park and provides businesses with vital global connectivity to key markets.



Beaconhouse events recognised as one of the UK'S most sustainable agencies

Newcastle-based BeaconHouse Events has been recognised as one of the top 30 most sustainable event agencies in the UK by eventdecision and micebook.

"The Power 30 Most Sustainable Agencies UK' list identifies and recognises event agencies from across the UK that prioritise sustainability across all aspects of their business and their ability to deliver measurable and impactful sustainable outcomes for client events.

BeaconHouse Events, the only agency on the list headquartered in the North of England, has an unwavering commitment to changing the way that the event industry views sustainability and the impact that events have on our planet. The agency's strategy is led by co-founder and director Sarah Thackray, whose passion for the topic started when she began working with client Planet Mark, a national organisation that provides sustainability accreditations.

The award recognised that instead of traditional carbon offsetting, BeaconHouse Events has devised new and innovative ways to focus on tangible regional impact rather than bold, unachievable statements. This includes the launch of a local donation fund to support environmental causes across the North East with the agency donating 10% of event emissions carbon credit equivalent to charity Groundwork NE & Cumbria, championing greener by default catering at events, carbon tracking of events using TRACE, and partnering with local suppliers. In 2025 the agency is focusing on food waste, with plans to partner with organisations like Olio to redistribute excess event food locally and testing Klimato for carbon labelling on menus to improve awareness of food sustainability. Accessibility, and inclusive approaches to delivering events is also front of mind with the introduction and roll out of new access & inclusion audits for events.

The 30 agencies that made the list are all at different stages of their sustainability journey, but all have made a commitment to embedding sustainability into their internal and external business practices. Agencies completed a rigorous and wide-ranging questionnaire, requesting data on both agency strategy, tactics and accreditation, followed by an analysis of real event case-studies to enter the Most Sustainable Agencies. Submissions were scored, then benchmarked to provide the clearest view of event agency sustainability available.

Making Clients Famous.

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Culture House Sunderland details revealed



Further details have been revealed about the facilities and events visitors will be able to enjoy when Culture House Sunderland opens later this year.

The multi-million-pound, four floor venue at Keel Square is set to open its doors to the public this Autumn.

A key feature of Culture House Sunderland will be The Atrium, an open plan space intended to be a living room where people can meet and relax. It will stretch all the way from the ground floor to the roof of the building and will include digital screens that can be used for live performance streaming, digital art or immersive storytelling.

It will be home to the City Library, with a huge range of physical and digital books..

There will be a number of different galleries including the Immersion gallery a cutting edge 360-degree digital story telling space. Two podcasting studios will also be available for the public to hire alongside a series of workshops on podcasting techniques, storytelling and editing.

A large, adaptable event space will

provide a home for talks, gigs, comedy shows and creative gatherings.

Three additional galleries will host a range of events and exhibitions throughout the year.

The first Focus exhibition will feature local creative collective Sunderland Indie and explore themes of sustainability.

For the little ones, as well as plenty of children's books, there will be The Den – an area where they can play creatively and enjoy enchanting stories.

The Teen Library space has been co-created with young people using Minecraft as an engagement tool to incorporate their ideas. .

The top floor will include a Sky Garden, a lush rooftop oasis perfect for events, workshops or simply unwinding with stunning views.

Cllr Beth Jones, Communities, Culture and Tourism Portfolio Holder at Sunderland City Council, said: "Culture House will be a fantastic addition to the city with a vast range of things to see, do and take part in, meaning that there really will be something for everyone."



Teesside opening for Three60 Energy

THREE60 Energy strengthens UK presence with Teesside expansion. Aberdeen headquartered THREE60 Energy, a leading global provider of innovative engineering, technology, and energy transition solutions, is pleased to announce the opening of its new office in Teesside, UK.

This strategic expansion underscores THREE60's commitment to enhancing its presence in regions with rich industrial heritage and significant growth potential.

This expansion aims to provide the local market with a market-leading, agile, and flexible solution provider to address their Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Commissioning (EPCC) needs and challenges.

By establishing a new office in Teesside, THREE60 will bring its extensive expertise in EPCC and Operations Management to support the region's ongoing industrial and economic development.

Council shaves days off major job - by using drones to do it in 80 minutes

A North East council has utilised a 'game-changing' drone to help inspect over 5,000 solar panels at the UK's first ever low-carbon depot.

Durham County Council tested the innovative 'drone-in-a-box' to monitor the 23-acre solar site powering its multi-million pound Morrison Busty depot.

Previously, the process took several days with staff inspecting the site on foot with handheld thermal scanners.

However, a drone inspection using a DJI M3TD thermal drone took just 80 minutes - helping the council save valuable time and resources.

The inspection was carried out by skilled pilots at heliguay. The North Shields-based firm is one of the UK's leading drone suppliers and training specialists, and a pioneer when it comes to automated drone operations.

Staff launched the drone from inside a DJI Dock 2, which can be based on-site and can instantly send a device airborne on-demand.



The technology has been heralded as transformative for everything from security patrols to turbine and pipeline inspections - and can potentially even unearth problems a human may miss.

"Defects that are invisible to the naked eye can present themselves clearly using infrared. In the case of solar panels, this may be due to disconnected lines or faulty panels," said Alex Williams, Technical Geospatial Specialist at heliguay.

"Being able to identify these issues with the speed and efficiency of drones can save valuable time, as there is no need for in-person physical inspection."

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Let's talk recruitment with David Taylor

Tell us about your background?

Very early years - I was born up in Ashington, moved around the country a fair bit for parents work, spending time in Exeter and Norwich before finding our way to Teesside.

I did business management at university up in Newcastle followed by a couple of summer Placements with Howie White Resourcing, joining them full time after I graduated, and then took over the running of the business in 2022.

What is your role?

I am the Managing Director of Howie White Resourcing.

What is the main purpose of HWR?

Howie White Resourcing was established, to provide an alternative to database recruitment agencies. We do not have a database of people seeking employment, but proactively find candidates for the role through our extensive range of contacts and by networking within relevant markets.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Working my way up through the business starting as a graduate in 2013 to taking over the business three years ago and continuing to lead it to success.

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I always wanted to own my own business, (was never sure doing what) I just knew that is what I wanted to aspire to do when I was older. It makes me proud that I have achieved that ambition, but now it's about bettering myself in the role and making the business the best it can possibly be.

What is your business USP?

People buy from people. Simple. Every role that we recruit is unique, because every business and every appointment is different. We take time and use our experience to really understand what a client wants from someone coming into a role. We seek to understand, not only the technical requirements of a role, but also the culture and values of a business. When you understand what you're looking for you can find it.

What services do you provide?

We are a search based recruiter, pure and simple. While this sounds simple, making it happen takes a unique skill set. We find that people are incredibly helpful if approached and treated properly and are happy to engage with us to reach relevant candidates.

How do you like to unwind?

Spending family time with my wife, our four year old son and our new addition, eight week old Ella. Going to watch NUFC - although this isn't always relaxing! Having a good work/life balance can be challenging at times, especially as a business owner, but it's important to me to make sure I maintain one and don't miss any key milestones with our young children because I've got my head in a laptop.

Briefly, what does a typical working day comprise for you?

It's the cliché of business owners to say, 'there isn't really a typical day, everyday is different' but it is entirely true. Working with a wide variety of sectors and clients means every role we handle is different. Typically though, my day always starts with taking my son to school, then it's head down with emails, calls and meetings for the rest of the day. I really cherish that twenty minutes in the car with my son each morning and having a chat with him before work mode kicks in.

What are the plans longer term?

There are no plans for fundamental change, as we are confident that our business model is one which is attractive to our existing, and prospective clients. What drives me, is making sure Howie White can be the best it can be and continue to provide a first class service to our clients.

What advice would you give to someone with a business idea?

I'd say, surround yourself with likeminded people and also people that know a lot more than you. Build a network, get out and meet business owners as well as setting yourself goals, you will get knock backs, but persevere.

What is your company's mission?

To raise standards within the recruitment industry and to ensure that we continually add value to the businesses that we work with.

What has been your career highlight?

I wouldn't say I have one career highlight. I am very proud of the business as a whole - Coming through COVID where the world changed in terms of business as usual, was a real challenge, but one that we rose to. Seeing Howie White change and adapt when technology tries to infiltrate the recruitment industry more and more, while still retaining the personal element of the job is always rewarding to see.

Finally...a quick fire round of 'Either/Or'...

Dog or cat? Dog - we have a pug and a Cockapoo

Indian or Chinese? Indian - Goan Chicken Curry always!

Sunshine or slopes? Sunshine hands down! Preferably with beer in hand

Teams or face to face? Face to face, can't beat meeting people in person.

Email or call? Both! Both have their place for different requirements

Tea or coffee? Coffee - milk no sugar, if you're offering!

www.howiewhite.co.uk

“

*...People buy
from people.
Simple...*

David Taylor



Sunday for Sammy is back!

The Sunday for Sammy Trust recently announced the return of their popular fundraising show at a special breakfast briefing.

The show will take place at Utilita Arena Newcastle on 15th February 2026.







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Price Guide:
Offers over £495,000



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Eastcliffe Avenue Gosforth

This stunning semi detached family home has been fully renovated throughout and simply demands an early inspection to appreciate the quality of accommodation on offer. The property enjoys a fantastic, re-landscaped, west facing rear garden and is tucked just off Kenton Avenue, only a short walk from the delightful Ashburton Village and with easy access to the City Centre and Town Moor. Tenure: Freehold. Council Tax Band: D.



3  1  1 

Price Guide:
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Responsible Business in the North East

On 25th January Just Williams hosted the North's first Responsible Business Conference in partnership with Northumbria University, Newcastle Business School.

An idea and conversation that stemmed back a year ago when Dr Alex Hope and I mused over the journey Just Williams had taken to become a certified B-Corp.

We wanted to bring an accessible and independent view to this rather confused landscape and help support businesses on their journey – and the Responsible Business Conference or RBC as we now call it, was born.

The term itself breeds confusion with over 15 separate definitions (I stopped looking at this point, so no doubt there are many more). A responsible business according to the ORB (Organisation for Responsible Business) is a business that operates efficiently and effectively; meets and exceeds legislation; and always considers its impact on people (the workforce, the community

and society at large) and the environment. For us at Just Williams who are a proud B-certified business - it's taking a values-based approach where profits, people, planet and purpose align. In fact, when we asked our audience, which comprised of business owners, senior managers, and a strong representation from three of the region's universities – the answers were all in fact different. But we started the conversation and provided a platform for discussion and I've always been an action over words kind of girl! However, many of the attendees had already begun their journey, so our challenge for next year is how do we ensure those who haven't, attend and engage. Suggestions welcome...

Our speakers covered a broad range of subjects with panelists, key notes and even a 'fireside chat' hosted by Northumbria's Vince Robson. From the Greggs pledge with Head of Sustainability, Paul Irwin-Rhodes to Data being the new single use plastic with Sharon Sinclair – Williams. We covered a plethora of subjects and asked all delegates to take one key action from the day and to move forward on their own Responsible Business pledge. Here's a few;

- Embed ESG into our Strategy.
- Reduce single use plastic in the office.
- Grow Living Wage movement in the North East and Tees Valley.
- Complete Carbon Literacy Training.
- Consider Digital Footprint and Digital Waste.

Robert Swan famously said "The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that

somebody else will save it" which was one of the key actions taken away by one of our delegates with the action saying in no uncertain terms 'Take Responsibility'. Bringing together over 60 organisations and individuals to talk, share, network and learn is powerful – it's taking action and for that we are both enormously proud. Next steps for the RBC are to hold regular roundtables and get together to continue the conversation and to once again host a Responsible Business Conference in 2026. If you want to get involved – get in touch.

You can't be what you can't see and so we at Just Williams along with the team at Northumbria University continue to celebrate, champion and support all those choosing to take the path of being a Responsible Business. For Responsible business is not just ethical—it's a long-term strategy for success, and sustainability and inclusivity must be embedded into governance, not just initiatives.

Imagine if we could be the first region in the UK renowned for Responsible Business and further still – what would a responsible region look like?

Additional Resources available...

- Real Living Wage Movement.
- Business in the Community.
- Northumbria University – Newcastle Business School – The Business Clinic.
- B-Corp Certification and Impact Assessment.

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360 Growth Partners welcome Business Development Specialist

Newcastle-based business growth specialists, 360 Growth Partners, is expanding its team of experts by welcoming experienced business development specialist, Justine Joice, as an Associate.

Justine has over 30 years of marketing and business development experience in senior roles within national and regional consultancy and professional services organisations, including Addleshaw Goddard, Ward Hadaway and global life-science agency, ramarketing.

Commenting on her appointment, Justine said; “Where marketing focuses on building brand awareness and generating leads, business development nurtures these leads into long-term partnerships and profitable business opportunities.

“Combining my skills with the experienced marketing associates here at 360 Growth Partners offers a powerful mix.”

Justine joins 360 Growth Partners Director, Andrew Silver, and the team of experienced associates, including leadership development and HR associate Alice Ackroyd, marketing and digital marketing associates Samantha Legget and Anna Shepherd, and business technology associate Mark Jenkinson.



Knight Frank Newcastle announces new senior appointment

Knight Frank’s Newcastle office has welcomed a new senior property professional to support the management of over 20 million square feet of commercial space across the North of England.

Janet Young has joined as associate and will play a key role in the firm’s property asset management team, which is headed-up by partner, Jason Wall.

Janet, who joins from GFW (formerly George F White) and previously worked at Johnson Tucker and BNP Paribas Real Estate, has over 35 years’ experience in surveying with extensive skills in managing properties for both private and public sector clients.

Janet will be managing industrial estates, multi-let offices, business parks and shopping centres, including Wellington Square Shopping Centre in Stockton and 2 St James’ Gate, Newcastle.



New Head of Finance at Malhotra Group PLC

One of the North East’s leading hospitality and care businesses has announced the appointment of a new Head of Finance.

Newcastle-based Malhotra Group plc has recruited Andrew Carr FCMA, CGMA to the position.

Andrew brings 25 years’ experience in senior financial roles to the position which he has gained in several high value businesses and organisations in a variety of sectors.

Malhotra Group’s portfolio includes The Great North and Grey Street hotels and bars such as Newcastle’s Three Mile and Leila Lily’s, along with residential care providers Prestwick Care and Lifestyle Care and an extensive property portfolio.

Andrew joins the Grey Street-headquartered group from Biddick Academy Trust, where he held the role of Director of Finance and Business, with responsibilities covering the breadth of non-teaching operations, including finance, ICT, estates, administration, data protection and health and safety.

His new role at Malhotra Group will encompass oversight of the finance team, financial reporting internally and externally and ownership of the Group’s year end audit process, its corporation tax affairs and involvement with group-wide IT governance and systems.

Durata appoints Ashaan Ayoub as Commercial Director to drive ambitious growth strategy

Durata, a leading provider of modular data centres and critical power solutions, has announced the appointment of Ashaan Ayoub as Commercial Director.

This strategic hire comes as Durata sets its sights on significant expansion throughout 2025 and beyond.

Ashaan brings extensive experience to Durata, having honed his skills over a decade in the civil engineering and construction industries since graduating as a quantity surveyor from Northumbria University.

His expertise spans various contract forms, including Joint Contracts Tribunal (JCT) and New Engineering Contract (NEC), and has a proven track record of success in cost management and project delivery for major clients such as Northumbrian Water and Leeds City Council.



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Small Steps, Big Impact – Tackling business challenges with confidence

“A journey of a thousand
miles begins
with a single step”

- Lao Tzu

For SME owners and senior leaders, reflection is an ongoing process. It involves assessing where the business stands, anticipating what's ahead, and identifying the challenges that come with it. However, recognising those challenges is just the first step, the real work lies in finding the right solutions to tackle them.

If there's one thing I've learned from over 30 years of leading businesses, from Board Director to CEO and business partner, it's that problems rarely just go away. The key is to take action as soon as possible.

Getting started – One small step at a time

I love the above quote from Lao Tzu. I've used it in so many one-to-one coaching sessions. You might have ambitious plans for your business, whether that's expansion, new hires, or process improvements, but if you're stuck in 'planning mode' without action, nothing will change.

Don't overthink it. What's the first, simplest step you can take? Do you need to collaborate with others? Take action. Momentum fuels motivation and sharing challenges with others creates accountability. Oh, and when you've done it, give yourself some credit. You've taken the first step, and that's a win.

Having the difficult conversations

“When we avoid difficult conversations, we trade short-term discomfort for long-term dysfunction.”

If something really matters, we owe it to ourselves, our team, and our business



Andrew Silver

to address it. One of my previous CEO's used to say, 'grasp the nettle early'. In my experience, it's often not as bad as you think.

Tackling tough conversations head-on can make all the difference in how your team operates. When trust and openness are part of your company culture, difficult conversations become easier and more productive. If there's something you need to address, approach it with a curious mindset, be clear by giving specific evidence and use active listening. Finally confirm the next steps and be aware that might include change for you too!

Will it be uncomfortable? Probably. Will it be worth it? Definitely. As leaders, our job is to create an environment where people feel safe having honest conversations. And you never know, you might learn something valuable about yourself in the process.

At 360 Growth Partners, we actively practise this, and we're still learning every day. Give it a go.

Leading through business and personal challenges

Let's be honest, being a business owner, founder, or senior leader isn't just about navigating professional challenges. It's deeply personal. It can be lonely at the top, and the pressure to have all the answers can feel relentless.

I know this first-hand. And if I've learned anything, it's that you don't have to do it all yourself. Nobody has all the answers, and the best leaders have the humility to admit they need help. Delegate effectively to those around you and surround yourself with the right people, whether that's trusted advisors, mentors, or a peer network of fellow business owners who understand the journey.

Most importantly, give yourself permission to pause when needed. It's about finding the right balance between driving forward and knowing when to step back to reflect and reset.

The 360 Approach – Supporting you every step of the way

At 360 Growth Partners, we know that overcoming business challenges is part of being a leader but it doesn't have to be a solo endeavour.

If any of this resonates with you, let's talk! Whether you need guidance on a specific challenge or a broader strategy to unlock your next phase of growth, we're here to help.

So, what's your first step?

www.360growthpartners.co.uk

THE BIG INTERVIEW

Martin Potts



North East HR support consultancy team and services grow

A North East HR support consultancy firm has started the year by doubling its team, beating its sales targets for the first two months of 2025 and adding key new services.

Durham-based Shrewd HR has welcomed four new team members in the past four months as demand for its expertise grows. And it's planning to continue its recruitment drive over the coming months.

As the number of clients increase, the Belmont-based company has also announced new specialist services to help business owners and organisations navigate their HR requirements.

Shrewd HR launched in 2022 with Managing Director and HR specialist Martin Potts at the helm. His vision was to offer a new approach to HR support by providing bespoke, quick response services that could be accessed when needed.

He also wanted to focus on key areas of HR support, including helping businesses improve by growing a better culture and implementing new technology to improve automation around HR processes.

As the business began to grow, Martin recruited a commercial director and HR specialist last year. And with an increasing number of clients, it was clear that Shrewd HR needed to recruit to keep up with demand.

As well as hiring HR consultants and a business development researcher in the past three months, it has also welcomed an employment law and HR adviser, making Shrewd HR one of few HR companies in the North East to have a legal adviser as part of its team.

New services

As Shrewd HR has welcomed its new team members, it has also announced a range of new services for organisations across the UK to access. These include:

- Private investigation to tackle workplace issues.
- Drug and alcohol testing.
- Mediation.
- Occupational health.
- People assessments and analytics.
- HR software.
- Training and development.
- Health and Safety.

Martin said: "I am delighted to welcome such a strong team of professionals to Shrewd HR. When I launched less than three years ago, I had a vision to offer a HR service that broke the mould and offered a more cost effective, bespoke service which covered every aspect of HR and the employee life cycle".

"We spent time listening to businesses about what they needed, and we quickly understood common frustrations which included not getting the support they were promised, speaking to different advisers having to repeat their situation each time, and having to wait around for support. Which is why our focus has been to ensure we deliver fast, effective support whenever our clients need us. Our aim is to retain every client, and to date we've managed to do just that."



*Team Shrewd HR,
L-R: Wendy Chaplin,
Amy Chandler,
Manik Latwal,
Stan Heslop,
Martin Potts,
Graham Sleep and
Becky Sleep*

"This model has been incredibly successful and our client base began to grow rapidly last year. As a result we have recruited some very talented people.

"We are particularly excited to be able to add an employment law and HR adviser to our team. It's rare for a HR support company to have access to such a legal expert on its team. This gives Shrewd HR a unique offer in the North East to support our fantastic team of HR consultants and specialists."

He said that the additional services being added would also give clients access to a full range of requirements no matter what HR situation arose.

"Our services include private investigation to tackle workplace issues," Martin explained. "We also offer Occupational Health services to support employees through and to protect businesses by implementing reasonable adjustments to get employee's back to work and to help keep them in work."

Drug and alcohol testing has been added to help clients who want alcohol and drug policies to ensure the safety of all workforce members.

"I always wanted Shrewd HR to be different, with a focus on adding value, not just around compliance which is why we offer bespoke HR services that are wrapped around each business we work with."

Adding these extra services means Shrewd HR has truly become a one-stop shop for businesses of all sizes, in any industry and at any point of their business journey, from start-ups to established SME's," Martin added.

shrewd-hr.co.uk

Would you like us to tell our story at your North East University or College in 2025?

Over the last 16 years, Newcastle based UltramapGlobal has grown from Customer Number One, To World Number One. In 2025, we're storytelling how it happened.

In December 2024, UltramapGlobal's Co-Director Martin Connelly, and Brand and Marketing Lead, Mychael Owen spent a day at Sunderland's National Space Academy.

"It was great to be invited to talk about our business." Explains Martin.

"We spoke to four different groups in a day. And it sparked something. Yes, the young people we spoke to were interested in what we do. But they were just as interested in how our Northeast headquartered business had gone from a standing start 16 years ago, to the world's most used."

From Client Number One. To World Number One.

Any business that does well in the long term needs good timing and luck. Right place, right time. But the age-old ingredients are important too. Hard work. Focus. Resilience. Adaptability. A clearly defined and well communicated brand. And at the heart of everything, a great product.

UltramapGlobal is hired by many of the world's most significant subsea cable owners, to protect some of the world's most important subsea cables from damage from sea vessels. Martin explains how things work.

How the UltramapGlobal business works.

"UltramapGlobal's flagship product is our software, AssetMonitor. It monitors one hundred million vessel movements. Every. Single. Day. The software

keeps an eye on how boats and ships are behaving around our client's cables and associated assets. If the software identifies a threat, an alarm is triggered and one of our global monitoring team intervenes. Cable strikes are expensive. Cables can be many millions of dollars to repair, and there are dangerous outages to deal with too.

UltramapGlobal's Monitoring Team are skilled and experienced negotiators and relationship builders.

"Our monitoring team don't really 'police' the seas, they educate and support. The global fishing community and cable owners need to co-exist. So really great negotiation and relationship building skills are important.

Would you like us to tell our story - at your North East University or College in 2025?

In 2025 we're looking to tell our story at a small number of North East Colleges and Universities. One has happened already, one is planned, and there's room for a couple more. If you'd like Martin and the UltramapGlobal team to chat, in an informal Questions and Answers format at your University or College, email mychael@mychael.co.uk with your contact details and we'll get back to you.

ultramapglobal.com

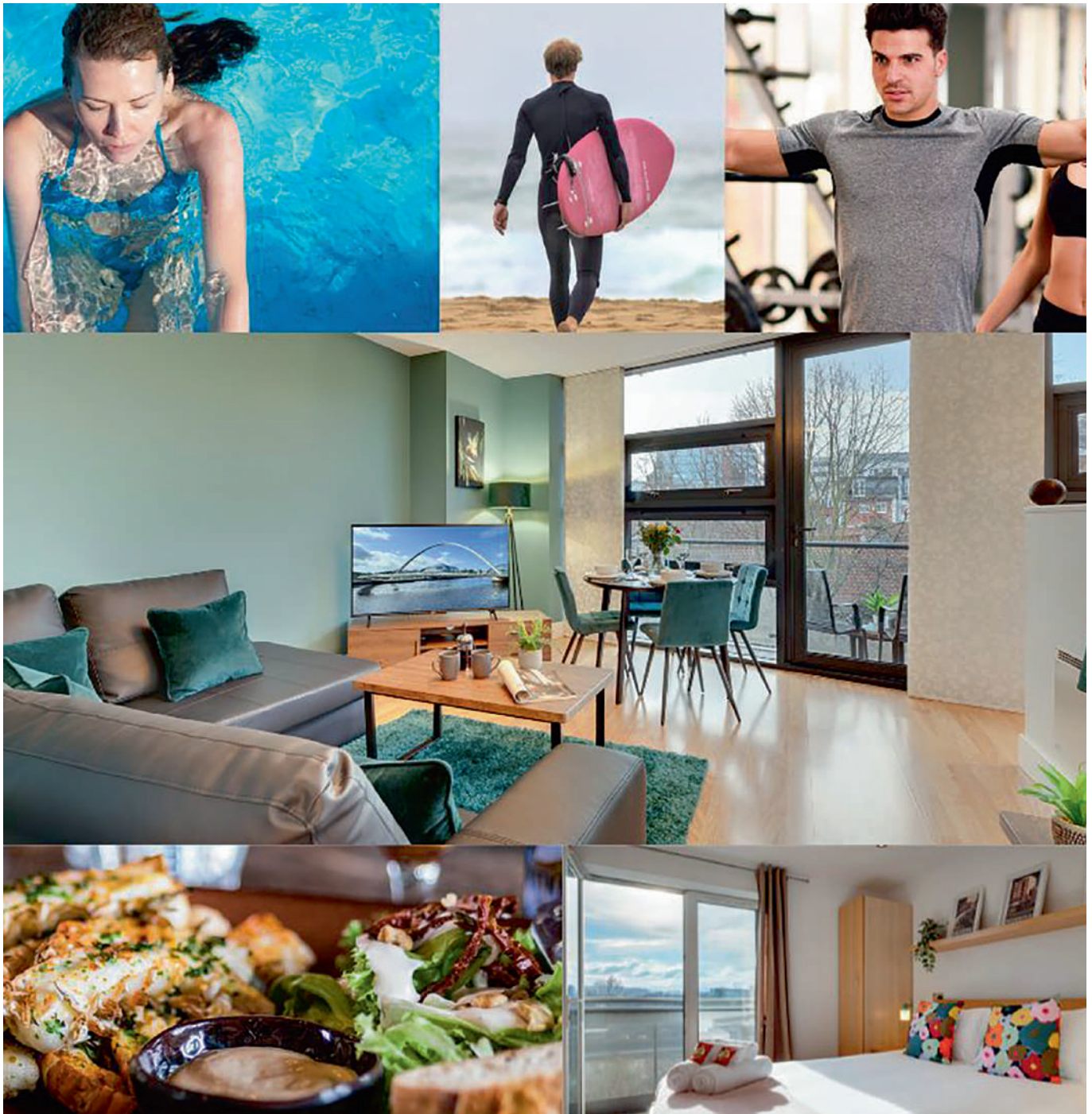


“
...In 2025 we're looking to tell our story at a small number of North East Colleges and Universities....

Martin Connelly



Photo: credit Alan Green



Guest experience elevated by Week2Week

Week2Week, a leading provider of serviced apartments across the North East, is delighted to introduce a suite of exclusive perks designed to elevate the guest experience.

With a focus on quality, comfort, and convenience, Week2Week now offers a range of handpicked discounts and partnerships, providing guests with added value during their stay.

Guests staying in Week2Week's serviced apartments will benefit from exclusive discounts on local attractions, restaurants, and wellbeing activities, encouraging them to explore the best that the region has to offer. Whether indulging in fine dining, enjoying cultural experiences, or unwinding with wellness treatments, Week2Week ensures that guests can make the most of their time in the North East.

"Week2Week has always been committed to providing exceptional accommodation experiences," said Claire Parry, Director at Week2Week. "With our exclusive Week2Week Perks, we're taking this

commitment a step further by not only offering premium serviced apartments but also enhancing our guests' overall stay with unique discounts and local partnerships."

In addition to high-quality serviced apartments in prime locations such as Newcastle City Centre, Quayside, Gateshead and beyond, Week2Week's Perks further showcase its dedication to providing a seamless and enjoyable experience. From business travellers to leisure guests, every stay is now enriched with special offers that support local businesses while delivering outstanding value.

For more information on Week2Week's serviced apartments and exclusive guest perks, visit www.week2week.co.uk or contact 0191 2813129.



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Lowes Financial Management enters new chapter while retaining client-centric ethos

Lowes Financial Management is embarking on an exciting new chapter as it merges with wealth management firm Saltus, aiming for continued growth while staying true to the values and principles that have defined the firm for over 50 years.

With a long-standing heritage, Lowes Financial Management is widely regarded for its commitment to client-centric financial advice and investment expertise. The firm, headquartered in Newcastle upon Tyne, manages approximately £1bn in assets and employs around 80 financial professionals and support staff.

Saltus is an award-winning financial planning and investment management firm which has spent the last 20 years providing institutional calibre fund management and high-quality financial planning to clients, managing over £7.5bn of assets and employing over 300 people. This merger will enable Lowes to enhance its offering to clients while maintaining its deep-rooted commitment to personalised financial planning.



Mincoffs Solicitors advises in sale of Cheshire's Mere Court Hotel

Ownership of an award winning Cheshire hotel and popular wedding venue has changed hands in a multi-million pound deal, thanks to legal support from a leading North East law firm.

Luxury venue, Mere Court Hotel has been acquired by a North West hotelier, with Newcastle-based Mincoffs Solicitors advising the seller, Ailantus.

The four-star country house hotel is located just outside of Knutsford and is set across seven acres of grounds, home to 34 rooms and an AA Rosette restaurant.

The Ailantus group includes the North East-based George Washington Hotel, Holiday Inn Gosforth Park and the Quality Hotel Boldon, as well as other hotels in the North of England. Mincoffs have advised the group for more than 25 years.

Mincoffs' corporate partner John Nicholson worked closely with Ailantus director, Neel Chawla, to deliver the transaction, with support from other members of the Mincoffs' team including corporate solicitor Grace Hughes, real estate associate solicitor Keith Ravenhill, employment partner Nick Smith and licensing and gaming partner Matt Foster.

Neel Chawla said: "The corporate team, spearheaded by John Nicholson, have once again transacted diligently and efficiently in our group's first hotel asset disposal.

"We look forward to working with Mincoffs on future transactions."

International business advisory group Azets has made a number of promotions in the North East

They are among the 122 mid-year promotions at all levels in its UK business and include Newcastle-based Louise Phillips, previously VAT Senior Manager, as one of eight promoted Directors.

Azets, a UK top 10 accountancy and advisory firm, has regional offices in Alnwick, Crook, Durham, Hexham, Newcastle, Morpeth and Wynyard.

There are also promotions in Newcastle for Harry Waters as Senior and Thomas Gillis as Assistant Manager Senior Marketing.

At the Wynyard office, Hannah Crofts is Executive and Mofeyisayo Juwe is Assistant Manager, with James Lee made Senior at the Durham office.

Notably, 60% of the senior promotions in the UK have been awarded to women, reflecting



Peter Gallanagh, UK CEO at Azets, the UK top 10 accountancy firm which has announced 122 mid-year promotions, including in the North East.

progress in improving gender representation in leadership roles within the firm.

Peter Gallanagh, UK CEO at Azets, said: "This latest round of promotions reflects the exceptional depth of talent we have at Azets.

"Our people are the driving force behind our success, and it's fantastic to see so many colleagues progressing in their careers and stepping into new leadership roles.

"As we continue to grow and support the evolving needs of our clients, investing in our people remains a priority.

"It's particularly encouraging to see more women stepping into senior positions, reflecting the progress we're making in improving diversity at leadership level in what remains a traditionally male-dominated profession.

"There's more work to do, but this is an important step in the right direction.

"On behalf of everyone at Azets, I'd like to congratulate all 122 colleagues on their well-earned success."

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INTERESTING TIMES

The Finance Newsletter That You'll Actually Want To Read | NORTHERN INSIGHT VERSION

Who said that accountancy and finance can't be interesting? (We'll do our best!)

ONE SUBJECT | FOUR TIPS



WHY YOUR FORECASTS AREN'T WORKING

And How To Fix It

Forecasting for the future isn't just important - it's the only way to succeed. A proper financial plan should be forward-thinking, helping you anticipate challenges, seize opportunities, and stay in control. If your forecasting isn't doing that, here's how to fix it.

1. Be Realistic, Not Optimistic

Many businesses create forecasts based on best-case scenarios, often underestimating costs and overestimating income. Instead of assuming rapid growth or stable costs, use historical data and market trends to forecast revenue and expenses more accurately.

2. Factor in the Unexpected

Unexpected costs can derail even the best-laid financial plans. Customers pay late. Suppliers increasing prices. Building a contingency fund into your forecast - typically 5-10% of expenses - provides a financial cushion when surprises arise.

3. Review and Adjust Quarterly

A forecast isn't a once-and-done exercise; it must evolve. Regularly comparing actual figures to forecast and adjusting as you go, allows you to move with customer trends, identify problem areas, and anticipate cash flows. By reviewing your financial plan quarterly, you'll stay agile, and your business will remain on track.

4. Leverage Technology for Efficiency

Relying on manual spreadsheets for forecasting can be time-consuming and prone to errors. Adopting specialist financial forecasting tools streamlines the process, reduces the risk of data inconsistencies, and offers real-time insights.

Give these a try. And see how you go.

Call me on 0191 603 1760 if I can help you. **Mark Melville.**

INTERESTING QUOTES

Spending money to show how much money you have, is the fastest way to lose it. **Morgan Housel**



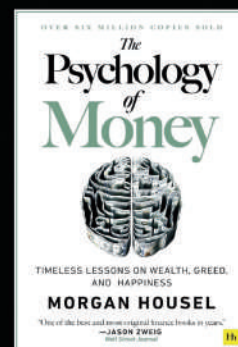
READ THIS

The Psychology of Money. Morgan Housel.

7 million sold. Sunday Times Best Seller.

This book addresses how you think financially, rather than what you do financially. So, what you read - sticks.

I like that. A really interesting and different way to approach money - and life.



The Psychology of Money costs about £12 online. Enjoyable.

Mark Melville

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Accountancy firm takes on Ben Nevis to raise money for charity

A group of thrill-seeking accountants will take on an arduous charity challenge later this year as they seek to tackle the UK's highest peak, Ben Nevis in Scotland.

On 10th May ten members of the team will climb the 1345-metre mountain to raise money for its own community fund managed by Point North, which will support projects and community groups in the North East.

The one-day ascent will see the team, which is aiming to raise £1000, push to the summit, which overlooks the highlands of Scotland and then celebrate their success on the descent with a campfire, cold water dip and onsite sauna.

Robson Laidler head of people and culture Amy Park said: "Each year our team and clients get together and embark on fun and physical activities to support local projects and community groups that make a positive difference to people's lives. We've done everything from climbing the Yorkshire Three Peaks, through to an intense velodrome race and a Coast-to-Coast challenge.

"These activities bring us together as a team and give us a shared sense of purpose. Supporting important causes reflects our commitment to making a difference beyond numbers and building lasting connections with our community along the way."

Point North chief executive Michelle Cooper said: "The money raised by Robson Laidler Accountants will be distributed throughout the region to charities and community groups who are working tirelessly to help people who need urgent support today and to create opportunities for a better life tomorrow.

"The donations might go towards a food bank for local families, or cooking lessons for young adults. It might go to community centres who keep their doors open and their heating on throughout winter, or it might support a talented young athlete to travel to a tournament."

The Ben Nevis team challenge is being managed by Gateshead-based Alexander Adventures who also facilitate a training schedule with practice walks, all travel and accommodation and provide refreshments during the event itself.

Point North is a charity and grant maker fighting poverty and enriching lives throughout the North East. You can sponsor the Robson Laidler team here: point-north-together.raisealysite.com/t/ben-nevis-2025



Durham law firm helps give historic building a new lease of life

Legal work undertaken by Durham City's leading law firm, Swinburne Maddison LLP, (Swinburne Maddison) on a newly refurbished Grade II building on High Street West, Sunderland, has given it a new lease of life.

The freehold owners of the building, Philip and Valerie Gibbs, who are longstanding clients of Swinburne Maddison, purchased the building as an investment in 2010 as trustees of their family trust, Arrow Commercial.

Arrow Commercial entered into a lease agreement with Sunderland City Council for the use of the offices in 2014, and on surrender of the lease in 2023, Arrow Commercial immediately embarked on a refurbishment programme to transform the building, submitting plans to Sunderland City Council. These were given the green light last September.

Commenting on this project and the Arrow Commercial portfolio, Philip Gibbs, said: "Lambton House is a perfect demonstration of how we operate as a business. When we saw this building, we were determined to bring it back to a full and useful commercial life and at the same time, create new jobs, so I was delighted when our plans were approved.

Teesside solicitor joins leading NE law firm

Muckle LLP, has appointed Teesside-born Joe Millar as a solicitor to its award-winning Real Estate team.

The Muckle Real Estate team is one of the largest commercial property practices in the region and has been named Insider's Property Law Firm of the Year four times, most recently in 2023 and 2024.

Joe brings valuable experience in residential and commercial property from his time at a major UK law firm in Leeds. Now returning to his Teesside roots, Joe will play a key role in strengthening Muckle's Real Estate services across the North East and Teesside.

The Real Estate team already serves a wide range of clients in Teesside including Teesside International Airport, Tees Valley Combined Authority and FW Capital. With the addition of new team members, Muckle



is set to further enhance its offerings in the region.

Joe said: "I've always been really interested in property—it was one of the first areas I got into after finishing my LPC masters degree at Leeds Beckett. I kept building on that experience while working as a Chartered Legal Executive before finally qualifying as a solicitor last year."

Jonathan Combe, Partner and Head of Real Estate, said: "We're delighted to start the new year by welcoming Joe to the team. His background in property and knowledge of the area will be invaluable in supporting clients across both the public and private sectors.



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HAS THE PENNY DROPPED YET?

It's obvious when you think about it. Accountancy is upside down.

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Maximising productivity with Microsoft Copilot for Teams

By Stephen McNickle, commercial director at RMT Technology, the specialist technology arm of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

The ever-increasing prevalence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems and the positive impact they can have on business processes has been a key technology theme in recent years - and judging by the increasing range of AI-related advice and solutions we're providing to our clients, this trend is seemingly going to continue through 2025.

One of the most prevalent AI technologies is Microsoft Copilot, which has quickly become a game-changer for users looking to streamline their communication, meetings and collaboration.

Launched as part of Microsoft's initiative to incorporate AI into its suite of products, Copilot works by leveraging the Microsoft Graph and Open AI's GPT-4 model, and offers insights, drafting capabilities, meeting summaries, and more.

Here are some of the ways you can get the best out of Microsoft Copilot in Teams and how it can help your business complete tasks more efficiently.

1. Optimising chat and channel interactions

One of Copilot's strengths is helping users with message composition. It can suggest edits to match the tone and format you're aiming for, help create a professional, concise version of your initial draft and adjust the tone from formal to more conversational if needed, all of which can save time and improve the quality of your communication.

For users joining Teams channels after time away, Copilot can quickly summarise key points from messages and mentions, which saves users from scrolling through a backlog of messages, and can retrieve updates specifically relevant to an individual's needs,

making searching for information shared in busy channels much easier.

2. Driving meeting productivity and efficiency

Meetings are often packed with information, and it's easy to miss details when multitasking or jumping between discussions. Copilot can create a real-time meeting summary, highlighting critical points, action items and the decisions made, all of which makes post-meeting follow-ups easier to handle.

Copilot can also provide a structured, post-meeting recap with follow-up actions, categorised discussion points and details in lists or tables for easy digestion. This not only streamlines task assignment, but by organising discussions into actionable steps, it also helps to keep projects moving forward and project teams on track.

3. Crafting effective prompts for accurate responses

Developing specific and clear prompts, adding context and revising or rephrasing prompts as required, allows you to get the best out of Copilot, as its accuracy relies on the clarity of your instructions.

Follow-up questions should be asked if you're not getting the output you need, with refining requests from the generic to the specific (i.e., "Summarise today's meeting" becomes "Highlight decisions from today's project

kick-off.") will help to ensure that you get structured, relevant responses.

4. Ensuring Privacy and Security

Copilot operates under rigorous privacy standards, meaning data remains private and secure, and is not shared with external services or used for broader AI training. This privacy commitment is especially important in industries such as finance, healthcare or government, where confidentiality is essential.

Copilot also supports compliance needs for regulated industries, with built-in data management protocols and user control features that provides a secure and compliant environment that aligns with regulatory standards.

The potential of AI to reshape collaboration and productivity within Teams is clearly just beginning.

Microsoft Copilot already enables enhanced meeting management, communication and project alignment, and as the technology evolves, it's likely that even more capabilities will soon be introduced.

For further information on how Microsoft Copilot and other AI technologies might help your business enhance its systems, processes and efficiency, please contact Stephen McNickle at RMT Technology on 0191 256 9550 or hello@rmttechnology.co.uk



Stephen McNickle



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“

*...Knowing
your macros is
the only way to
identify potential
opportunities...*

Andrew Marsh

Navigating the Macro Environment and what it really means for you

Andrew Marsh, chair of Vistage for the North East and Northumberland, NED and business owner regularly scans the region's business horizon to look at what is ahead and how to respond.

He brings speakers to the region to examine economy, business action and best practice. Here he talks through how to understand the latest macro environment, what they will mean and how to respond accordingly.

"The Macro environment in the UK and our region is ever shifting, and to really get to grips with strategic thinking, they not only need to be analysed but also considered in depth when building out a strategy for stability or growth. Knowing your macros is the only way to identify potential opportunities or hazards that might impact the business.

"By analysing the current macros in building your strategic plan as a leader, you enable and prepare your management team before they need to act with information that assists them in making operational decisions to improve performance.

"Some leaders go as far to employ experts in evaluating macro-environmental factors who then provide recommendations tailored to the company. These experts review broad macro-environmental forces related to factors including politics, the economy, demographics, technology and more.

"A great example that I use to get people in my Vistage and Experience Bank peer groups thinking about the size and scope of macros, is the question 'how is toast made?'. Some people will start at taking the bread out of its bag or cutting a slice off the loaf and putting in the toaster. Some will start at going shopping for bread or baking it. Others will drill right down into how the bread is made, as far back as the grain being grown in other countries like Ukraine, which then brings in macros of war, freight issues, wholesale markets, retail buyers etc. On the other side, some people will stop when the toast pops out of the toaster, others will go into as much detail of what they put on it and where that was sourced. So, you see, macros that affect you may be obvious or more than likely need a deeper delve.

"Political factors are something that with a relatively new government in place that we are aware are already and that could continue to impact a business negatively. As well as the obvious increase in costs in being an employer, political macros include laws, new regulations and legislations that allow or don't allow companies or the industry in which they operate to behave in certain ways. These can close market routes, cost money and involve operational upheaval with, as one example, training needed.

"Other macros can include the cost of imported goods, that a company needs to manufacture its products, increasing - it makes sense to strategically pre-plan for this by having knowledge of other suppliers and their costs so you can switch quickly if needed. If there are no other suppliers and your hands are tied to an increase in cost, your strategy needs to be around how you pass that cost on to your customers without losing them. That brings in many of your company's departments including marketing and customer service!

"There are many tools out there like Pestel which can help you evaluate these risks, but don't do this exercise with blinkers on. You need to look at your forward customer chains at the same time and make sure you consider all of them, otherwise your goals may not be fully achievable.

"Personally, I think the six main macros that we should all be aware of right now are recruitment issues due a talent shortage, emerging technologies and AI, sustainability and demands to operate in an environmentally friendly way, the threat of recession and rising costs, and the overriding feeling of systemic mistrust. However, at an event I recently hosted for my Vistage members, economist Roger Martin-Fagg painted a brighter future that went some way to lifting this mistrust, so remember to always collect your facts from a range of sources!

"In conclusion, by adopting a macro-management leadership style you are truly focusing on long-term strategy, so it is also important that you prioritise delegating responsibilities with clean lines of authority throughout your team.

"It is also worth remembering that there is not always a need to worry or over panic, the macro environment's impact on a company depends on how much of its trade is dependent on the health of the overall regional and national economy. There are always ways to refocus, pivot and improve which are often positively highlighted by understanding the influencing macros on your company's future."

If you'd like to discuss anything in this article, then please do get in touch on Andrew.marsh@vistagechair.co.uk

An active market for 2025

By Phil Ballantyne, Cavu

The North East is poised to build on a strong 2024, where the Autumn Budget triggered a late surge in deals as shareholders looked to get ahead of long-anticipated capital gains tax increase.

With several marquee transactions lined up for 2025, we anticipate a more stable, but still very active market in 2025.

Last year saw a high volume of mid-market deals in the region, including the sale of multiple businesses by regional private equity firms, such as LDC's sale of iamproperty, and the sale of BGF-backed Datum360 to international software giant Autodesk. Additionally, listed companies continued their expansion through bolt-on acquisitions as part of their M&A strategies, with notable transactions including SkinBioTherapeutics PLC's acquisition of Dermatronics and Bio-Tech Solutions.

As 2025 begins, there is a sense of optimism around the deal community that this year will continue to build on 2024. There are a number of sectors that continue to drive M&A activity including technology and software businesses, digital transformation consultancies, healthcare service business



Phil Ballantyne

and critical business services. These deals are poised to launch and have already attracted strong interest from bidders.

On a broader scale, the impact of global political developments on the UK M&A market remains uncertain. The return of a former U.S. President for a second term, who has expressed intent to cut taxes while aggressively advocating for tariffs on international trade partners, could introduce new dynamics for dealmaking in

the months ahead. Additionally, a stronger U.S. dollar against the GBP may further drive interest from U.S. based buyers.

Overall, 2025 is shaping up to be another strong year for M&A activity in the North East, driven by a healthy pipeline of mid-market transactions and continued interest from private equity funds.

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In Conversation With...

Mark Brown

Owner, L4 Financial Management

What were your career ambitions growing up?

I always had a strong interest in numbers and problem-solving, which naturally led me towards finance. But I wasn't just interested in the numbers. I was interested in how businesses actually work, the decisions behind them, and what makes them successful.

Tell us about your current role.

I'm the founder of L4 Financial, a business that provides part-time Finance Director services to SMEs. Many smaller businesses can't justify a full-time FD but still need strategic financial expertise. I work closely with owners and management teams to help them understand their numbers, improve reporting, and put better systems in place. My approach isn't just about finance, it's about ensuring finance is fully integrated with the rest of the business so that decision-making is focused and more effective.

What is your proudest business achievement?

Taking the leap to start L4 Financial was a big moment for me, but my real sense of achievement comes from the impact I have on my clients. Seeing SMEs go from firefighting issues to having a clear, structured plan for driving the business forward is what makes it worthwhile. I recently helped a client transform their financial reporting and debt collection process, which not only improved cash flow but also gave them the confidence to plan ahead with more certainty. Moments like that reinforce why I do what I do.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

Technology has had a massive impact. Ten years ago, many SMEs were still reliant on spreadsheets and manual processes. Now, cloud-based accounting, automation, and software integrations have transformed what's possible. The challenge isn't just adopting new technology for the sake of it. It is knowing which tools add real value. I help businesses cut through the noise and implement systems that make life easier, not more complicated.

What are you currently working on?

Alongside my ongoing work with SME clients, I'm growing L4 Financial to support more businesses in the North East. I'm also



involved in a project that will link finance, facilities management, and operational decision-making, helping a client develop a clearer and more streamlined financial workflow for their business. A big focus for me right now is making financial reporting more accessible.

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

"Keep things simple." Finance can get unnecessarily complex, but the best business decisions come from clear, straightforward thinking. Whether it's cash flow, pricing, KPIs, or profitability, simplicity leads to better decisions and fewer mistakes.

What has been your biggest challenge?

One of the biggest challenges for SMEs is balancing short-term pressures with long-term strategy. Many businesses get stuck in a cycle of reacting rather than planning. A challenge in my role is shifting that mindset. I help business owners see that taking a step back to plan properly doesn't slow them down; it actually speeds up growth in the long term.

Have you an ideal client?

My ideal clients are SMEs that have a clear direction but recognise the need for expert financial support to grow. They're open to constructive feedback, willing to improve their financial processes, and value practical advice. I work best with business owners who want to move beyond just 'keeping up'

with the numbers and instead use them to drive better decisions and long-term success.

What other businesses do you admire?

Since launching L4 Financial, I've paid closer attention to local businesses and the effort their owners put in. The North East is spoilt for choice when it comes to independent businesses. Some of my favourites include Proven Goods for the best doughnuts by far, Laneway & Co for high-quality coffee and a bit of tranquillity in the city centre, Reflex, an independent music store which is great for adding to my vinyl collection, and Riley's Fish Shack for a great location and amazing freshly cooked food.

How do you unwind outside of work?

Music is a big passion of mine. I love collecting vinyl and going to gigs. Walking our dog also helps clear my head, especially after a day of problem-solving. And when I get the chance, I love to travel. Seeing new places and experiencing different cultures is always inspiring.

Favourite Books and Boxset?

For business, *Shoe Dog* by Phil Knight is a must-read. It's a great insight into the need for resilience when running a business. For fiction, *Misery* by Stephen King is a favourite. For a boxset, *The Sopranos* is hard to beat.

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Tom Harrison

Navigating Tax Challenges of Remote Working in a Global Economy

By Tom Harrison, Tax Senior Manager at Johnston Carmichael.

Remote working has transformed the global employment landscape, offering businesses and employees unprecedented flexibility.

The attraction of working from anywhere, coupled with the enticing proposition of hiring talent globally, has unlocked exciting new opportunities. However, this newfound flexibility comes with its own set of tax, legal, and compliance challenges that without pro-active management, can come unravelling ex post facto.

1. Working from anywhere: Individual flexibility and corporate risks

The concept of working from anywhere sounds appealing, but it is far from simple in terms of compliance obligations. While remote work offers freedom, it also means businesses must navigate a complex web of immigration regulations, labour standards, and corporate risks.

When employees work remotely in foreign jurisdictions, businesses may create a 'permanent establishment', triggering corporate registration and tax liabilities. Other considerations include social security, income tax, and payroll regulations, which

vary significantly per country.

Although a 'work from anywhere' model is appealing, businesses should invest in up-front professional advice to ensure compliance and avoid penalties or reputational damage. The costs associated with appropriate legal and tax consultation are far outweighed by the risks of non-compliance.

2. Hiring from anywhere: Expanding talent pool expanding complexity

Hiring from anywhere gives companies access to global talent without requiring physical relocation. However, to do so the employer must navigate the challenges of employment law, payroll tax and reporting requirements in an unfamiliar overseas jurisdiction. For example, differing labour laws can impact employee benefits, working hours and termination rights so requires careful legal guidance.

In addition, payroll compliance presents another challenge. Hiring an individual in an

overseas territory can bring about employer obligations such as payroll to account for income tax and social security liabilities, and failure to adhere to local rules can lead to penalties.

3. Working from vessels: An offshore challenge

Remote work isn't confined to land. Professionals such as engineers and maritime crew often work from vessels in foreign ports or international waters. This scenario introduces unique complexities, as jurisdictional tax rules can vary widely. For example, some countries consider the employee's residency, while others apply source-based taxation based on where the vessel operates.

4. A proactive approach

To navigate these challenges, employers should take a proactive approach to global mobility tax planning. This includes mapping out where employees are working and understanding the tax and legal implications proactively by engaging with professional advisers to address compliance risks.

While working and hiring from anywhere offer great potential, businesses must carefully negotiate the tax landscape to avoid costly pitfalls and position themselves for success.

**For more advice on global mobility, please contact tom.harrison@jcca.co.uk
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NPIF II Maven Equity Finance invests £1 million in CRL Foods

Newcastle-based CRL Foods, a specialist food & beverage canning business with pioneering thermal processing technology, has secured a £1 million investment from NPIF II - Maven Equity Finance, which is managed by Maven as part of the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund II.

CRL is a food & beverage producer that utilises in-house patented technologies to manufacture a range of ready-to-drink (RTD) beverages including cold brew coffees, teas and protein drinks.

Its innovative retort equipment and unique processes underpin CRL's superior quality of product, sterilising and pasteurising products with delicate ingredients whilst achieving significant

water and energy savings in the production cycle. CRL provides its services to a number of major retailers, national food-to-go outlets and well-known brands.

Maven originally invested in CRL Foods in 2021 and 2022 via the North East Development Capital Fund to enable the business to expand its team, invest in new equipment to add additional



production lines to its growing factory and increase capacity. Today's transaction will allow CRL to scale rapidly and enable the business to deliver significantly higher volumes following a number of exciting new contract wins.

With consumer trends moving towards convenience and healthy living, demand is driving a wider range of more innovative products with an environmentally friendly focus. CRL is supporting this sustainability movement by delivering long shelf life ambient products with recyclable packaging; reducing unnecessary food and packaging waste in the process, and helping secure a future for applied food technologies in UK.

Gareth Phillips, Managing Director of CRL Foods, said: "At CRL, we are on a mission to improve the quality and sustainability of thermally processed food and beverage products in the UK, and ultimately worldwide, by providing innovative and value-added contract manufacturing solutions. We are delighted to have Maven's continued support with this latest round of growth capital funding to

accelerate our progress towards these goals."

David Nixon, Senior Investment Manager at Maven said: "CRL is a growing business that has utilised its unique manufacturing processes to develop a strong order book from high-quality customers since we first supported the firm back in 2021. The company is well positioned to support increasing consumer demand for healthy and sustainable food & drink, and they have achieved impressive year on year growth to date. The team has many years' experience within the food and beverage industries, and we're delighted to support them at such a pivotal point in the company's development."

Sarah Newbould, Senior Investment Manager at the British Business Bank said: "NPIF II is driving innovation across the North and its recent investment in CRL Foods exemplifies this commitment. This investment demonstrates how the Fund supports a broad range of industries to drive technological advancement and boost growth across the regional economy."



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 to find out more.

Local property developer invests over £500k in Sunderland



L-R: Darryl Cullerton, Director at Lemon Properties and Lewis Blakelock, Investment Executive at FW Capital

As we head towards the spring of 2025, the region's commercial property market is seeing some significant developments that will help boost the North East economy.

There is funding available for those seeking to fulfil growth ambitions and local developer Lemon Properties is a great example. The business has received a £517k funding boost to support a new property development in Sunderland.

Finance to support the development comes from the North East Property Fund (NEPF) which is an investment programme managed by FW Capital and backed by the North East Combined Authority. It is assisting the development of a building on St Mary's Street that will be released in May 2025. It covers two floors and was formerly commercial shops and offices. The new development, which sits near Sunderland's Park Lane Interchange will now consist of a high quality apartments and offices.

Following the completion of this development Darryl Cullerton, Director at Lemon Properties will have a property portfolio of 100 across Sunderland, with a value of over £10million. He talks about the importance of regeneration and development in Sunderland.

Darryl said: "My main focus is investing in Sunderland and bringing high end accommodation to the city. This latest development, which will be released in May 2025, brings quality apartments to the city centre. The interior design is by Gerard McElvenny from Pulp Studios Design House. I never thought I'd get to own this particular site – one of the previous shops was where I used to get my school uniform so it brings back memories. I've invested over £500k into this development because I want to make Sunderland a better place and provide great accommodation. This is the first time I've worked with FW Capital and is the start of our relationship. I've been happy with the support I've received from Lewis Blakelock who understands my vision."

Lewis Blakelock, Investment Executive at FW Capital said: "Darryl has a great track record of success in the local property market. His drive and determination to invest in quality new developments that will improve Sunderland is impressive and at the forefront

of his business strategy. There's been lots of regeneration and development happening within the city and we share Darryl's vision. The NEPF funding was created in response to demand for smaller construction and property development financing and this is a great example of how this is being used positively."

The North East Property Fund offers short-term loans for small and medium-sized construction and property development companies. Loans from £250,000 up to £2 million are available for residential and non-speculative commercial developments in Tyne & Wear, Northumberland, and County Durham.

The £20 million fund is backed by the North East Combined Authority. The Fund was launched to address a gap in the market and facilitate the delivery of new residential and non-speculative property development projects in the North East area.

If you're a business in the North East looking for finance, get in touch to find out more about how we can help. Call 0191 269 6969 or email info@fwcapital.co.uk You'll also find additional details on website www.fwcapital.co.uk

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Peter Neal

Recruitment philosophy of Experience Bank Group

Experience Bank Group specialises in the identification and development of board level talent, and is particularly active in the recruitment of Chief Executives and Trustees for Charities. Here, founder Peter Neal, tells us why he does what he does, and about the latest roles for which he is looking for the perfect candidates.

“We all know that charities have limited unrestricted funds and resources, so for them to invest in anything there needs to be a compelling business case that shows a clear return on investment and positive contribution to impact.”

“Because of this, and my commitment to helping organisations with purpose, I have developed an affordability-based service for charities that includes support with a boards skills matrix assessment, compilation of role and person specifications, compilation and design of candidate information pack, a carefully thought-through recruitment campaign, and access to the most comprehensive network of charity board level talent in the region.

“Whilst I have made this package highly competitive and good value, I also appreciate that some smaller charities may still find the full service unaffordable. It is my philosophy to help as many charities as possible and I have pledged to always look for a way to support if I can. I rarely say no, and will structure a level of support for charities with the tightest of budgets. We

are all in it together, and those charities and organisations with purpose who can afford to invest in my full service will not only be helping themselves but also allowing me to support some of the much smaller, fellow charities those that can’t.”

Peter currently has a number of opportunities for leadership roles in charities across the region including:

Chief Executive (salary range £60k to £70k) for Tyne Rivers Trust, an organisation dedicated to improving the wellbeing of our rivers and people through education, tackling pollution, and practical conservation. The right person will be an individual who brings business and managerial expertise to TRT, and who is passionate about wanting to create a biodiverse environment for people and wildlife to thrive, now and for all time.

They are looking for someone regardless of age, background or experience who has: Proven experience in business and managing an organisation effectively; the ability to think innovatively, objectively and make sound decisions, without being afraid

of new ideas; a collaborative spirit and a willingness to work effectively as part of a team and a strong commitment to improving our environment.

Think this would suit you and your skills? Get in touch. Or maybe you’d be more interested in:

Deputy Chief Executive (salary range £45k to £55k) for Reviving the Heart of the West End (RHWE) – this organisation is delivering an extraordinary level of holistic and personalised support to people in the West End of Newcastle, enabling them to make more informed choices and empowering them to take the steps towards getting the job they really want, exploring a self-employment idea, or consider training or education opportunities.

The DCEO will be responsible for shaping, implementing and strengthening the organisation’s processes and infrastructure to support the Charity’s Strategic Plan and embed sustainable growth initiatives, ensuring compliance and regulatory requirements are met, delivering strong and sustainable service improvements, demonstrating direction and leadership to ensure high quality services. The DCEO must also demonstrate a robust understanding of the operational impacts on financial performance of each of the Charity’s services, ensuring that all operating policies, procedures and best practices are maintained, successfully promoting the Charity’s culture and vision. The DCEO must have relevant legal, commercial and financial acumen.

If this sounds like you, you can find the full details on Board Level Recruitment page of The Experience Bank Group’s website theexperiencebank.co.uk/board-level-recruitment

It's time to talk Inheritance Tax, and protecting your legacy

"Inheritance Tax (IHT) is a particularly hot topic at the moment – unsurprisingly so. You've worked incredibly hard over the years to support your family and current lifestyle but perhaps also with a view to leaving a legacy for your loved ones".

"If you hold the view that your beneficiaries deserve to inherit as much of your legacy as possible, you might want to take some advice to legally mitigate it, using the allowances provided by the Government and some intentional financial planning. IHT is often called the 'stealth tax', catching many families off guard. With the right planning and advice however, you can protect some or all of your estate and ensure your loved ones receive more of what you have built over your lifetime.

An inheritance can be life changing too. It could help your children pay off a mortgage, start a business, or fund your grandchildren's education. Yet, without careful planning, up to 40% of your estate over £325,000 (or £500,000 if your home is left to direct descendants) could go to HMRC instead of your family.

Gifts : How much can you give away?

One of the simplest ways to reduce your Inheritance Tax (IHT) liability is through gifting – each tax year, you can gift up to £3,000 tax-free. If you didn't use this allowance in the previous tax year, you can carry it forward, allowing you to gift up to £6,000 tax-free.

Additionally, you can give small gifts of up to £250 per person, as well as wedding gifts of £5,000 to a child, £2,500 to a grandchild, and £1,000 to others without incurring IHT. Gifts outside of these allowances may still be exempt, but only if you survive seven years after making them – this is known as the seven-year rule.

Gifting from excess income is a powerful yet often misunderstood way to pass on wealth tax-efficiently. As long as the gifts follow a regular pattern, any amount given is immediately exempt from IHT. However, it's important to ensure that these gifts do not impact your standard of living. The rules state that gifting should be made from surplus income, meaning it must not reduce your ability to maintain your usual lifestyle.

This approach is ideal for those who have more income than they need and want to support loved ones in a structured and tax-efficient way.

How can Business Relief reduce IHT?

If you own a qualifying business or shares in a trading company, you may be eligible for Business Relief (BR), which can provide up to 100% IHT relief (up to the first £1 million) – when you pass away, your business assets could be exempt from IHT, making it a highly effective way to preserve wealth for future generations.

Strategic gifting and BR are just two of the many ways to reduce your family's future IHT bill, whilst Trusts can also help create a tax-efficient inheritance plan.

Trusts: A Smart Way to Protect Your Legacy

"Trusts have long been a reliable way to pass wealth from one generation to the next. However, it's essential to remember that once you place an asset into a Trust for a beneficiary, it no longer belongs to you. Generally, if you live for at least seven years after setting up the Trust, the gifted amount is excluded from your estate, meaning it's no longer subject to IHT.

A Trust (of which there are a number of options) can hold valuable assets like money, land, property, or high-value items for safekeeping. Once you've appointed Trustees to act as keyholders, your wealth will be managed and distributed according to your wishes – it's crucial to leave a clear letter of wishes, detailing when and how the funds should be distributed and for what purpose".

"Navigating inheritance planning can be complex, but with the right advice, you can protect your legacy and maximise what your loved ones receive".

The levels and bases of taxation, and reliefs from taxation, can change at any time and are generally dependent on individual circumstances.

Trusts are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

If now feels like the right time to meet for a coffee and begin those conversations, please reach out to arrange an appointment with Jason Smith, Financial Adviser at Sage Wealth Management.

T: 07369 228896 / E: jason.smith@sjpp.co.uk

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SJP Approved 13/02/2025



Tier One Capital appoint Broadoak Asset Management to support strategic growth of North East investment fund



L-R: John Seager, Fergus Trim, Broadoak and Ian McElroy, Tier One Capital

Tier One Capital (TOC), the Newcastle-based fund and wealth management specialist, has appointed Broadoak Asset Management (Broadoak) to help support the strategic growth of successful North East investment fund, Develop North PLC (Develop North).

Working alongside Develop North's fund management team, Broadoak has been appointed to help expand the reach of the fund to support more residential and commercial property developments in the North East, while also supporting its plans to explore options for future additional fund raising.

Established in Newcastle in 2014, Broadoak is owned by experienced property experts Fergus Trim and John Seager, who have a long track record of leading successful,

large scale property development and asset management projects in the region.

Develop North has been listed on the main market of the London Stock Exchange since 2017 and is a leading provider of property development finance in the North of England and Scotland.

The fund has already provided more than £80m in debt funding to 39 residential and commercial projects, creating significant economic growth in the regions and helping to create over 3,200 jobs.

Broadoak's successful property projects include Newcastle Helix, Quorum Business Park, Siglion and recently on Strawberry Place for Newcastle United Football Club.

Develop North currently has a niche focus on the North of England and Scotland, offering bespoke secured loans of between £0.5 million and £5 million to credible and professional property developers across residential and commercial sectors.

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive, Tier One Capital, said, "We are delighted to appoint the team at Broadoak to work alongside our existing fund management team. John and Fergus will be a valuable addition to our team and we expect them to make

a significant contribution to the next phase in the strategic growth of Develop North. To date we have worked with many development teams in the North of England and Scotland, to provide a gross development value of more than £160m.

"Integrating John and Fergus's expertise with our team brings a wealth of property experience as we look to capture exciting growth opportunities in the region."

Broadoak Director Fergus Trim said "We're really excited to be appointed to work alongside Tier One Capital's existing fund management team. The Develop North fund has a great track record, and we are looking to build on that and take advantage of some big opportunities in the North East.

"Devolution and a changing investment and development landscape has created real opportunities for a trusted local fund with a focus on the North East and a real depth of knowledge of the local market. We are keen to bring our expertise to support the growing impact the fund can have on this region."

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Jacksons' latest appointment welcomes growing SME demand for Corporate and Commercial legal services

Dan Flounders is joining Jacksons to head up the firm's Corporate and Commercial team.

The new head of Corporate and Commercial at a North East law firm believes changes to capital gains tax and business asset disposal relief announced in the last Budget have accelerated SMEs' succession plans and entrepreneurs' business exits.

Dan Flounders, who joins Jacksons Law Firm from Knights (formerly Archers) in Stockton, is looking forward to the challenge of growing the Corporate and Commercial team.

At the same time, Dan, who has a strong reputation as a Corporate and Commercial legal adviser, is also relishing the opportunity to support younger solicitors in developing their careers in the successful way he has carried out himself.

Dan anticipates increased activity in the team in the first quarter of 2025, as business owners respond to recent changes in the autumn Budget, in which adjustments to capital gains tax and business asset disposal relief (formerly Entrepreneurs' Relief) were announced.

As a result, he says a number of SMEs have accelerated their succession plans and more entrepreneurs are looking for an exit strategy for their business, before changes with adverse tax implications come into effect.

There is driving demand for expert legal advice on structuring business sales and acquisitions in a tax efficient manner, while ensuring a smooth transition post sale.

"Businesses are keen to act before rules tighten or tax advantages diminish further, meaning we're supporting more clients with strategies to navigate and accelerate succession plans," Dan says.

Dan trained at Archer's Law in Stockton and quickly rose through the ranks, working his way up to partner.

The company sold out to Knights in 2021, and Dan remained there, until the opportunity arose to head up the Corporate and Commercial team at Jacksons.

"I'm still quite young and always wanted to get back into a regional practice and have an involvement in the day-to-day running and strategic decisions being taken by a firm," he said.

"Jacksons was a firm I had a lot of respect for - and I've been involved in a number of transactions with them throughout my career.

"If I was ever going to leave to go anywhere else it was going to be to come here."

Dan says it is pleasing to see the firm has a lot of younger partners looking to move Jacksons forward over the next five or ten years.

"With my profile in the region, I hope to be able to bring in work and contacts and grow the team - that's the ultimate goal," he added, complimenting Jacksons for "maintaining their roots in the North East".

"Jacksons are training young people and bringing them through the ranks, and they have many people who have trained there progress to partnership," he noted.

"I am looking forward to working with the younger workforce who are where I was 10 years ago, taking them on the journey I have been on and growing the team organically."

Dan is also looking forward to the challenge of working and acting for local SMEs across the region, with Jacksons also having an office in Newcastle.

"I looked at it and thought, 'it's an opportunity I have to be part of something and make an impact', he said.

"I think the key attraction for me is the planned growth.

"I want to be involved in the strategic decisions of the business, and I want to feel like I'm making an impact."

Erica Turner, head of legal at Jacksons Law Firm, said: "We would like to extend a warm welcome to Dan, who brings with him a wealth of experience and a formidable reputation in Corporate and Commercial law.

"Dan's appointment aligns with the strategic growth plans we have in place for Jacksons over the next five to ten years, and the ambitions we have around providing holistic legal services solutions for SMEs across our region.

"Dan's experience, rising through the ranks from trainee to partner in a busy law firm, will also be a huge asset to the young people he will be working with in the Corporate and Commercial team - and we look forward to seeing where he takes them."

Current head of the Corporate and Commercial team Tony Wentworth, will continue to provide his valuable experience to the busy team.

He said: "We're really pleased to welcome Dan to the team.

"The firm's focus over the past couple of years has been on building for the future, remoulding our leadership around a young and ambitious team that will steer and grow the business for many years to come.

"We're already a long way down the road to achieving that and Dan's appointment to head up the Corporate and Commercial team is the latest piece in the jigsaw.

"It gives the next generation the opportunity to continue to develop our already highly experienced and expert team and to continue to grow one of Jacksons' key legal service areas."

www.jacksons-law.com



L-R: Erica Turner, Dan Flounders and Tony Wentworth



**The power of collaboration:
Unlocking the ‘win-win’
in charity and corporate
partnerships**

L-R: Lydia Stewart, Hugh Welch, and Debbie McCormack of Muckle LLP with Chris Conroy, Centre Manager at Choysez

Corporate partnerships hold considerable value for charities and not-for-profit organisations; the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) estimates that UK businesses contribute around £4bn in total to the sector. But it's not just about money. Through meaningful collaboration, both sides can benefit hugely, leading to a real impact on our communities and environment. But what does that mean in practice?

Traditionally, these relationships have been (and often still are) centred around donations; however, businesses and charities alike are realising the greater value of longer-term strategic partnerships.

Muckle LLP is one of those businesses. The firm has been developing its environmental, social, and governance (ESG) strategy for decades and, in 2023, became the first law firm in the North East and Cumbria to receive B Corp Certification™.

Hugh Welch, who heads up Muckle's ESG strategy, discusses how working closely in partnership with local charities has benefited the firm, its people, and its partners.

Mutually beneficial partnerships

By definition, a partnership is mutually beneficial. The real value of partnerships between businesses and charities goes beyond a one-off fundraising initiative; it's shifting from a "we're here to help you" mindset to one that recognises the potential of the charity sector to offer value back to the business.

For example, many of our people act as trustees and governors, and we actively encourage this as a firm. Many of our younger lawyers are taking up trusteeships, and it is a fantastic opportunity for them to not only use their legal skills to help a charity but also develop useful board-related skills to support their own professional development in strategy, governance, leadership, and business management.

Volunteering is another area that has traditionally been seen as 'one-sided', with only the charities seeing any value. However, research has shown that people who carry out regular volunteering experience higher levels of mental well-being than those who never volunteered. Improved mental health in the workplace has been shown to improve productivity, performance, attendance, staff retention and morale – what business wouldn't want that? Everyone working at Muckle gets two days a year to volunteer; it's important that we encourage first-hand connections between our people and local charities, as it's also a fantastic way to see the tangible impact we can have on our local communities.

It's a part of doing business

Being a responsible business isn't just a nice-to-have—it's a must. Clients, employees and stakeholders expect businesses to play their part in tackling social and environmental issues, so I would suggest that this should be a key part of any strategy. It is a potential differentiator and an opportunity to

compete on grounds beyond just price, particularly if your business is bidding for contracts in the public sector.

The public sector is the biggest purchaser of goods and services in the UK, and most, if not all, tenders have social value requirements built in. Anyone wanting to supply the public sector must detail the economic and social benefits they will create through the delivery of the contract. Many charities are working directly with communities most impacted by various issues – so who better for a business to ask about what they could do to create or add value? Having those pre-existing relationships with charities and community groups makes delivering on those social value commitments that much easier.

Making funding go further

As our strategy has developed over the years, we've looked at moving beyond simple donations to working more closely with local charities to support lasting change through shared goals and values.

That isn't to say financial help isn't important; funding will always be a major priority for charities as the cost of providing services becomes more expensive and the need in our communities becomes greater. Our Muckle Fund at the Community Foundation has been active since 2002, and in that time, we've given almost 750 grants to local charities. In 2024, we supported 30 separate charities, four of which we'd given grants to in the previous two years.

This included Bedlington-based charity Choysez, which supports young women throughout Northumberland aged 9-16 years old with individually designed programmes to help gain nationally recognised qualifications and boost their self-esteem.

Being a responsible business is an important part of modern business strategy. Collaborating with charities will not only create better social and environmental impact but also help build stronger relationships with stakeholders and improve long-term business success.

You can find more information about business as a force for good at bcorporation.uk.

If you'd like to speak to Muckle about its journey, contact Hugh Welch at hugh.welch@muckle-llp.com

Five things all businesses should know about the UK GDPR

Hannah Nagel, an associate solicitor in Mincoffs Solicitors' commercial team who specialises in data protection, advises on five key points to help businesses stay compliant.

Hannah Nagel



Most businesses will come into contact with personal data, which can range from basic identifiers, such as names, email addresses and IP addresses, to more 'sensitive' personal information such as medical records or religious beliefs.

Under the UK GDPR, businesses must handle this data responsibly, ensuring compliance with legal requirements to protect individuals' privacy and security.

1. Your customers need to know what happens to their data

Not only do customers want to know how you will handle their personal data, it is also a legal requirement under the UK GDPR. This is called the 'transparency principle'.

You must also have a lawful basis, such as legitimate interests or consent, for processing their personal data.

You should be proactive and tell your customers what you're doing with their data and why, and what lawful basis you are relying on to do so. This is best communicated via a privacy notice.

2. Get ahead of your data protection obligations to save time and money

We recommend viewing data protection compliance as an investment in your business' future. This investment can help reduce the risk of data breaches and complaints resulting from non-compliant practices, which can save time and costs.

Complying with your data protection requirements can also result in inadvertent

advantages for your business. For example, another key principle of the UK GDPR is 'storage limitation', which means that you must not keep data for longer than necessary. Limiting data storage in this way can make it quicker and easier for you to find what you need.

At the outset of a project, data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) are a useful tool to help organisations identify and mitigate risks.

3. Be aware of the eight rights of individuals

One of the most well-known rights is the 'right of access' which is often exercised as data subject access requests (SARs). However, there are eight data subject rights to be aware of: the right to be informed, to access, rectify, erase, restrict processing, object, data portability and rights in relation to automated decision-making, including profiling.

Your organisation must comply with these rights and requests (including SARs). We would recommend that you seek legal advice if you are unsure how to comply.

4. Consider any third parties that may handle personal data on your behalf and make sure you have agreements in place

If you use any third-party payment providers, CRM providers, payroll providers or analytics services, then it is important to consider that there is a data processing

agreement in place.

The law stipulates what must be included in a data processing agreement. For example, the contract must state the processors' responsibilities such as: only processing personal data on documented instructions from the controller; taking appropriate security measures; and returning all personal data when the contract ends.

5. Pay the annual data protection fee to the ICO

Under data protection law, most businesses handling personal data must pay a data protection fee to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) and you may be subject to a fine if you don't pay.

In our view, it is worth the investment into compliance as the consequences of non-compliance can be significant. Aside from reputational damage, the ICO can also award fines of up to a maximum of £17.5 million or 4% of the total annual worldwide turnover in the preceding financial year, whichever is higher.

In an increasingly data-driven world, now more than ever is the time to invest in your business' data protection compliance.

To speak to a data protection solicitor, call our commercial team on 0191 281 6151 or email Hannah Nagel, associate solicitor at hnagel@mincoffs.co.uk www.mincoffs.co.uk

Employment Appeal Tribunal case highlights risk of failing to deal with a grievance

Nathan May-O'Brien is a Solicitor at specialist employment law firm, Collingwood Legal. Nathan considers the importance of resolving grievances.

Background

The decision in *Eddie Stobart Ltd v Graham* [2025] EAT 14 primarily concerned overruling an Employment Tribunal award which was “manifestly excessive”. However, the facts of the case concern an employer’s failure to investigate a grievance.

The Claimant informed her employer that she was pregnant in October 2021. In March 2022, the employer commenced a redundancy process. She believed that she had the right to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy as a Transport Shift Manager because she would shortly be commencing maternity leave. The employer did not view that this role was “suitable”. The Claimant applied for the role and was unsuccessful.

The Claimant raised a grievance about the redundancy process, but this email was twice blocked by the employer’s firewall. She was eventually dismissed by reason of redundancy. While discussing maternity pay with the Head of HR she mentioned her unanswered grievance. The Head of HR investigated this, was informed by a colleague that no grievance was received, and no further mention was made of the grievance when replying to the Claimant’s maternity pay query.

She brought a number of claims in the Employment Tribunal including unfair dismissal. She also brought a claim that the failure to investigate her grievance was an unlawful detriment for taking maternity leave and pregnancy and maternity discrimination. She was successful only in respect of the claims related to her grievance in that she had made her employer aware that she wished to raise a grievance, and this was not sufficiently followed up. The employer did not have a sufficient reason to explain why it did not follow this up and the Claimant was awarded £10,000 in injury to feelings. The Employment Appeal Tribunal (“EAT”) agreed with the employer that this



Nathan May-O'Brien

award was excessive on the basis that failure to deal with the grievance was “limited in scope and impact”.

Comment

It is perhaps unsurprising that the EAT reduced the amount awarded to the Claimant as it accepted that the failings of the employer were procedural, and any discriminatory conduct was not overt.

However, it is important to note that the employer was still liable for discrimination arising from their failure to investigate the grievance. It is possible that the risk of the claim could have been negated by providing some sort of outcome to the grievance.

In this case, the Claimant argued that the failure to investigate her grievance amounted to discrimination, but it is also possible, in appropriate circumstances, for a failure to investigate a grievance to amount to a repudiatory breach of contract entitling the employee to resign and claim for constructive unfair dismissal.

While this employer was able to reduce their liability on appeal, the case demonstrates that employers can be put to significant time and money for failing to investigate a grievance.

How we can help – Essential Manager Training

Managing discipline and grievances is one

of six modules that Collingwood Legal are covering in their Essential Manager Training from April to July 2025.

Each module is 90 minutes long and takes place remotely.

1. *Introduction to employment law for managers* – 10 April 2025
2. *Having difficult conversations* – 1 May 2025
3. *Managing discipline and grievances* – 15 May 2025
4. *Absence management, disability and adjustments* – 5 June 2025
5. *Discrimination, harassment and bullying* – 19 June 2025
6. *Ending the employment relationship* – 3 July 2025

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

Early-Bird Discounts are available for bookings made before 31 March 2025.

Please email sue.graham@collingwoodlegal.com or view the Events section of our website www.collingwoodlegal.com for further information.

Update on the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 (LAFRA)

Major Reforms for Leaseholders: What to Expect in 2025

The previous landscape of leasehold property rights in England and Wales is set to finally undergo significant transformation in 2025, bringing forth some of long-awaited reliefs to leaseholders.

As part of the government's previous leasehold reform agenda, new implementations will remove key barriers to lease extensions and enfranchisement, expanding the leaseholder rights, and paving the way for comprehensive legislative change.

Immediate changes from 31 January 2025

One of the most notable reforms taking effect from 31 January 2025 is the removal of the two-year ownership requirement for leaseholders seeking to extend their lease or buy their freehold. Previously, leaseholders were required to wait two years before initiating these processes, but this will no longer be the case, significantly improving flexibility for those seeking greater control over their properties.

The change applies not only to flat leaseholders but also to house leaseholders, who will now be able to extend their lease or purchase their freehold immediately upon acquiring their property.

What these changes mean

The upcoming reforms marks a reignited focus in the UK Property Laws, with a clear focus on empowering leaseholders and reducing exploitative practices by freeholders. By eliminating costly delays, expanding Right to Manage access, and preparing for a major legislative overhaul.

Voluntary and Statutory Lease Extension procedures

The processes involved in navigating lease extensions and enfranchisements is a complex legal minefield and requires specialist advice in order to successfully action the extensions.



Shahar Sadat

Voluntary Lease Extension – A lease extension can be agreed upon directly between the landlord and tenant, with negotiated terms and variations. Rent may be set at an equal or lower proportion of the current rent until the original term ends, followed by a peppercorn (£0.00) rent. Alternatively, a peppercorn rent may be agreed to apply from the extension's grant date going forth for an agreed premium.

Once all has been agreed between the parties. We can assist in formalising the agreement through a new lease. If there is a charge on the leaseholder's or freeholder's title, beneficiary consent is required from the charge holder and if there are no charges or restrictions, there will be no further consents required to be obtained, and the lease can be agreed and executed.

Statutory Lease Extension – The premium is determined through a valuation, typically conducted by a RICS-accredited valuer. Once the valuation is obtained, a notice is served to the landlord, who has two months to respond—either accepting the claim or issuing a counter-notice with proposed

terms and a statutory deposit.

Upon agreement, new leases are prepared for execution, and completion is arranged on a mutually agreed date.

A short lease can reduce property value and complicate selling or refinancing. Addressing it early helps maintain marketability, as extension costs vary based on the remaining term.

These new changes are a positive development, reducing constraints for leaseholders and helping to control costs, preventing continuous increases while waiting to extend the lease.

With these changes on the horizon, leaseholders should stay informed and prepared to take advantage of the new legal landscape in 2025.

For advice and guidance, contact Sweeney Miller Law's lease extension and enfranchisement specialist Shahar Sadat via email at Shahar.Sadat@sweineymiller.co.uk, visit www.sweineymiller.co.uk or call 0345 900 5401.



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“
*...People remain
at the heart of
our business...*”

Christopher Welch

Building for tomorrow, today

On the back of another year of strong financial growth, plus the transformation of the firm's head office we speak to Sintons' managing partner, Christopher Welch, about his plans for 2025.

For Sintons, 2024 was a year of change and investment, investment in our clients, in our infrastructure and in our people.

A real highlight was the complete refurbishment of our head office in Newcastle city centre. The conclusion of this two-year project, with a seven-figure spend, has not only transformed how we work, but has further cemented our position as a leading law firm here in the North East.

Our aim was to create the best possible environment for our clients and our colleagues and to provide facilities which were better suited to the type of work we do and the sophistication of the clients we are proud to represent. We have succeeded in our aim and now have facilities which are not only first class in terms of client experience but also better embrace the new ways in which our colleagues work.

New appointments

People remain at the heart of our business, and we continue to invest in the best talent with 40 new appointments throughout the firm in 2024.

We now have over 210 colleagues supporting our clients across all aspects of their business and personal needs and I'm looking forward to welcoming further significant hires this year.

We are proud to continue investing in fostering new talent as well; through our links with the region's universities and our continued participation in the solicitor apprenticeship scheme, which provides colleagues with a different career path to becoming a qualified solicitor.

Harnessing emerging technology

It is impossible to run any business without ensuring that your IT capabilities remain first rate. Over the course of the next 9 months, we are replacing the firm's entire practice management system. This is a huge task and will enable

us to harness the benefit of emerging technologies whilst continuing to ensure that our systems are reliable, secure and able to adapt to different ways of working.

The common theme with all the changes we have made is that we want to ensure we provide the highest standards of service to our clients whilst also providing the best facilities for our colleagues.

Consistent values

As our business continues to evolve and grow, there are some things which will always remain at the heart of our values as a firm – and that includes giving back to the North East community, of which we are proud to be a part. Following on from the £30,000 we were delighted to donate to The People's Kitchen last year, our colleagues are now busy fundraising for The Percy Hedley Foundation, which is our chosen charity for the next two years.

2024 was a fantastic year for Sintons. We continue to build on our success and are very excited for 2025 and the opportunities it provides. We have great colleagues, looking after great clients from great premises; any one of these things would make a good law firm; all of them make us the great firm that we are.

Sintons works with clients across the UK, operating in a full range of sectors.

Find out more at www.sintons.co.uk





Family at the heart of growing Hay & Kilner team

Operating from offices in Newcastle and Wallsend, Hay & Kilner's family law team offers comprehensive legal support across all aspects of family law, ensuring tailored support for every client. They recognise that each of their clients have different needs and unique circumstances.

With a wealth of experience and a wide breadth of knowledge they boast a growing team renowned for high quality, client-focused service.

How can Hay & Kilner help?

The Newcastle City office provides expert support across a wide range of family law matters offering guidance on divorce, financial matters and private children's issues. Our experienced team assists a wide range of clients offering tailored solutions to their specific circumstances, including cases involving business assets, farms or multiple properties. Our approach is practical and clear, focusing on achieving the best outcomes for clients in emotionally complex situations.

We are also one of the few North East firms offering the 'one solicitor' approach assisting both parties to reach an amicable solution. Additionally, we offer collaborative family law where parties are separately represented but agree at the outset to deal with matters

co-operatively and outside the court arena.

With a mind to protective planning for your assets and reducing time and money spent in dispute the team are able to advise in relation to both Pre and Post Nuptial agreements. Currently, many unmarried couples choose to live together in a property bought with financial support from family members and/or their own savings, they also advise about future proofing those assets with a well drafted Cohabitation Agreement. One size does not fit all, and their service is bespoke.

The Wallsend office works in conjunction with our Newcastle offering providing Legal Aid services for children's matters. This ensures access to justice for clients who may qualify for public funding. Our team is particularly skilled in handling care proceedings, child protection issues, adoption, as well as a variety of other sensitive family matters.

The Wallsend team specialises in both public and private law children proceedings.

Kerry Kelso and Anna Curphey hold the Law Society Children Law Accreditation. The team deals with a wide range of cases where they act for parents, family members and children when they are facing the most stressful periods in their lives.

The team approaches each case with empathy and determination, helping clients work towards the best possible outcomes for their children.

A cohesive and experienced family law team

The Partner and Head of the Hay & Kilner Family Team is Kerry Kelso who is based in Wallsend, with Fiona Ryans and Louisa Bestford leading as heads of the Newcastle team. However, regardless of location, Hay & Kilner's Family Law team works cohesively across both the Newcastle and Wallsend offices, offering clients expert guidance and practical solutions for every family situation.

As Kerry Kelso, Partner at Hay & Kilner, expressed, "Our team really does go the extra mile for the families we work with, bringing empathy, integrity, and legal expertise when it's needed most.

"The team's strength lies in its diverse skill set, whether handling complex financial matters, child protection issues, or collaborative separations. We are proud to offer tailored support, ensuring that every client receives the focused and dedicated attention they deserve."

If you need any assistance with family matters, please contact us on 0191 232 8345 or info@hay-kilner.co.uk www.hay-kilner.co.uk

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Comment

By Barry Speker OBE

The arrival of the Chinese Lunar New Year - for 2025 the Year of the Snake - was welcomed in fine style in Newcastle. Sunday 2nd February saw thousands enjoying various events in Stowell St and the Chinatown area as well as throughout the city.

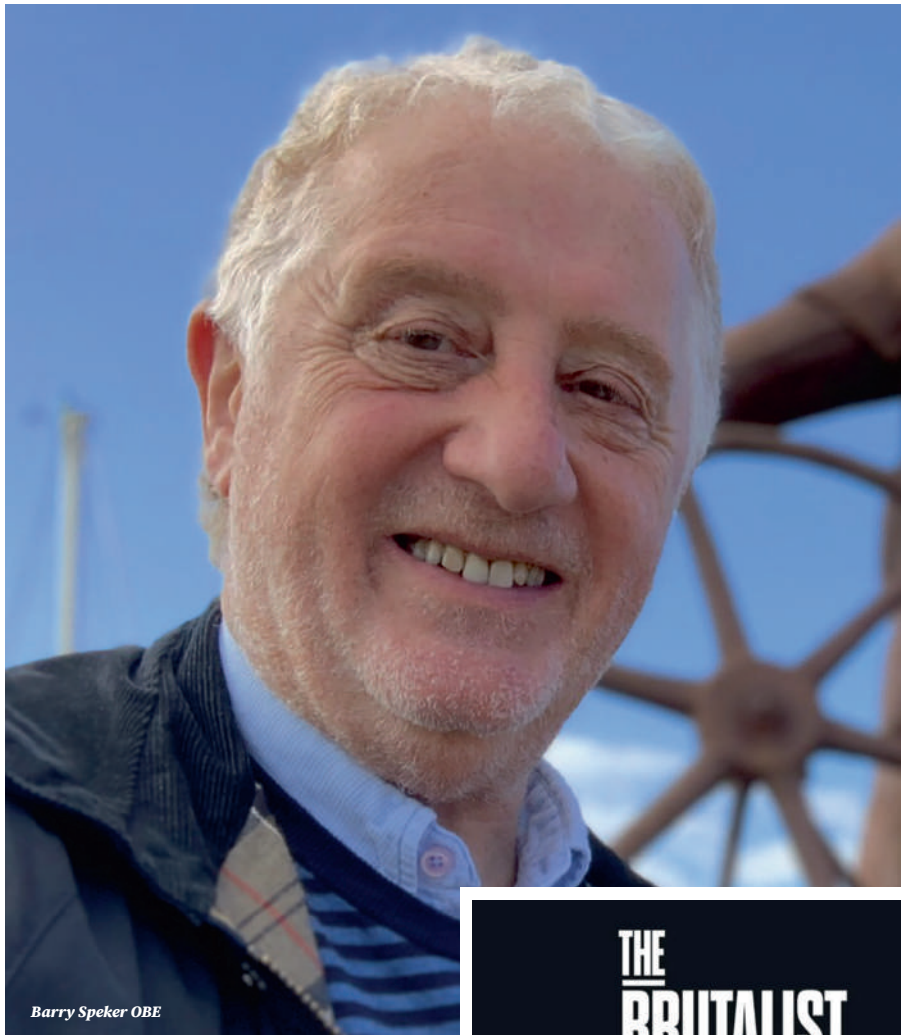
There were numerous groups displaying music and dancing as well as ear-splitting fire-crackers, funfair and much street food.

The arrangements were coordinated by the Chinese Festivities group, this year chaired by Edmund Ng of the Choy Lee Fut Kung Fu, Lion and Dragon Club. During the week I was pleased to be at Gosforth Palace (thanks to Yifan and Bo), Sky Restaurant for the North East Chinese Association celebration (Jimmy Tsang) and the South Mountain Chinese Older People's Association (thanks to Stephen, Amanda and Sow Fong).

The event gets better every year.

The professed aim may be peace but the controversial approaches to achieving it and the differences in perception of what are realistic terms, have produced utter confusion around the world. From international and sanctioned pariah, having committed war crimes, Putin has been transformed into a victim and a peace-seeking partner with President Trump.

And President Zelensky, from heroic patriotic leader of his invaded nation, is now



Barry Speker OBE

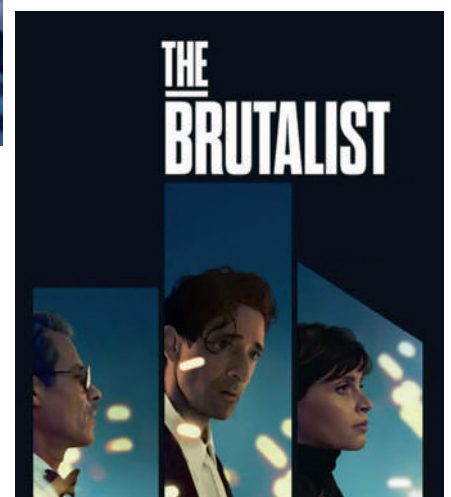
characterised by Donald Trump as a dictator with minimal support, refusing to have elections, accused of having started the war and of having failed to secure peace during the last three years.

Some argue that Trumpian statements are mere rhetoric and that we should await the commencement of the real negotiations. However there is no doubt that American prioritisation of Putin above NATO partners and declaration that Ukraine should not expect to recover seized land, have emboldened Russia whilst causing major concern in Ukraine and Europe. [Note to Rachel Reeves - Need to increase defence spending to 5% of GDP!]

Recent statements indicate Trump and Putin are kindred spirits in seeking territorial expansion of neighbouring countries particularly if rich in natural resources, fossil fuels and rare metals.

The forthcoming meeting between President Trump and our Prime Minister might serve as a reminder of our expectations of the USA as our ally and NATO partner. Ironically it is 80 years since the Yalta Conference in February 1945 when US President Franklin D Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin met and carved up Europe, in particular Germany and Poland. Déjà vu?

I strongly recommend The Brutalist, a truly stunning film starring Adrien Brody as Hungarian visionary architect László Toth,



a Jewish Holocaust survivor, rebuilding his life in post war America. Brody has won a Golden Globe and BAFTA as best actor and he and the film are tipped for the Oscars, in competition with Conclave which featured a bravura performance by Ralph Fiennes.

The Brutalist at 3hrs 35mins in length is a true epic in every sense with brilliant cinematography and a stunning score by Daniel Blumberg, (the grandson of my late dear friend Maurice Black).

A film not to be missed!

Access to Newcastle is not easy with the ongoing Tyne Bridge repairs (almost funded) and now the closed Gateshead flyover. Praise to North of Tyne Mayor Kim McGuinness in suggesting some funding may be found to deal with it. Incidentally has anyone checked the Central Motorway recently?

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Whitley Bay Travel Show a resounding success

Independent ABTA-registered travel agent, Destinations By John, has successfully hosted the first-ever Whitley Bay Travel Show at the town's Playhouse, attracting more than 300 enthusiastic visitors.

The event featured an impressive lineup of exhibitors, including renowned travel companies such as Newmarket Holidays, Riviera Travel, Wendy Wu Tours, and a selection of hotel chains and cruise lines. Attendees also had the opportunity to participate in a photography competition and explore essential holiday accessories from local IT experts, Canny Clever.

John Dixon, owner of Destinations By John, expressed his delight at the event's success, stating: "This has been a fantastic event, offering something for everyone—from walking and cycling tours to luxury cruises and long-haul holidays. The feedback we have received has



been overwhelmingly positive, and we are now looking into booking the venue for next year."

The Whitley Bay Travel Show provided a unique platform for travel enthusiasts to connect directly with industry experts, gather inspiration, and plan their next adventures. With such a strong turnout and enthusiastic response, this event is set to become a staple in the local travel calendar.



Maggie and Loukas celebrate special Great North Run surprise

Maggie Pavlou, a volunteer and Trustee of The People's Kitchen charity, and her son Loukas have ran the Great North Run many times, as part of a team raising money for The People's Kitchen.

When the early ballot place confirmation emails went out last week, they were both inundated with 'is that you?' messages, as the image

used was a photo of them crossing the finish line last year in their People's Kitchen running vests.

"What an honour, this is a wonderful opportunity to raise awareness of what we do".

Everyone at The Kitchen is a volunteer and the charity relies on donations and fundraising to help feed up to 250 people per day, 365 days a year.

"If you were successful in getting a place in the ballot and would like to run for The People's Kitchen, please get in touch ASAP info@peopleskitchen.co.uk

Every penny raised goes towards feeding the homeless, vulnerable and less fortunate people within our community," said Maggie.

The charity is encouraging supporters to cheer on their team on race day and contribute to their fundraising efforts, helping to make a real difference to those in need.

"If everyone who sees their confirmation email, thinks of us and simply donates even £5, we would be able to help feed more people in need and ensure that someone's life is made just a little better that day". www.justgiving.com/thepeopleskitchennewcastle

Boxers fight to deliver ambulances to the frontline

A boxing event took place to raise funds and awareness to support Ukrainian frontline brigades with life-saving ambulances and equipment.

The event was organised by Paul Lysaght of Durham based Go The Distance CIC (GTD) Paul has more than 40 years' experience in sport and leisure, and he is also a qualified boxing coach at England Boxing. Proceeds from the event enabled the charity organisers to purchase essential medical evacuation vehicles, including ambulances, to save lives on Ukraine's frontlines.

Fellow organiser Dr. Anatoliy Telpov is a doctor in the Emergency Department of South Tyneside District Hospital, and he has first-hand experience of delivering ambulances to Ukraine. Now living in Backworth but originally from Ivano-Frankivsk, in Western Ukraine, Dr. Telpov has personally delivered ambulances from the UK to the Polish border, where they were handed over to Ukrainian military representatives.

"Transporting these ambulances to Ukraine has been one of the most meaningful contributions I've made to my homeland," said Dr. Telpov. "These vehicles are not just transportation—they are mobile lifelines,



bringing hope and urgent care to injured soldiers. Without them, many would not survive the critical window after an injury. This is why the proceeds from this event are so vital."

Dr. Telpov explained the process: "The ambulances we deliver are immediately deployed to high-need areas. These are vehicles designed to move quickly and navigate rough terrain, stabilising patients and transporting them to field hospitals or safer medical facilities. Every vehicle has saved countless lives, but they face immense challenges in active combat zones, which is why replacements are urgently needed."



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People Doing Good!

Council puts wheels in motion

A brand-new Skatepark was opened in Blyth by the Mayor of Blyth, Cllr Aileen Barrass.

Cllr Aileen Barrass expressed her enthusiasm, stating, “This skatepark is a wonderful addition to our community, providing a much-needed space for young people to be active, social, and creative. I am thrilled to see so many people here today, and I look forward to the positive impact it will have for years to come.”

Beyond the fun of the opening event, the Isabella Skatepark brings significant benefits to the community. It offers a safe and designated space for skateboarders, BMX riders, and scooter users to develop their skills while reducing the likelihood of skating in unsuitable areas. The park fosters a sense of belonging and camaraderie among local young people, providing a positive social environment that encourages teamwork, resilience, and perseverance.

Additionally, skateboarding is an excellent form of exercise that improves balance, coordination, and cardiovascular health. The skatepark also serves as an inclusive space where people of all ages and skill levels can participate, breaking down barriers and



promoting an active lifestyle. This incredible new facility was made possible by Blyth Town Council, with support from Northumberland County Council, and was constructed by Wheelscape Skateparks. Additional support was provided by Silks and Shred The North.



The Well-being coach helping clients find the perfect home for the soul

Jackie Webster, a well-being coach based in North Devon, is pioneering a unique approach to wellness by exploring the correlation between where people live and their overall well-being.

With over a decade of experience in coaching, Jacqueline has created a niche service and helped countless clients find their ideal home – not just a place to live, but a space that nurtures their mental,

emotional, and physical health.

Her business Soul Purpose helps people all over the world including the North East. What sets her apart is the ability to identify when a person's environment is negatively impacting their well-being. Through her coaching, she helps clients recognise the emotional and psychological effects of their surroundings and empowers them to make life-changing decisions – sometimes even relocating to a place that better aligns with their needs.

Her approach is gaining recognition as more individuals realise that where they live directly affects their happiness and health. “Some of my clients feel emotionally trapped in spaces that don't serve them. They long for nature but live in a concrete jungle, or they crave peace but are surrounded by noise. Helping them move to a location that truly supports their well-being has been transformative,” she explains.

Jackie encourages people to take a fresh approach to their well-being. “Spring is a time of renewal. It's not just about cleaning your home but also about refreshing your mind. Small changes – whether it's opening a window, stepping outside for fresh air, or considering a bigger life shift – can make a huge difference,” she advises.

Having moved around 15 times herself, Jacqueline understands the challenges and emotional complexities of relocation. “My role isn't just about moving house – it's about helping people step into a new chapter of their lives with confidence,” she says. “If I can be a small part of that transformation, then my job is done.”

Freemasons Show that they are at the Heart of the Community

The Masonic Hall in North Shields has recently installed a defibrillator outside its building, symbolising Freemasonry's heartfelt commitment to supporting the community, giving back, and being at the heart of local life.

Lewis Bartoli, Treasurer, said, “Not only is it a potentially lifesaving asset, but it's also a symbol of care, compassion, and Northumberland Freemasons' commitment to the local community.”

The funding for the defibrillator came from a collective effort. The Freemasons of Northumberland provided a generous donation, which was supplemented by contributions from various Masonic orders associated with the hall. Additionally, match funding from the Department for Health and Social Care's Community Fund helped complete the project, covering the cost of the cabinet as part of the package.

“We're proud to have this equipment available for public use. Of course, we hope it never has to be used, but it's reassuring to know



it's there,” he added. “This initiative underscores the Masonic commitment to community care, ensuring safety and support for all who live and work in North Shields.”

The Provincial Grand Lodge of Northumberland, through the Richard Henry Holmes Masonic Benevolent Fund, donates approximately £160,000 each year to local charities and good causes.

Banks Group grant lights the way to Throckley Community Hall improvements

A busy west Newcastle community hall is looking forward to a brighter future after using funding from a North East employer to pay for a new energy efficient lighting system.

Throckley Community Hall has used a £1,897 Banks Group grant to replace failing, 15 year-old strip lights in its main room with a state-of-the-art LED lighting system which is both cheaper to run and less impactful on the environment.

Local contractor Switch Electrical & Mechanical Services was chosen to carry out the required work, with feedback from the Hall's regular users already highlighting how much of a positive difference the change has made to the venue.

And the Hall committee is hoping that the improved environment within the building will encourage more local people to hold their events and activities there.

The volunteer-run Throckley Community Hall welcomes over 500 visitors every week and hosts a wide range of different groups and functions, including dance and exercise classes, a youth club, a men's group, Knit & Knatter sessions, a craft club and popular twice-weekly bingo sessions.



It is also the home of a community larder which distributes food parcels to dozens of local people and families in need every week.

Michelle Mitchell, office manager at Throckley Community Hall, says: "The difference that the new lighting has made is immense and we're thrilled with how much brighter our main hall now is."



OnPath Energy adopts Sunderland Community Soup Kitchen as 2025 dedicated charity

Colleagues at Sunderland-headquartered renewable energy developer OnPath Energy are set to swap wind farms for whisks in support of a city food poverty charity.

The OnPath team voted to adopt the Sunderland Community Soup Kitchen as their English dedicated charity for 2025, with the company matching every £1,000 that colleagues raise in the next 12 months, up to a maximum of £5,000.

And as well as undertaking a range of fundraising activities through the year, members of the OnPath team will also be volunteering at the Soup Kitchen, joining more than 60 other local volunteers who help to deliver the charity's services every week.

Founded in 2019 by CEO Andrea Bell, Sunderland Community Soup Kitchen provides free, freshly cooked hot meals for around 100 local people during every shift which are available to anyone in need, whether on a regular basis or just once in a while.

It moved into its Albert's Place home on High Street West in the city in 2021 and is open from 3-4pm on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and between noon and 1pm on Sundays.

The charity recently opened a breakfast pit stop café for people working in the local area and is set to open a new community hub later this year which will be available for local businesses, groups and organisations to hire for their events and activities.

It also has its own allotments on which some of its service users help to tend and grow much of the fruit and vegetables that are used to make its meals.

Sunderland Community Soup Kitchen receives no statutory funding, and relies entirely on its own fundraising efforts and support from local people, regional businesses and grant-giving organisations.

Support The Charlie and Carter Foundation

April is Charlie's month at The Charlie and Carter Foundation as they celebrate Charlie's birthday. This year they are inviting you to make a bold statement and raise much needed funds by participating in Wear Blue for Charlie and Carter.

Could you hold a Wear Blue Day at your office, host a Blue Event or have a Blue Raffle? It's time to get creative and raise funds in memory of Charlie, who would have been 14 this year.

There are so many ways to get involved but the main thing to remember is to have fun and support The Charlie and Carter Foundation!

All funds raised allow us to support families who have had to reduce their working hours to care for a child with a life limiting illness.



If you would like to discuss how you can go Blue in April, please contact Laura Jane Forbes on Laura@ccfemail.co.uk

Scan here to get involved



This April, we're inviting you to make a bold statement and raise much needed funds by participating in Wear Blue for Charlie and Carter. There are so many ways to get involved but the main thing to remember is to have fun and support The Charlie and Carter Foundation!

www.thecharlieandcarterfoundation.co.uk Registered Charity No: 1166538 laura@ccfemail.co.uk





NE Youth celebrate 90th year with big bash

NE Youth have reached an incredible milestone - they are celebrating their 90th anniversary throughout 2025. For nine decades they have impacted the lives of over 1 million young people across the North East!

The night is poised to be a stand-out event in the 2025 calendar- guests will enjoy fizz on arrival, great food, entertainment, auctions, games, raffles, live music, dancing and more! Its important to look forward as well as back on anniversaries. NE Youth hope that the money they fundraise during their 90th year will mean that more young people will be supported next year and for many years to come.

To secure a table for the 90th Gala event contact NE Youth - table prices are set at just £350 per table for NE Youth Members and Charities, and £550 for corporate guests.

www.neyouth.org.uk

From their humble beginnings in 1935 as The Northumberland Association of Boys Clubs the charity has evolved and changed hugely over the last 90 years.

NE Youth now offers direct open access youth provision and targeted programmes which reflect their deep commitment to

addressing the changing needs of young people over the years.

To celebrate their special anniversary they will be hosting a Gala event at The Fed, Gateshead on Thursday, 10th April 2025 7-12pm, It promises to be a one-of-a-kind celebration event.





Generator Studios taking part in September

Charity of the Month

In the latest of this hugely popular series of features Northern Insight speaks to...

The Bubble Foundation

Tell us about the charity.

Founded in 1993, the Bubble Foundation is a small charity based on Ward 3 at the Great North Children's Hospital at the RVI in Newcastle. Children admitted to the ward have a life-threatening immune deficiency and require a bone marrow or stem cell transplant. Whilst on the ward they live in isolation with a parent or carer, in a protective 'bubble' to keep them safe from infection. Children mainly come for treatment from as far south as Birmingham and from Wales, Scotland and Ireland, but some come from further afield due to the ward's reputation for excellence of the service. They are uprooted from their home and family for many months.

The Bubble Foundation provides toys, activities and equipment for the children, medical equipment for the ward which can't be funded by the NHS, and emergency funds and support for families. The charity also funds vital research into treatments and diagnosis of primary immunodeficiencies and has made a significant contribution to improving outcomes for these children.

Our aim is to give every young superhero on Ward 3, the care and childhood they deserve as they face their daily battle fighting for life leading to a lifelong cure of their condition.

What type of fundraising events do you have?

We have a small number of places in the Great North Run! You can organise your own event for us such as a cake sale or a Wear Blue Day. You can also take part in our annual challenge – September! Can you walk 10,000 steps every day in September? Better still get your workplace involved, create healthy habits and add a bit of competition – who can walk the furthest? Get in touch for details!

Who are your patrons and trustees?

We are honoured to have Brian McPadden (of Westlife and Boyzlife) as our President, actress Charlie Harwick and artist Alexander Millar as our Patrons. We have a very active Trustee Board including some medical staff who have been involved with the ward, and the charity, for over 30 years. Professor Andrew Cant is our Chair. Other trustees are Professor Andy Gennery, Professor Mary Slatter, Neil Stotesbury, Anna Hodgson, Vicky Philipson, Helen Mylott, Dan Clark, James Turnbull and Bevis Jones. James, our youngest trustee, has an amazing story. As a small child James was diagnosed with Chronic Granulomatous Disease. The disease means that the immune system is not working correctly, leading to increased susceptibility to infections which can be critical. In August 2012, when he was nine years old, James was a patient on Ward 3 where he underwent a bone marrow transplant. This is a major procedure which required a seven week stay in an isolation 'bubble'. James was so inspired by his time on Ward 3 that he graduated from Sheffield University, as a Pediatric Nurse last year. In a wonderful turn of events, he is now a nurse on the very same pediatric bone marrow transplant ward where he was a patient 12 years ago.

Find out more about our trustees here - www.bubblefoundation.org.uk/learn

What has been your proudest moment so far?

Research funded by the Bubble Foundation has helped to improve the survival rate of children treated on Ward 3 from 50% to over 90%. This is an amazing achievement, but we continue to strive for better results.

What are you currently working on?

We are working on updating our website and we are looking forward to revealing a new logo for the Bubble Foundation in the spring!

We will be holding our first online raffle in the spring, and we are looking for prizes to entice people to buy lots of tickets. If you can help, please get in touch.

We are building a corporate support package to expand our connections with businesses. Corporate support can vary from supplying a raffle prize, to holding an office cake sale, having our leaflets at reception, to holding an event, such as a golf day or dinner or sponsoring a piece of equipment.

How do you get involved?

- **Follow us on social media:**
Share our posts whenever you can, this helps raise awareness of primary immunodeficiencies and the work of the Bubble Foundation.
- **Fundraise for us:**
Take on a challenge or set up an event to fundraise for us. Get in touch for ideas and support.
- **Help us find corporate support:**
Can you introduce us to a business who would like to know more? Our relaunch in spring will draw a lot of attention, would your business like to be involved?
- **Donate now:**
www.bubblefoundation.org.uk/donate
- **Visit our website to learn more:**
www.bubblefoundation.org.uk

Get in touch:

Email: bubble.foundation@nhs.net

Phone: 07760 393187



Trustee James

Retention Revolution: Building a workplace that keeps talent

With rising employee National Insurance contributions and an increase in the minimum wage, businesses across the UK are feeling the financial strain.

Many companies are looking for ways to cut costs and training and development budgets are often among the first to go. But while reducing investment in people might seem like a quick fix, it can have damaging long-term consequences.

Now, more than ever, businesses must focus on retaining talent, maximising productivity and engaging the workforce and that starts with managing the employee journey. Cutting back on people development may save money in the short term, but the cost of high attrition, disengaged employees and low productivity will far outweigh any immediate savings.

Why investing in the employee journey is more crucial than ever

With operational costs rising, companies need a high-performing, motivated and loyal workforce to succeed. Yet, many businesses are struggling with retention as employees look for better opportunities when things are tight.

Here's why we believe that prioritising the employee experience is not just the right thing to do, it's a business necessity:

1. Retention is more cost-effective than recruitment.

Replacing an employee can cost up to twice their salary in recruitment, training and lost productivity. In a time when every penny counts, businesses should focus on keeping their best people rather than continuously replacing them.

2. Engaged employees drive productivity.

Research by Gallup shows that "Engaged employees are, on average, 22% more productive, innovative and committed to business success". Investing in onboarding, training and career development can unlock greater performance without increasing headcount.



Jen Tait, Rise Learning Group

3. Employees expect growth opportunities.

Rising costs mean many businesses can't afford to offer significant pay increases right now. However, development opportunities, career progression and being part of something bigger is just as important in keeping employees motivated. When businesses invest in their people, they foster loyalty, even in tough times.

At Rise Learning Group, we know that business leaders want to continue to develop and retain their people, even during challenging economic times.

That's why we've launched our live, interactive series of webinars, focusing on supporting your people through each stage of the colleague journey.

These sessions will provide practical, effective strategies to retain talent, boost engagement and drive productivity without breaking the bank.

What you'll get from the webinars:

- Strategies to retain employees and reduce costly turnover.
- Practical ways to boost engagement without increasing salaries.
- Insights on creating a workplace culture that attracts and retains top talent.
- Cost-effective training and development solutions for businesses with limited budgets.

Webinar Series Schedule:

Webinar 1: Transforming Onboarding – From Offer Stage to Long-term Success

Webinar 2: Transforming Customer Conversations – Communication Skills

Webinar 3: Transforming Leadership – Leading with Confidence

Webinar 4: Transforming Training – Essential Skills for Workplace Trainers

Webinar 5: Supporting Bereaved Colleagues – A Compassionate Approach

Webinar 6: Neurodiversity – Creating an Inclusive Colleague Journey

Don't miss the opportunity to future-proof your workforce, scan the QR code to register.

riselearninggroup.com



Effective and engaging training solutions for every stage of business success.



Speak to us today to explore how we can support your business and it's people through our four pillars of excellence.



Readiness

From job offer to the end of probation, we help new hires become confident, competent, and loyal employees by designing and delivering a structured onboarding framework tailored to your company.



Impact

Strengthen your customer-facing teams with training designed to enhance communication, customer understanding, and positive outcomes that drive business results.



Success

Equip your aspiring, new, and experienced managers with a wide range of leadership and commercial skills, delivered over an 8-month development and coaching programme.



Empower

Ensure your internal Trainers deliver impactful learning experiences with our Train Skills programme, designed to elevate their ability to identify training needs, design, deliver, and evaluate successful training programmes.

The future of work: Being Leaders v Doing Leaders

To be or to do – that is the question.

A few years ago, during a coaching development session, we were asked: “Are you being coach or doing coach?”

The question hung in the air. I remember exchanging confused glances with another—neither of us knew what it meant. But we answered, and in doing so, we stumbled upon the essence of leadership.

What does it mean to be a “Being” Leader?

When dealing with people, responding to challenges, and handling stress, we often fall into two camps: “doing” people and “being” people.

The Doing People

Doing people get on with tasks for various reasons:

- To block out distractions or stress.
- To keep moving forward as a coping mechanism.
- To achieve, ticking off tasks as a measure of success.

They focus on output, productivity, and measurable results. But often, the work they prioritize isn't the most important—it's just what keeps them busy. This busyness can lead to burnout, neglecting relationships, and missing out on what truly matters. In a world that glorifies being busy, doing people wear their effort like a badge of honour, but it isn't always the answer.

The Being People

Being people take a different approach. They question why things are done, considering the bigger picture and the long-term impact. They focus on:

- Understanding behaviour and psychology.
- Being clear on their purpose, identity, and role.
- Playing the long game—developing people and creating sustainable success.

Being people know how to show up to influence their environment positively. They reflect on their actions, understand their impact, and hold up the mirror not just for themselves but for others as well.

So what does this then look like in the workplace?

Approach 1: The Doing Leaders

Doing leaders drive teams forward, focusing



Annabel Graham

on success, competition, and achievement. Their priority is getting results, often without reflecting on how they got there. They concentrate on objectives, KPIs, and outputs but may overlook the impact on team culture, morale, and long-term sustainability. They are great at making things happen, but what if they leave? Will the team and organisation have the skills and capability to sustain without them?

Approach 2: The Being Leaders

Being leaders play the long game. They recognize that true success requires:

- Investing in people, capability and role modelling the right behaviours.
- Creating an environment that fosters development, psychological safety and collaboration
- Encouraging self-awareness and accountability.

They build teams that can sustain success beyond their own tenure. This approach requires patience, self-reflection, and the willingness to challenge the status quo. It also demands that leaders leave their ego at the door—focusing not on personal recognition but on long-term impact.

My Own Leadership Journey

I didn't realize I was a being leader until much later. I wasn't interested in quick fixes.

Sure, I could “do,” but I always did it with intention. When leading teams, I focused on building capability, aligning with values, and fostering independence. This wasn't always popular—it took time, and time isn't always available in business. But I knew the long game worked, as people continued to develop without me.

I spend my time working with leaders on behaviour, recognising that how they present themselves can transform their impact on their teams and organizations.

Consider your own approach:

- What systems shaped you?
- What habits have you formed?
- What gets in your way?
- How do you need to be your best self for your family, friends, and team?

Start noticing when you're “doing” and ask yourself why. Recognize the power of “being” and embrace the leadership style that fosters true, lasting impact.

Annabel is an Executive and Team Coach, Leadership Facilitator and Coach Supervisor. If you would like to explore what's next for your development Contact Annabel via LinkedIn, annabel@successfultraining.co.uk, or visit www.successfultraining.co.uk



There's no place like Hoult's Yard

The coolest place to work in Newcastle! Flexible workspaces, inspiring community, and a vibrant local culture.

Looking for a workspace that sparks creativity, fosters collaboration, and connects you with a thriving community?

At Hoult's Yard, we believe work should be more than just a place you go – it should be a place that inspires. Whether you're a freelancer, a growing startup, or an established business, you'll find the perfect space to flourish in Newcastle's most vibrant business village.

A community like no other

At Hoult's Yard, it's not just about the space – it's about the people. Join a community where ideas are shared over coffee, partnerships are born in casual conversations, and successes are celebrated

together. From our Brew and Bites, and Good Business meetups to cake giveaways, every day brings new opportunities to connect and grow.

Spaces that inspire

Our offices and meeting rooms are housed in buildings rich with local history, thoughtfully redeveloped to blend industrial charm with modern comfort. Whether you're looking for a private office, industrial warehousing, or a creative meeting space, you'll find an inspiring environment that adapts to your needs.

A day at Hoult's Yard

Imagine starting your morning with freshly brewed artisan coffee, brainstorming ideas in a beautifully designed meeting room, and wrapping up the day with a craft beer at the onsite taproom. With wellness spots, local eateries, and even a barbershop on your doorstep, Hoult's Yard perfectly balances productivity with lifestyle.

Supporting Local, Celebrating Success

We're proud to support local businesses – from doughnut makers to burger maestros – all contributing to the unique buzz at Hoult's Yard. And when one of our members achieves something great, we

make sure to celebrate it. After all, success tastes even sweeter when shared with friends.

Special Offers to get you started

Looking to join our community? We've got some fantastic offers to help you get started:

- **50% off meeting room bookings** – Ideal for your next big pitch or team meeting.
- **50% off a quarter of your licence term** – When signing up for 12 months or more on an office space.

These offers are available for a limited time, so don't miss out!

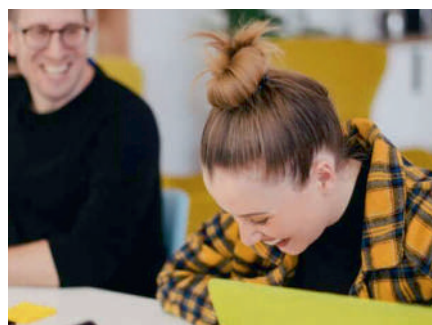
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Come and experience Hoult's Yard for yourself. Schedule a tour today and find the perfect home for your business.

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WWW.HYHUBS.COM



Callum and Rhonan with Amanda (Highlights PR)

North Tyneside Business Forum on the hunt for the Beating Heart of the Community

The Heart of the Community Award is back for 2025, ready to shine a light on the businesses and organisations that go above and beyond to support, uplift, and empower North Tyneside.

This prestigious accolade honours those who put people first, making a real, lasting impact on the lives of residents while fostering a spirit of togetherness and generosity throughout the borough.

Michael James, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, shared his enthusiasm for the initiative:

“This is always my favourite award from the whole Business Awards. Every nominee goes above and beyond their daily work to support the community. Their passion and generosity make a real difference in North Tyneside.”

2024 Winners, North East Nipple Project is run by Megan Jones and Amanda Patterson from Wallsend who have transformed lives through their free areola tattooing service for women recovering from breast cancer reconstruction. Their compassionate work has not only restored confidence but also provided emotional healing, proving that community care is about more than just services—it’s about changing lives.

Amanda Patterson said: “It was a real surprise to win the award, and we are grateful to everyone who voted for us. It’s

lovely to know that our work is helping so many people to regain their confidence after having breast surgery.”

The previous year’s winner Tynemouth Decorators is a family-run business who have painted a brighter future—both literally and figuratively—through their tireless support of local organisations like Pathways 4 All, as well as international projects such as painting schools in Gambia. Their hands-on involvement in initiatives like DIY SOS reflects a steadfast commitment to giving back and creating spaces filled with hope.

“We’ve helped dozens of good causes by giving away free paint and by helping in projects like the BBC DIY SOS TV programme, we enjoy doing things like this and never expected to get an award, but we are very honoured,” said Tynemouth Decorator’s owner Stephen Hull.

“Our inspiring past winners have set the gold standard for the Heart of the Community Award,” said Michael James. “There are many other people, businesses and organisations in North Tyneside who champion those in need with compassion, creativity, and collaboration and we need to

find them to give them the recognition they deserve.”

The North Tyneside Business Forum invites businesses and organisations to showcase how they’re making a difference. This year, the award will feature three distinct themes that highlight key pillars of community impact:

Positive Impact (Until end of March 2025) – Recognising those who have made a tangible, meaningful difference in people’s lives.

Collaboration (April–June 2025) – Celebrating businesses that work together with other organisations, charities, and local groups to achieve greater impact.

Wellbeing (July–September 2025) – Honouring initiatives that prioritise the health, happiness, and welfare of the North Tyneside community.

Nominations will be open for six weeks during each phase, with a winner announced at the end of each period. The three winners will then advance as finalists for the prestigious Heart of the Community Award, which will be presented at the North Tyneside Business Awards 2025 in November.

Anyone can nominate a business that is making a real difference, and self-nominations are welcome throughout the year. Submissions will be carefully evaluated by the North Tyneside Business Forum management team, with input from external judges, including representatives from the North Tyneside Council Economic Growth team and VODA directorate.

For more information on how to nominate or get involved, visit www.norhttynesidebusinessawards.co.uk/heart-of-the-community-award

Why non-domestic retrofit and PAS 2038 is vital for achieving a sustainable future



David Stobbs

As the world faces the pressing challenge of climate change, the built environment plays a crucial role in reducing carbon emissions and promoting sustainability.

Non-domestic buildings, comprising offices, retail spaces, industrial facilities and public sector buildings account for a significant portion of energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions.

To achieve net-zero carbon goals, retrofitting these buildings is essential.

One key standard guiding the retrofit of non-domestic buildings is PAS 2038.

The standard provides a structured approach to retrofitting, ensuring compliance with best practices for energy efficiency improvements. Brighter Compliance, a leading North East consultancy specialising in regulatory and environmental compliance, offers tailored support to help businesses navigate the complexities of non-domestic retrofit and PAS 2038 implementation.

Why Non-Domestic Retrofit is Essential

Reducing Carbon Footprint – Many older UK commercial buildings suffer from poor insulation, outdated heating systems and inefficient lighting leading to excessive

energy use. Retrofitting addresses these inefficiencies by integrating modern technologies such as LED lighting, high-performance insulation and renewable energy solutions.

Enhancing Energy Efficiency and Cost Savings

– As energy prices continue to fluctuate, retrofitting non-domestic buildings improves energy performance, leading to reduced operational costs.

Regulatory Compliance and Future-Proofing

– With commercial landlords needing to achieve an EPC rating of at least 'E' and with future policies likely to impose stricter requirements, retrofitting ensures compliance and avoids potential legal and financial penalties.

Improving Occupant Well-being and Productivity

– A well-retrofitted building enhances indoor air quality, lighting and thermal comfort, contributing to a healthier and more productive working environment.

Understanding PAS 2038: A Framework for Non-Domestic Retrofit

Developed by the British Standards Institution (BSI), it ensures systematic energy efficiency improvements through a staged process. This framework aligns with the UK's drive toward net-zero carbon emissions and complements PAS 2035, which focuses on domestic retrofitting.

PAS 2038 encourages a comprehensive evaluation of a building's energy performance rather than piecemeal upgrades. This ensures integrated improvements for maximum impact.

While the standard requires collaboration among building owners, consultants, contractors, and energy assessors to develop effective retrofit strategies, post-retrofit

assessments ensure that energy efficiency measures deliver the intended benefits, avoiding ineffective interventions.

North Tyneside based Brighter Compliance offers expert guidance to businesses and organisations seeking to implement PAS 2038 and optimise their retrofit projects. Having recently been named as the compliance partner of Warmworks, the Managing Agent of the Scottish Government's national fuel poverty scheme, Warmer Homes Scotland, the Brighter team are using their vast knowledge and experience to support installers within the retrofit sector.

David Stobbs, Brighter's experienced PAS compliance consultant, commented on the increase in demand for the retrofit standard, 'As the UK continues their efforts to combat climate change, we have experienced an increase in demand from installers for the PAS 2038 standard.'

Offering tailored support to businesses to gain and retain the standard, we work with our clients' workforce and supply chain to create or enhance their management system, we have a flexible approach and understand that many installers are at different stages of their compliance journey.

The retrofit of non-domestic buildings is no longer optional, it's a necessity for achieving a sustainable future. With our support, installers can navigate the PAS 2038 process smoothly, unlocking financial savings, regulatory compliance and environmental benefits.'

More information on the PAS 2038 support from Brighter Compliance can be found on their website. www.brightercompliance.co.uk



Dr David Cliff

I'll get back to you

Dr David Cliff explores the most common cliché in business.

Those of you who know me know that I maintain courtesy in business is an absolute prerequisite to good trading and good business relationships. The ability to acknowledge someone's humanity, over the transactional nature of the business in hand is central to who we are as people. The old adage "people buy from people", is a truism, not a cliché.

Modern social exchanges often involve increasingly distant communication through electronic devices, particularly since the advent of social media. An increasing use of emails may be convenient but has the tendency to distance and depersonalise. We can communicate whilst severing the natural human reciprocity that naturally occurs in face-to-face communication and constitutes the basis of so many of our relationships. You might not need this

closeness for a simple transaction, but for a lasting relationship based on more than just the exchange of goods and services you need trust, understanding, customer centricism and true reciprocity. These things are truly essential.

One of the most frustrating things I see across business are those people who are happy to garner the time and efforts of individuals and organisations in an attempt to meet their needs for goods and services. Then, at a pre-contractual stage, people will go into what I call "I'll get back to you mode". Sometimes this is a genuine need for time to consider something of great importance, sometimes it is simply because the circumstances are not yet ripe for the proposed exchange to take place. All too often, however, people have thought beyond the original exchange and have decided that they seek something else, have lost energy on an idea they originally thought was a solution for them, or simply can't afford to proceed or just don't have the time to proceed.

That is not the problem of the trader who has taken the time and effort to engage with a potential customer, discuss the issues and attempt to frame an offer that is central to why they are in business. They are left waiting, they don't know whether it's proceeding or not. They then have to

progress chase to clarify what is going on, having already devoted time and effort to securing your business. This lack of reciprocity, this "kicking down the road" or just completely ignoring someone is intensely egocentric on the part of the person who fails to communicate. "I'll get back to you" or worse, complete failure to respond fundamentally affects future working relationships. It is intensely devaluing of people and a poor reflection of the integrity of the offender.

The world is getting an increasingly remote place. Business relationships, just like other relationships are bounded by not just the nature of the transaction. They involve sharing human qualities that are essential to define who we are. In a world of globalisation and automation, we can all too quickly forget that. AI on its own is not the answer either. It "can get back to people" but often in inauthentic ways that can easily reduce people to feeling like a "data packet" or just plain manipulated. It is this very space that small to medium size businesses can excel in, provided they honour the simple protocol of courtesy, reciprocity and to communicate rather than just maintain "radio silence".

But dear reader, you never do that do you?

www.gedanken.co.uk



Dr David Cliff

Enjoyed this article? Take the next step!

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Quantum Controls reinvents industrial maintenance with Q-Care Service Partnerships

Quantum Controls, the UK's leading independent drive service and maintenance provider, is revolutionising industrial maintenance with the launch of Q-Care—a new suite of comprehensive service partnerships designed to eliminate unplanned downtime, enhance operational efficiency, and provide businesses with complete peace of mind.

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Call us today at 01661 835 566 or visit quantum-controls.co.uk to discover how Q-Care can safeguard your operations and drive long-term efficiency.

Are you Waste Aware? The North East Partnership approach to waste awareness

Starting from the 31st March 2025, organisations across England with 10 or more full-time equivalent employees will need to comply with the new Simpler Recycling regulations designed to streamline waste management and boost sustainability.

For organisations in the North East, an innovative partnership is ensuring that all organisations that need to comply across the region are given the information they need.

Waste Aware North East, a pioneering campaign created by Genee Consulting, Net Zero North East England, and the North East Recycling Forum, with sponsorship from industry leaders like J&B Recycling, Alupro, Olive Compliance, and Suez, has been developed to help organisations navigate upcoming legislation with ease. The sponsorship is key to the success of the initiative and testament to the waste sector recognising the importance of working together to get the message out to all organisations that will need to comply.

The aim is to ensure organisations know the legislation is on the way, help them develop waste management systems internally to efficiently manage, segregate and reduce waste and how they work with waste service providers to dispose of their waste. The partnership approach has meant that messaging and awareness raising is being done through a network of organisations across the region who are sharing the resources.

If your organisation employs 10 or more full-time equivalent staff, these regulations will affect you. Whether you already have a waste management system in place or need to establish one, compliance isn't just about meeting legal requirements, it also reduces waste output, lowers costs, and enhances sustainability credentials.

To help North East businesses stay ahead of the curve, Waste Aware North East is offering a suite of free tools, including:



Jo Holmes

- A recorded webinar featuring key insights from WRAP and DEFRA, outlining the legislative changes.
- Guide to Simpler Recycling for organisations.
- Downloadable website and newsletter content, and graphics to keep stakeholders informed.

As well as managing the Waste Aware North East campaign, Genee delivers the Investors in the Environment (iIE) accreditation programme across the North East and North West, helping organisations to effectively manage and reduce their waste. The accreditation provides a structured framework for organisations to implement sustainable practices, and with the upcoming Simpler Recycling regulations, organisations that participate in the iIE programme will benefit from guidance and support to ensure compliance.

Jo Holmes, MD at Genee Consulting Ltd and Secretariat for the North East Recycling Forum, said: "We've been working with Net Zero North East England to strengthen regional partnerships and emphasize the connection between resource management and climate action. The Waste Aware North East campaign is a testament to the power of collaboration, making it easier

for organisations to embrace sustainable practices and contribute to the region's net-zero ambitions. We're grateful for the support of our sponsors, who share our vision for a greener future. Our waste sector has made amazing progress in addressing the challenges of the climate crisis, halving the greenhouse gas emissions associated with its activities over the past thirty years, by dramatically phasing out landfill and increasing recycling. But as the climate emergency grows ever more pressing, managing the UK's waste still accounts for eight per cent of total UK greenhouse gas emissions – reducing the sector's emissions further is an urgent issue if the UK is to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050."

With sustainability becoming an integral part of corporate responsibility, now is the time for businesses to act. Stay informed, stay compliant, and take advantage of the free resources available through Waste Aware North East.

Access all free resources at www.nerf.org.uk/waste-aware-north-east

For more information or to speak with a representative, contact Jo Holmes at info@genee.org.uk



Michael Ward

Key industries poised for growth in 2025 and their impact on the UK Economy

By Michael Ward, Director, Collaborative Search.

It is fair to say that 2024 was a turbulent year, with challenges like election uncertainty, rising interest rates, and shifts in workplace preferences leading to a double-digit downturn.

With AI innovations, potential economic recovery, and renewed hiring activity, there are many reasons to be positive for the year ahead.

As the UK economy continues to evolve in response to technological advancements, policy shifts, and global economic trends, several key industries are expected to experience significant growth in 2025. These sectors will not only drive economic expansion but also create new job opportunities, attract investment, and enhance the UK's global competitiveness. Below, I thought I would explore some of the industries poised for growth and their potential impact on the UK economy.

Renewable Energy and Sustainability

The UK government's commitment to achieving net-zero carbon emissions is fuelling significant investment in renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, and hydrogen. Offshore wind energy, in particular, is set to expand, with major projects in development across the North Sea. The growth of this industry will create thousands of jobs in engineering, construction, and maintenance while reducing reliance on fossil fuels. Additionally, advancements in battery storage and green hydrogen production will

support the transition to a more sustainable energy grid.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Technology

AI and automation are transforming multiple industries, from healthcare to finance. The UK is emerging as a leader in AI innovation, with startups and established firms investing in machine learning, robotics, and big data analytics. AI applications in healthcare, including diagnostics and drug development, will enhance medical services and efficiency. Furthermore, the technology sector's growth will spur demand for skilled professionals, reinforcing the UK's position as a hub for digital innovation.

Biotechnology and Life Sciences

The life sciences sector is another key area expected to thrive in 2025. The UK has a strong reputation for biomedical research and pharmaceutical development, with major players expanding their operations. Advances in personalized medicine, gene therapy, and vaccine development will continue to drive investment in this field. Government funding and partnerships between academia and industry will accelerate breakthroughs, benefiting both the economy and public health.

Financial Technology (FinTech)

The UK has long been a global leader in financial services, and FinTech is set to play an even more significant role in the economy. With innovations in digital banking, blockchain, and cybersecurity, FinTech companies are enhancing efficiency, security, and accessibility in financial transactions. The expansion of open banking and regulatory support will further drive growth, attracting foreign investment and reinforcing London's position as a global financial hub.

E-Commerce and Logistics

The shift towards online shopping continues to reshape the retail landscape, and e-commerce is expected to grow further in 2025. The rise of direct-to-consumer brands, advancements in last-mile delivery solutions, and the integration of AI-driven supply chain management will drive efficiency and consumer satisfaction. Growth in this sector will boost the logistics industry, creating job opportunities and encouraging further infrastructure development.

In summary, there are many reasons to feel optimistic towards 2025 and the expansion of these industries will contribute to GDP growth, job creation, and increased investment in the UK. While some sectors may face challenges related to workforce shortages and regulatory changes, the overall economic outlook remains positive and as these industries flourish, they will help shape a resilient and future-ready economy, benefiting businesses and citizens alike.

Collaborative Search operates across all major industries and we are experts at finding the best talent for our clients, wherever they are in the world. If you would like to learn more about how we can support your talent requirements or your next career move, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

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Stephen Patterson

Nightlife under pressure: Vision needed for Newcastle's night-time economy

By Stephen Patterson, Chief Executive at NE1 Ltd

Newcastle is internationally renowned for its vibrant nightlife and is synonymous with a great night out.

The city boasts an eclectic mix of locally owned and much-loved independent operators alongside national and international brands that together create a dynamic and ever-changing late-night scene. There's a healthy competition in the sector that elevates standards and quality, and encourages innovation.

Newcastle punches above its weight in the hospitality and leisure stakes and is well-represented in both the number of restaurants and independent venues per capita. The city has more independent restaurants per square mile than any other city outside London.

Recently, there have been several exciting announcements of new venue openings that will expand the city's offer. The famous darts and cocktail bar Flight Club is scheduled to open in Eldon Square, together with the £16 million Freight Island development, which will transform the upper floors of the former, and now vacant, Debenhams store into a large food, drinks, and entertainment complex. As well as housing its own restaurant, Freight Island will include a variety of street food vendors and its signature attraction, the Music Box, which will provide a new venue for live music and a range of national and international touring acts.

Meanwhile, the North East's own STACK is set to launch its latest venture this spring in the Grade II listed Worswick Chambers on Pilgrim Street. This will see STACK's hallmark shipping containers and outdoor performance areas combine with the building's historic architecture to create three floors of food, drink, and live music and entertainment space.

On the face of it, this is all great news for the city.

It would be so easy to assume that all is well with the night time economy. But beneath the glitz and glamour and news of new openings, there are real difficulties, and the hospitality industry faces significant challenges.

Nationally, 50 pubs are closing each month, a clear indicator of the pressure on the sector.

Increases in the Minimum Wage and National Insurance contributions scheduled for this April, combined with the reduction in business rates relief, will disproportionately

impact hospitality and retail businesses, making margins even tighter. Rising energy and supply costs have already stretched operators to their limits. All these factors make it more and more difficult to operate successful leisure businesses.

The sense of frustration is palpable within the industry.

Despite its substantial contribution to a city's cultural and leisure offer combined with the experience, profile, and employment it creates, the hospitality industry feels increasingly devoid of support and isolated.

In principle, NE1 is always supportive of investment and innovation. New venues add to the city's offer and experience attracting new visitors and employing local people. If the offer is strong enough, they can also provide an uplift for surrounding businesses. A reputable brand will also help attract other operators keen to join the ranks. Having said that, when is too much, too much?

The question of sustainability looms large. How much new business can Newcastle's nightlife sustain? Developments like those taking place on Pilgrim Street, in the Helix, and Stephenson Quarter promise an influx of approximately 20,000 additional workers into the heart of the city, but the significant impact of these additional workers will not be felt until 2027 at the earliest.

Despite these challenges, Newcastle is a far richer place for our vibrant hospitality scene; it differentiates the city and is a vital part of its appeal, attracting students, businesses, visitors, and residents alike.

Competition is essential for any major city. It prevents stagnation and decline, and ensures a constant cycle of renewal, rebirth and evolution. However, as the first law of economics, supply and demand, teaches us, to allow supply to grow unchecked can lead to an oversaturated market and all the difficulties that presents.

We are rightly proud of our vibrant hospitality and leisure scene, but to ensure its future prosperity, we need a strategic vision for the sector in the city based on solid economic sustainability. Without this, we risk losing a great deal, which once lost, will be difficult to get back.

www.newcastlene1ltd.com

Standing into danger

Fear is triggered by the threat of danger.

Fear is the word I've heard the most in 2025.

Whether it's been in an individual context or from a business perspective, people (adults and children) are frightened. There's a mild hysteria brewing due to very real threats.

We are witnessing unkind decisions taking priority over decisions that support all to thrive.

Businesses from grassroots community initiatives to large national corporations to public services are struggling. Social needs and problems are growing; against the global trend, poverty in the UK is increasing.

There's an extensive amount of conversation that is creating division, and eroding opportunity.

Everything seems unstable right now, and the future feels uncertain.

People feel they are powerless and have no control. And whilst some are powerless, many of us do have some degree of control. We certainly have the power to take kind action.

The real threat is if we don't.

There's an old mariners expression 'standing into danger', it's a warning that without action the ship is in danger of running aground or colliding. They take it very seriously and work collectively to keep the ship afloat. If they don't, the ship sinks and they go with it.

We have a choice to stand against the threat.

We are in control of our own decisions and actions and how they affect others as well as ourselves. And if we are all choosing to, do the right thing, collectively we can keep afloat.

In business, our internal and external social responsibility is a significantly powerful resource.

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You are twice as likely to win a contract with a strong commitment to delivering social good.

It has been unnecessarily complex for some time to be a business for good that is profit driven, but this is about to change, we just need to make the decision to step into the opportunity and stand into the danger to steer our ships into calmer waters.

www.kindcurrency.co.uk



Michelle Jones

NEW MULTI-MILLION POUND HUB AT NEWCASTLE AIRPORT TO HELP BUSINESSES THRIVE AND EXPAND INTO GLOBAL MARKETS

A new multi-million pound business hub that will propel North East companies onto the global stage and attract vital investment to the region has officially opened its doors.

The 10,200 sq ft International Space Station (ISS) Airview is the newest addition to AirView Park, a premier business destination near Newcastle Airport that offers bespoke office spaces and national and global links.

Regional business figure Ammar Mirza CBE is behind the ISS which aims to help regional SMEs scale-up and take advantage of global trade and export opportunities in key markets, including South Asia, Turkey, the Middle East prioritising Saudi Arabia and the Netherlands.

The ISS offers businesses flexible workspaces, including scaleup co-working space, office suites and conference facilities, and can accommodate over 150 desk spaces.

Ammar Mirza CBE said: "It's incredibly exciting to see our plan for the UK's first dedicated International Trade Hub come to life, in partnership with strategic allies.

"Providing a physical platform that's underpinned by the three key enablers of growth - innovation, investment, and internationalisation. ISS Airview will offer a launch pad to help scaleups grow globally, and a soft landing for inward investment, ultimately showcasing the significant strengths and assets from across our North East.

"For over 15 years, we have meaningfully cultivated relationships at both government and on the ground in various countries ready for our launch."



www.issairview.com | grow.global@issairview.com
1 Airview Park, Newcastle International Airport, NE13 8BR
Registered in England: 15691849



Mark Hunt, Chief Financial Officer at Newcastle Airport, said: "The opening of ISS Airview marks a significant milestone for the North East's business community.

"This state-of-the-art facility will provide local businesses with the resources and connections needed to engage with global markets, helping to attract more investment, drive innovation and create new jobs throughout the region."

ISS Airview is the latest addition to Airview Park, joining national homebuilder Bellway plc, architects Sadler Brown and wellbeing solution provider ART Health Solutions at the site.

Newcastle Airport is located just one mile from AirView Park and provides businesses with vital global connectivity to key markets.



The Power of Patience, Perseverance and Positivity

They say overnight success takes about 10 years. Well, in my case, it's been 15...and counting.

Fifteen years of conversations, handshakes, shared meals, and countless flights between Newcastle and key global destinations. Fifteen years of building relationships, earning trust, and proving that the North East is a serious player on the world stage. And now, after all this time, we're finally launching ISS Airview—an international gateway at Newcastle International Airport, designed to drive investment, innovation, and trade.

It's a moment of immense pride, but also a lesson in patience, perseverance, and the power of positivity.

If I had a pound for every time I thought, "This deal will be done in six months", I'd probably own an airline by now. The reality is, anything truly worth doing takes longer than you expect. Plans change, priorities shift, and unexpected roadblocks appear.

There were times when the vision for ISS Airview felt so close I could touch it—only for the world to change overnight. Economic downturns, shifting policies, global disruptions... every setback required a recalibration. But here's the thing: if you believe in something enough, you don't quit—you adjust.

Fifteen years ago, when I started fostering these international relationships, there were no guarantees. Some people told me to focus on 'easier' wins, stay closer to home, or scale down my ambition. But that's not how progress happens.

As Sir Winston Churchill once said: "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

And so, we continued.

I've learned that your mindset is the single biggest factor in whether you succeed or fail. When doors close, when plans unravel, when yet another 'sure thing' gets pushed back another year—what keeps you going?



Ammar Mirza CBE

For me, it's optimism. It's knowing that every 'no' brings me one step closer to a 'yes'. It's believing that the right people, the right partnerships, and the right opportunities will align if you keep showing up and doing the work.

There's an old saying: "When nothing is going right, go left." I'd add: *When nothing is going right, keep your head up, keep moving forward, and stay positive—because things always shift when you least expect it.*

And now, with ISS Airview, we're taking that same spirit of patience, perseverance, and positivity to the next generation of regional scaleups.

For businesses ready to take their first international steps—or those already making waves globally but looking to scale 10x—you don't need to do it alone. ISS Airview provides all the support you need to grow global, leveraging the government and ground-level relationships we've built over the last 15 years.

Success isn't just about talent or timing. It's about resilience, playing the long game, and surrounding yourself with the right people.

As the great Napoleon Hill once said: "Patience, persistence, and perspiration make an unbeatable combination for success."

Now, it's your turn. Let's take your business beyond borders. Let's grow global. Let's scale. And together, let's make the next 15 years count.

(To find out more about our growing global plans, and how you can be part of them, reach out to grow.global@issairview.com)

Ammar Mirza CBE is Chair & Founder of Asian Business Connexions, Executive Chair of the AmmarM Group, Honorary Colonel of 101 Regiment RA and holds various positions across the public and private sectors with a deep interest in Inclusion, Innovation and Internationalisation.



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Contact Amit Bahanda: amit@abconnexions.org



The Inclusion By Default Campaign aims to help make the North East the most inclusive region in the UK.

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- ✓ 12 Events including Round Tables
- ✓ 50,000+ People completed our survey

For more information on ABConnexions, visit: www.abconnexions.org

Navigating rising National Insurance costs: What employers need to know

As businesses step into 2025, the cost of employment is soaring, and rising National Insurance (NI) contributions are adding further strain.

From April 2025, employer NI contributions will increase from 13.8% to 15%, while changes to the contribution threshold will see more businesses paying out even more. Combined with National Living Wage increases, these shifts are significantly raising employment costs, forcing companies to rethink budgets, workforce planning, and employee benefits.

For small and medium-sized businesses, this financial burden can present difficult decisions—from reducing staff numbers to implementing pay freezes, or scaling back benefits. These changes could also impact employee morale and retention, making it harder to attract and keep talent in an already competitive market.

The key challenges for businesses

Higher Payroll Costs – Increased NI contributions and wage hikes mean higher employment costs, putting pressure on budgets.

Compliance & Legal Risks – Keeping up with tax and employment law changes is crucial to avoiding costly errors and disputes.

Employee Retention Struggles – Cutting benefits or delaying pay reviews may lead to low morale, decreased engagement, and higher turnover.

Turning challenges into opportunities

While these cost increases are undeniably challenging, they also offer a chance for businesses to reassess HR strategies and improve workforce efficiency. face2face HR is supporting employers through these changes with tailored, practical solutions that ensure compliance, maximise resources, and keep employees engaged.

What can businesses do?

Review Workforce Structure – Now is the time to analyse staffing levels and ensure teams are aligned with business goals.



Kathryn Rodgers

This helps businesses maximise efficiency without unnecessary financial strain.

Stay Legally Compliant – with more changes on their way under the Employment Rights Bill, employment law compliance is more important than ever. face2faceHR ensures businesses document and implement pay changes correctly, ensuring clarity and avoiding disputes.

Prioritise Employee Engagement – Transparency is key. Open communication about pay, benefits, and restructuring helps employees feel valued and informed. face2face HR offers guidance and training to help employers manage these conversations effectively.

Plan for the Future – Beyond the immediate financial impact, businesses must take a long-term approach. face2face HR helps companies with succession planning,

workforce development, and future-proofing strategies to remain resilient.

The bigger picture

Yes, the rising cost of employment presents a challenge—but it doesn't have to derail your business. By taking a strategic approach, companies can turn these pressures into an opportunity to streamline operations, strengthen employee engagement, and future-proof their workforce.

At face2face HR, we provide expert guidance and tailored solutions to help businesses navigate these changes with confidence. Whether it's restructuring, ensuring compliance, or supporting employee retention, we're here to help.

Kathryn Rodgers, face2faceHR
face2facehr.com, 07946 330 025.

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Diane Mactavish

The HR Dept Newcastle North and North Tyneside celebrates growth by expanding into a new territory

Local employers can now access practical employment advice and support from an expanded The HR Dept Newcastle North and North Tyneside, in a bid to help and support small and medium sized business owners prevent people problems.

The HR Dept's Diane Mactavish has recently expanded and grown her business to cover Northumberland.

The HR Dept helps local businesses access the levels of expertise and practical support usually reserved for large organisations with in-house HR professionals. Local HR professionals are on call to provide a full range of local support including an advice line to deal with day-to-day personnel queries and tailored one to one advice

on issues ranging from employment contracts and handbooks, HR policies and procedures, employment law advice to disciplinary and grievance issues. The HR Dept acts as the HR department for SME employers.

Diane Mactavish comments 'It is a privilege to be able to expand the business into Northumberland and be able to support more SME's with their HR issues and take away those HR headaches so the business

owner can focus on running their business'.

The growth and expansion is encouraging at a time where businesses of all sizes are facing tough times. Already burdened employers are plagued by ever changing legislation which is keeping The HR Dept busy.

"Growing my business by expanding to a new area means that more employers have the opportunity to be more proactive in managing their workforce effectively. Most small and medium sized businesses don't need a full time HR presence but do need support with dealing with HR issues that arise when employing either their first member of staff or their 100th."

Diane works with a wide range of clients, and from 1 employee to 250 employees, local limited companies to national PLC's, providing a local and personal service that works with and understands local employers and their organisations.

Diane can be contacted on 0191 2838732, or via the website: www.hrdept.co.uk/newcastle-north-and-north-tyneside

CONNECT

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One Strawberry Lane, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4BF
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This workshop covers:

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- The rider and the elephant – how to motivate others
- The importance of interpersonal dynamics and building authentic relationships
- Effective and impactful communication
- How to positively influence others

Note: We don't use role play of any kind in our training.

Our experience with Mortal Fools was amazing! They definitely deliver leadership training with a difference; it's fun, impactful and delivers meaningful learning experiences in a very memorable way. We've never laughed and learnt so much at the same time."

Nicola Leyden
Director of HR – Muckle LLP

This one-day training session is open to book NOW!

Cost per participant:

- Medium-Large businesses: **£200pp**
- Third Sector organisations of any size and small businesses of 20 people and under: **£100pp**
- Individual freelancers: **£75pp**



This session is part of **CONNECT**: a dynamic and practical training and professional development programme for businesses, teams and leaders.

Scan QR code to download our training brochure.

To find out more or to book a place email: connect@mortalfools.org.uk

mortalfools.org.uk/connect

Business insights for ambitious entrepreneurs from Ian Kinnery



Ian Kinnery

For any business to be successful, it needs to have the right people on the bus—which also means that the wrong people need to be taken off the bus. This may seem relatively straightforward and simple, yet in my 20 years of experience as a coach, very few people manage to do this successfully. Hence, it warrants deeper consideration and an explanation of what it means and how it can be achieved.

The concept of people being on or off the bus involves attracting the right individuals, recognising when someone isn't a fit, and taking appropriate action. So, what defines the 'right' person for your business?

Firstly, the 'right person' will live and breathe your organisation's core values. When an organisation knows and can communicate its core values, identifying individuals who resonate with your company's ethos becomes easier. This alignment is more than possessing the advised skills or qualifications; it goes deeper into their perspective and approach to their role within the company. It's about their integrity and how they perform their duties in line with the company's vision and mission.

Clear expectations are also very important when getting the right people onboard. Understanding what you expect from team members allows for a transparent performance measure. The right people will grasp these expectations intuitively and often exceed them because they align with the company's core values.

Furthermore, recognising the right people requires more than evaluating skills and qualifications. It involves identifying those who excel in their tasks and understanding and integrating the values that drive your business.

The right individuals may not come fully developed but they should be able to demonstrate the potential and willingness to grow. They should value any opportunities for personal development as an opportunity for growth rather than viewing it as criticism. This openness to development is pivotal for fostering business growth and agility, and will show a desire to work for the business today and long term.

Deciding if it's worth the time and effort to invest in someone depends on these key factors. The 'right person' will naturally align with your core values, meet performance expectations, and embrace ongoing professional development, meaning that the investment is likely to yield positive returns. If these elements are lacking, it may be time to stop the bus and let this 'wrong person' off the journey.

Kinnery.co.uk

Unlocking business potential with Ian Kinnery

Q&A with Daniel Wade,
Wade Construction Management Consultants

What led you to choose Ian Kinnery as your business coach?

During a period of significant growth, I realised the importance of guidance. After discussing with peers and connections who spoke highly of Ian, I reached out to him. His approach resonated with me, especially his understanding of the complexities involved in managing a business.

How has Ian helped you through your business challenges?

Ian has been instrumental, particularly in navigating people challenges. The common joke among business owners is that managing people is the hardest part, and Ian has provided essential support in this area.

What do you find most valuable about working with Ian?

His support during my darkest times as a business owner. I've picked up the phone to Ian and it all looks completely different. That's the best thing about working with him - it's that arm around your shoulder saying: 'it's all right, we'll do this, there's always a different way, there's a better way.' He's like a reassuring presence, offering a new perspective or simply a chance to breathe and regroup. His ability to transform challenging situations is invaluable.

What are some of the challenges of working with Ian?

Ian is a hard taskmaster. Working with him isn't about getting easy affirmations; it's about real growth and sometimes tough love. He



Daniel Wade

pushes you beyond the comfort zone, which is essential for true progress.

Would you recommend Ian to other business owners?

Absolutely. One of the best decisions I've made was to engage Ian as a coach. He's not only a great coach and mentor but also provides the guidance and support necessary to navigate the complex business landscape. Working with him has been a pleasure, and I highly recommend his services to anyone looking to genuinely improve and grow their business.

Ready to grow your business? Visit Kinnery.co.uk or contact ian@kinnery.co.uk to schedule a conversation.

People Spark finds solution with The Experience Bank™

People Spark Solutions has set out an ambitious 2025 strategy to develop more people, grow the company, work with more organisations and ensure continued exceptional service, thanks to the support from philanthropic organisation The Experience Bank™.

Scott Smith launched the company in 2020, and having grown the portfolio and team, found himself in a position where he had ambition and vision but needed guidance from an advisory board who would hold him accountable and be a sounding board.

A mutual friend introduced Scott to Peter Neal, founder of The Experience Bank™, who guided him through how to attract the right people to challenge him. The response to Peter's call out was a resounding success with Scott lining up three board advisors and six people that he can call on for specific help when needed.

Specialising in empowering leaders, elevating teams and driving success for their clients People Spark Solutions offer coaching and mentoring, leadership and team development, team facilitation and psychometrics to support finding the insights that lead to smart hiring of talent.

Scott said: "I have welcomed Mark Dixon, Ian Scurfield and John McConnell to our



Peter Neal



Scott Smith

first two board meetings already and I can tell this is going to be exciting times ahead. I left these meetings feeling very challenged and out of my comfort zone, and as we head towards our third board meeting things have already moved along significantly.

"The three advisors bring great diversity in experience and thinking and they have really had me focussing on what is different about what we do at People Spark Solutions. They've had me look at my business through the eye of a client, to see that we are authentic, speak the language of our clients and behave like an extended part of each client. Now we have recognised that, we will be using it to launch the future strategy of the company."

Scott described his experience with Peter and The Experience Bank™ as nothing but positive from start to finish and he was so impressed he made a donation. Peter said:

"Whilst The Experience Bank™ is a philanthropic endeavour, we have costs to cover and it is always hugely appreciated when a client like Scott values what we have done to help them enough to make a donation to cover our overheads!"

Scott, who is keen to benefit from the services of Peter and the wider Experience Bank Group in the future concluded by saying: "People Spark Solutions has survived many challenges since its inception and now we set to help even more people as we head towards our fifth birthday in 2025 thanks to The Experience Bank™. This includes further growth in one-to-one coaching for business leaders, expansion of leadership development services, and maximising on our current reputation of being a go to partner for high-growth tech companies who want to nurture healthy, productive workplaces."

Experience Bank Group is a commercial venture specialising in peer groups and board/high-level recruitment for charities and SMEs with purpose. Its philanthropic offering, The Experience Bank™, offers qualifying start up and small companies primed for growth access to a bank of hundreds of leaders from the region who offer up time and experience pro-bono.

You can find out more about The Experience Bank™ on theexperiencebank.co.uk

There's more to work than your paycheck

Bryony Gibson, Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on what you should consider before switching jobs.



With salary review season upon us, many people, especially in the world of accountancy, will be weighing up their options. Should you stay put, push for a raise, or is it time to look elsewhere?

While money is an important factor, it shouldn't be the only reason to change jobs. A career move should be about long-term satisfaction, growth, and professional reputation - not just financial gain.

If you're considering a job switch, there are many important factors to bear in mind before making your decision.

Why do you want to leave?

Before signing on the dotted line to move, take a moment, step back and reflect on why you began looking for a change in the first place. Was it a lack of career progression? A toxic work environment? Do you feel undervalued? A higher salary is always appealing, but if core issues remain unresolved, you will quickly become dissatisfied again.

Career growth

As tempting as a big paycheck is, remember to ask yourself if the new role aligns with your long-term goals. Take time to consider the company's culture. What are the opportunities for progression and training? Will you learn and develop new skills? If career growth matters to you, a move must

take you towards your ultimate aspiration, rather than stepping sideways - or even backwards - purely for financial gain.

The risk of a counteroffer

A common but risky strategy people adopt when they are unhappy with their salary is to use external offers to negotiate a raise with their current employer. If you are testing the market to leverage a counteroffer, think again. While it might seem like a win, it can seriously damage your professional reputation.

In my experience, employers often see counter offers as a temporary fix and may not prioritise your career development in the future. Furthermore, unless money is your sole motivation, the reasons why you want to leave will still be there.

Work-life balance

Money can't buy a good work-life balance. Does the new job offer flexibility in terms of remote work or hours that fit your lifestyle? A pay rise may not be worth it if it comes at the expense of your well-being and personal time.

Training, Development & Support

A great salary won't mean much if your career stagnates. Does the new company invest in employee growth? Look at the opportunities for mentorship and professional development, and whether the

role will help you build new skills that open-up new opportunities.

Do your values align?

Work is a major part of your life, and job satisfaction often comes down to more than numbers on a pay slip. Ask yourself: Does this company's mission resonate with me? Do I respect its leadership? Does the business empower and value its people? A misalignment in values will quickly lead to dissatisfaction, no matter how attractive the salary is.

Make the right move for the right reasons

I believe that, wherever possible, the decision to change jobs should be strategic, not impulsive. If money is your only motivation, you are going to find yourself job-hopping throughout your career as soon as the excitement of a new role fades.

In the end, the choice is yours but whatever you decide, I urge you to consider the full package: career progression, work-life balance, company culture, long-term fit, and salary.

Most importantly, remain professional. Not every job offer is right for you, but the accountancy world is small, especially in the North East, and how you conduct yourself in negotiations and transitions can impact your future opportunities.

Think long-term and choose wisely.

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



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- 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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Paul Fraser



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What is a Will & do I even need one?

A Will is a legally binding document that outlines how your estate will be distributed after your passing. It can address important matters such as funeral arrangements, guardianship of children or dependents, and any charitable donations or personal gifts you wish to leave behind.

Creating a Will is essential for everyone, particularly those with dependent relatives under 18 or property ownership.

Without a valid Will, your estate will be distributed according to the Rules of Intestacy—a strict legal framework that may not reflect your personal wishes. This could result in your assets being allocated in ways you never intended or, in the absence of eligible heirs, claimed by the state.

Types of Wills

Understanding the different types of Wills can help you make informed decisions about your estate planning:

- **Standard Will:** A straightforward document that specifies how you want your assets distributed after death.
- **Mirror Will:** Used by couples who want their estates distributed similarly; if one spouse dies, the other inherits the entire estate, with the intention that their children, or chosen beneficiaries inherit their estates on second death. However, it's important to be aware that if the surviving spouse remarries, the inheritance may unintentionally go to the new family. We often see this situation arise, so it's crucial to consider the implications of Mirror Wills carefully.

Why having a Will is important

While contemplating death is uncomfortable, it's crucial to prepare for the unknown. Having a Will ensures your wishes are carried out and provides peace of mind for you and your loved ones. The loss of a family member is always painful; thoughtful



L-R: Brenda Beveridge and Karen Robinson

planning can help alleviate some of the heartache and tensions that may arise within families.

Proper estate planning addresses key legal and financial issues, ensuring assets are distributed according to your wishes, avoiding lengthy probate proceedings, settling outstanding debts, and managing taxes. By taking these steps in advance, you provide clarity and security for your family during an already challenging time.

The Benefits of a Trust

While a Will is vital, sometimes it isn't enough. A Trust can offer an extra layer of protection for your assets. When assets are distributed directly to beneficiaries through a Standard Will, they become part of the beneficiaries' estates, making them vulnerable to risks such as creditors, divorce settlements, or inheritance tax. A Trust safeguards these assets, ensuring they are managed and distributed according to your wishes while providing protection from potential financial threats.

Reviewing your Will

It's advisable to review your Will every three to five years to ensure it remains valid and reflects your current wishes. Major life events—such as the birth of a child, marriage, or divorce—can significantly impact your circumstances, making it

essential to update your Will accordingly. While it's never too early to organise your affairs, many people delay until it's too late.

Final steps

Do you know what will happen to everything you've worked for during your life? Have you appointed guardians for your children? Is there a trusted person in place to make decisions on your behalf if necessary? If you're uncertain about any of these matters, now is the time to take action and protect your future and your loved ones.

At Brenda Beveridge Wills and Trusts, we understand the complexities of estate planning. As a family-run business based in North West Durham, we offer tailored solutions that meet individual needs. We provide a free, no-obligation initial consultation to discuss your requirements and offer recommendations specifically for you—whether you prefer an online or face-to-face meeting.

For further information or to arrange your free consultation regarding your future planning or updating your current provisions, please contact Karen at Brenda Beveridge Wills and Trusts on 07485 619415 or email karen@brendabeveridge.co.uk. Don't leave your future to chance; take control today.

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New benchmark reached on Team Valley with new letting to FPS

Commercial property consultancy, Naylor's Gavin Black, has secured a major letting on the Team Valley in Gateshead, for a new-build industrial unit on Eighth Avenue.

Distribution firm, FPS (part of Alliance Automotive Group) has leased a brand new, 36,000 sq. ft. property, built and owned by UK Land Estates, at a rent that sets a new tone for the estate.

FPS Distribution has signed a 15-year term and will use the building as a regional distribution centre.

The unit is highly sustainable, with solar panels, air source heat pumps and electric vehicle charging stations - rated EPC A.

Naylor's Gavin Black are joint agents with Knight Frank.

UK Land Estates, which is continuing with its significant investment programme on the Team Valley, is now on site at Centralway building a new, sustainable, 65,000 sq. ft. industrial unit.

Keith Stewart, partner at Naylor's Gavin Black, comments: "UK Land has delivered a high-quality unit with exemplar ESG credentials which most tenants now want so there were a number of interested parties.

"The letting to a business like FPS on a long lease demonstrates that there is healthy demand for mid-size units in the region. We're expecting high interest in UK Land's 65,000 sq. ft warehouse now under construction, which will be available in Q4 this year."



Xenia Lettings new office opens in Sunderland as rental boom continues

Xenia Lettings has opened its first office in the North East, the first regional office outside the North West – as it begins a programme of regional office expansion across the UK.

As a nationwide lettings agency, Xenia Lettings combines local expertise with national reach, specialising in both residential and student lettings, delivering dependable, stress-free property management services while maximising landlords' return on investment.

Branch Manager, Antonia Askew, has over 18 years of expertise in lettings and property management, will lead Xenia's Sunderland team from its new offices on North Bridge Street.

The Sunderland branch opens at a time when the property market has demonstrated resilience and growth over the past two years. Average house prices rose 2.3% to £150,000 from November 2023 to November 2024, and the average monthly private rent also rose to £650 in December 2024, an 8.9% increase from £597 in December 2023. As of November 22, 2024, 2,596 properties in Sunderland had been sold subject to contract (STC), a 12.8% increase from 2,302 properties during the same period in 2023.

Daryl Tomlinson, Director of Xenia Lettings, commented, "I am absolutely delighted with the successful launch of our new Sunderland lettings office. The opening event was fantastic, and it was great to see the enthusiasm of the local team. Our new branch manager, Antonia, is the perfect choice to lead Xenia Lettings into this exciting new chapter. She possesses the ideal blend of local knowledge and connections, coupled with an empathetic and diligent approach, and is incredibly eager to work with local landlords.

"This new office represents an exciting opportunity for us to support local landlords by providing expert guidance and services to help them manage their properties effectively. With such a strong team in place, I'm confident we'll make a real difference in the area. I'm looking forward to the journey ahead!"



Summers Inman extends its higher education expertise into Yorkshire with new wins

Summers-Inman, the award-winning construction and project management consultancy with an office in Leeds and seven further offices located between Edinburgh and London, is celebrating new contract wins in the higher education sector.

These latest appointments will enable Summers-Inman to bring its considerable higher education experience gained across various university projects UK wide, into Yorkshire.

Recently won, is a multidisciplinary consultancy framework agreement appointment for the University of Sheffield. Consultants have been appointed to deliver services for specific projects on a call-off basis as and when required.

In addition, the firm has also won a place on the university's framework agreement for Cost Management Services.

The University of Sheffield has 30,000 students and more than 350 buildings across its multi-campus estate, which it is working towards making net-zero.

Summers-Inman will have the opportunity to work on a range of projects with the university which aims to deliver around £200 - £300 million of projects over the course of the framework.

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EPC, improving the energy ratings of our houses - why is it so confusing?

By Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield

There is much talk in the media of changes to Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) on rental properties requiring landlords to have a minimum rating of C on their properties. This is all part of the Government's target of achieving net zero by 2050.

Surely, it's a good thing that properties will be improved, which will create better living conditions and ideally, houses that use less energy, resulting in lower energy bills for tenants?

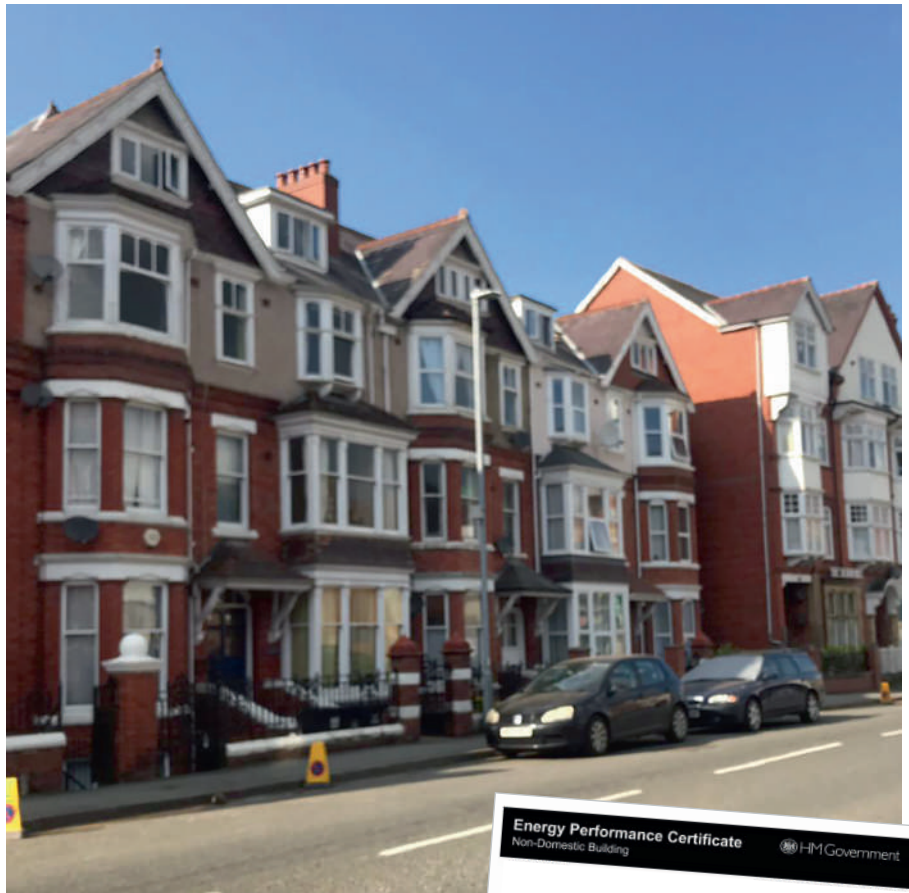
Well, it's never that simple. To get properties up to the standard by 2030 is going to require some significant investment as currently only 48% of properties meet the new minimum standard.

I have seen landlords complaining about investment costs of £15,000 and even young renters worried that the investment costs are going to be directly passed on in the form of higher rents.

According to Zoopla (December 2024) rents for new lets are £270 per month higher than three years ago, making the average annual cost £3,240 higher since the pandemic. This means that the average rental cost has risen by 27 per cent since 2021 — compared to earnings growth of 19 per cent.

Zoopla also predicted that average UK rents will rise by a further four per cent in 2025. However, there is some good news in that annual rate of rent inflation is now at 3.9 per cent, which is a little lower than previously.

So, what can be done? For a start I would create a new version of the EPC, as it is outdated and often badly calculated by inexperienced assessors. Notwithstanding that, a system of recording is needed, in whatever format deemed to be modern and workable.



At the heart of the issue is the fact that UK housing stock consists of poor, old and not well-maintained properties, throughout both the private and rental sectors. Common sense improvements like loft insulation, cavity wall insulation and low energy LED lighting all help the rating.

I have little sympathy for landlords complaining of having to invest - a recent survey by Goodlord said the average landlord was only willing to invest £2400. Surely keeping the property well maintained helps to maintain investment value as well as marketability? Spreading the investment across the next few years would also assist. The UK, 'Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018' requires proper ventilation in rental houses'.

So how do we incentivise landlords to upgrade in a way that actually benefits everybody in society? A better-quality housing stock with warmer houses, free from mould and damp, would help tenants, young and old alike.

I believe it's a carrot and stick issue. Let's encourage everyone to invest by giving tax credits on the investment. California for example, gives a 30% tax credit on solar panel systems installed, which provides a powerful incentive to do something.

In the UK, there are various government grants available to support green energy initiatives on boilers, PV generation and insulation, but they are complicated and don't cover the full costs - in most cases, they are subject to income.

My suggestion is that everyone who makes their houses warmer, greener or better ventilated (landlord or homeowner), be



offered tax credits, cheaper mortgages or reductions in council tax; then there would be a much larger take up of building improvements and upgrades.

The boost to the economy of these changes in the building industry would offset the perceived loss of tax.

If we want landlords to invest, then simply telling everyone to improve, will only lead to people doing the minimum work (to achieve standard C, for example) not necessarily the right thing. The housing stock in the country needs investment and we need good housing. It would be good to square the circle.

Neil Turner, Director, Howarth Litchfield can be contacted on 0191 384 9470 or email n.turner@hlpuk.com www.howarthlitchfield.com



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Inspirational charity brings to market its Newcastle headquarters

JK Property Consultants LLP has been instructed by First Step North East, a registered charity, to bring to market its headquarters, located on Westgate Road in Newcastle upon Tyne.

First Step North East, dedicated to promoting equity, inclusivity and personal growth by, with and for women and young people predominantly in Newcastle West, is exploring options to either lease back part of its terraced property, valued at £220,000, subject to a decision on VAT election, or relocate to a new facility.

JK Property Consultants LLP provides expert property consultancy services, specialising in residential and commercial real estate and delivers tailored solutions and personalised services to clients across the UK.

First Step North East, formed in 1991 by community activists as a direct response to local need, offers informal and formal learning and volunteering opportunities. It champions equity for all through accessible programmes, supported by an onsite creche, community languages, a lived experience volunteer mentoring programme and full disabled access and facilities.

The property, situated at the edge of the city centre's business district, offers convenient access to local amenities, including shops, cafes and sports facilities. It is also well-connected by transport, with Newcastle City centre and Central Station. The A1(M) motorway is approximately an 11-minute drive away.

Key features of the property include:

- Toilet facilities on both the ground and first floors, with an accessible toilet on the ground floor.



Kevan Carrick



- A fitted kitchen on the second floor.
- Disability access via the front elevation, including a platform hoist and disabled access area with a call system.
- Two car parking spaces in the yard, accessible from the rear lane.

The building is currently subject to a rateable value of £14,500 with a small business rate liability of £7,235.50 per year.

First Step North East is open to selling the freehold interest with vacant possession or will consider a leaseback arrangement for the ground floor, which would continue to serve as an Adult Learning and Community Centre. The proposed lease terms are:

- A 10-year lease, subject to the Landlord and Tenant Act 1954.
- An annual rent of £8,000, excluding costs, with a review at the end of five years.
- An internal repairing lease, with the tenant responsible for paying a proportion of the building's insurance premium.

Kevan Carrick, co-founder, JK Property Consultants, said: "We are committed to providing First Step North East with the best possible solutions during this important transition.

"The property is ideally positioned with

easy access into and out of the city centre and the local amenities are plentiful. The interior provides adequate space and is fully functional for any business or charity seeking a base that is in a prime location. Having been well maintained by its current occupants, it is ready to move straight into.

"First Step North East's work in promoting equity and diversity within the community is commendable and we are dedicated to helping them secure a future that best supports its ongoing mission."

For more information about the property, please contact:
Kevan Carrick, 07957 811824,
E: kevan@jkpropertyconsultants.com;
Jennifer Welch, 07808 138 255
E: jennifer@jkpropertyconsultants.com

Installation of defibs will help save lives

In the UK there are more than 30,000 out-of-hospital cardiac arrests a year where emergency medical services try to resuscitate the patient.

Yet according to NHS data the survival rate is low - only one in 10 people who have a heart attack outside a hospital setting live.

That's why Kenton's Ward committee funded another three defibs outside Wyndley House and Harehills Tower, Montagu and St Cuthbert's.

These devices complement two existing defibs outside Kenton Park Sport Centre and Hillsview Surgery (the latter donated by the local community).

Kenton Councillors Stephen Lambert, Ged Bell and Paula Maines said: "We're determined to secure more funding and work in partnership with our community groups to ensure more Kenton residents can have quick access to these life-saving devices."

Meanwhile Kenton Park Sports Centre is running a cardiac rehab programme coupled with gentle exercise classes for those in mid-life/late-life who have had heart operations.

Residents can find out where local defibs are by using www.defibfinder.uk and learn CPR on the British Heart Foundation website www.bhf.org.uk



The continued adventures of...



Hi everyone,

This cold weather is not doing anything for my old bones. Thank heaven for Cally who does all the outside stuff now. Sad news - cousin Dexter has gone to the kennel in the sky - we will miss him. Uncle James is getting a new puppy - so more news on that next month!

Anyway *Russ from Forest Hall asks:

Q: I have a wooden-framed, three-panelled lounge window, 4m x 2.5m, with no opening lights. I want to change it to one which opens onto a patio. The house was built in the early 50's and the window has a hidden lintel, I assume, with bricks forming the outside of the cavity wall appearing to be placed directly on top of the wooden frame. I have invited three specialist window installers to inspect, and to give me a quote. Company One suggested that PVC-U or aluminium could be used - that a steel angle iron may be required upon further investigation (ie during the alteration) and that an external lintel may also be

Ziggy *and Cally!*

required. Company Two said PVC-U would not be strong enough, and aluminium would be needed. This agent did inspect the outside of the window and said that Building Regulations would not now allow the external bricks to just rest on the frame - they would need some independent support. Company Three insisted that PVC-U would be the best material, and he brought small samples to demonstrate their strength. He did not go outside and did not mention lintels. So, could you please try to clear up my dilemma as to which company is right?

A: In your opening lines, you say you assume that this four-metre wide window opening has 'a hidden lintel' supporting the weight of the brickwork above. This is a dangerous assumption. Nowadays there are some clever designs of steel lintel, where the main structural support is up inside the cavity (although they all usually reveal a tell-tale strip of steel between the top of the window frame and the bricks). In the early 1950s such a design did not exist. There was usually a substantial timber lintel above the inner leaf (sometimes steel), but it was common for the first course of outer-leaf bricks to be bedded directly onto the window frame. In other cases a 'flat' brick arch would have been designed to carry the load; in time, these too might have settled, meaning that the window frame became load-bearing. Fitters

working for replacement window firms are often ignorant of this fact, or perhaps they just don't care. All over the UK you can see examples of houses that have been damaged by cheap replacement windows - whether PVC-U, aluminium alloy, or thin-section timber. The original window had been carrying the load of the wall above - whether by accident or design. The new window is not up to the job, and after a few years a characteristic cracking pattern emerges, with a triangle of brickwork detached from the rest of the wall, and perching on top of the sagging window frame. Your first two companies at least acknowledge that a new lintel would be needed, but appear vague about the size or type. I suggest that rather than a "specialist window installer", what you really need is a Fenestration Surveyor or Structural Engineer to survey the property, specify the best product, and inspect the final installation.



Please send me your building queries through facebook - @WDLne, website: wdlnortheast.co.uk or through Michael at Northern Insight on michael@northern-insight.co.uk

GFW gears up for talent expansion in 2025



Sally Hart



Adeline Rutherford

North East property consultancy GFW is set to expand its team in 2025, with a strong focus on recruitment across its Rural and Commercial sectors as part of its commitment to nurturing local talent and supporting regional growth.

Last year, the firm strengthened its workforce with the addition of 20 new hires and 10 key promotions, including Lesley-Ann Riddles, who joined GFW as a Senior Associate and Commercial Chartered Surveyor in March and progressed to Partner within six months.

The success of team members like Riddles exemplifies GFW’s dedication to fostering professional development and creating opportunities for advancement within the business.

Other notable promotions include Adeline Rutherford, a Rural Chartered Surveyor who having joined GFW during a placement year, has this year been appointed Partner in recognition of her contribution to the firm’s continued growth. Additionally, Sally Heath, Liz Rhodes, and Ashley Barnes have all been elevated to Associate, reflecting their expertise, dedication, and impact within GFW’s rural and residential teams.

Founded in Alnwick in 1979, GFW has grown from a rural practice into a leading multidisciplinary consultancy, with over

100 employees operating across six offices throughout the Northeast and North Yorkshire. The firm offers a comprehensive range of services, including property management, architecture, planning and development and residential sales and lettings, while staying deeply connected to its rural offering.

In recent years, GFW has achieved significant growth milestones, including a 2022 merger with Johnson Tucker LLP, which established one of the largest commercial property teams in the North of England.

Sally Hart, joint Managing Partner at GFW, said: “This year our priority is investing in people. We’re focused on bringing skilled and passionate people into the business, ensuring we continue to meet the evolving

needs of our clients and communities.”

“Our history provides a strong foundation for everything we do, but it’s our commitment to growth and innovation that drives us forward. Expanding our team and expertise not only enhances the services we offer but also strengthens our ability to contribute to the development of the region for years to come.”

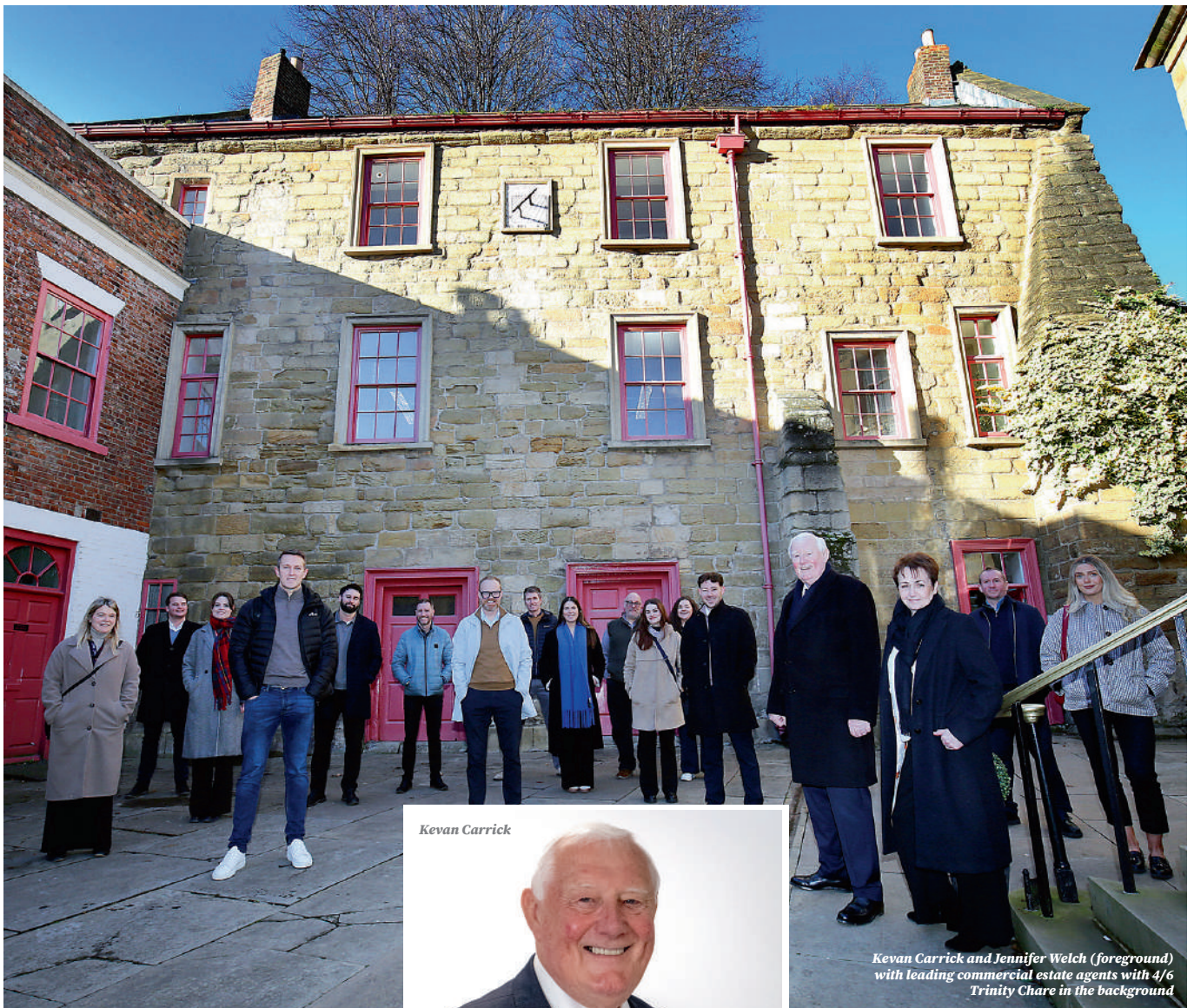
With a clear vision for recruitment and talent development, GFW is poised to continue its journey of success, creating opportunities for individuals and delivering value to clients and communities across the North of England.

To find out more about GFW’s current vacancies, visit www.gfwllp.co.uk/careers



Lesley-Ann Riddles

Trinity Chare attracts huge interest from leading commercial estate agents



Kevan Carrick

Kevan Carrick and Jennifer Welch (foreground) with leading commercial estate agents with 4/6 Trinity Chare in the background

A much-anticipated viewing of 4/6 Trinity Chare, a 13th century building on Newcastle Quayside, attracted huge interest from leading commercial estate agents on Tyneside.

Situated in the heart of Newcastle, 4/6 Trinity Chare is part of the Corporation of Newcastle-upon-Tyne Trinity House and presents an ideal opportunity for companies looking to distinguish themselves with a distinctive brand image.

The building's rich history and prime location make it a standout offering in the city's competitive property market and the viewing attracted agents such as Knight Frank, Naylor's Gavin Black, George F

White, Parkers Knight, Savills, Sanderson Weatherall, BNP Paribas and Dunlop Heywood.

4/6 Trinity Chare is available to let through JK Property Consultants.

Kevan Carrick, co-founder of JK Property Consultants, said: "The turnout and feedback from agents at the viewing was extremely positive and they were all taken by the history of the building and its very special features. It offers a great location by Newcastle Quayside, providing the perfect setting for businesses seeking to create a memorable brand presence while promoting sustainable office standards. It's rare to find a property with this level of character and potential in such a prime location."

Originally built in the 13th century as a Merchants House, 4/6 Trinity Chare has undergone various transformations over the centuries. The building, offering approximately 2,000 sq. ft. over three floors, is now being offered for lease for five years or more, with availability expected in late summer 2025. Listed building consent has been applied for to modernise the interior to meet contemporary office and sustainability standards, with works anticipated to begin in early 2025.

The building will feature modern amenities, including LED lighting, heat pumps, toilet and kitchen facilities and broadband, while maintaining its historic charm. Additionally, the Trinity House site offers meeting and function rooms for hire, making it an attractive option for businesses looking to host events in a distinctive setting.

For further information, please contact Kevan Carrick at Kevan@jkpropertyconsultants.com

Banks Homes signs up to innovative ‘Own New’ reduced rate mortgage scheme



Housebuilder Banks Homes has signed up to an award-winning national mortgage scheme that aims to make home ownership more attainable for more people.

The Own New Rate Reducer takes housebuilder incentives, which are used to top up somebody’s deposit, and invests them into the mortgage to allow lenders to offer lower monthly rates and homebuyers to own 100 per cent of their new property.

Own New, which won the Innovation In Personal Finance category at the 2023 Moneyfacts Awards, works with a growing

range of well-known mortgage providers, including Virgin Money, Halifax and Darlington Building Society.

Banks Homes is now offering the Own New option on selected plots at its new Cathedral Meadows development in West Rainton, where two five-bedroomed show homes officially opened their doors just before Christmas.

Aisling Ramshaw, head of sales and marketing at Banks Homes, says: “We’ve welcomed hundreds of visitors from across the region to Cathedral Meadows over the last month and are thrilled with the feedback we’ve had about the sustainable, contemporary living spaces we’re creating in West Rainton.

“Own New offers a new approach that is making it possible for more homeowners across the UK to buy the homes they want and by signing up to what they offer, we’ll

be providing a valuable extra incentive for people looking to move to Cathedral Meadows.”

Banks Homes is building 150 high specification new homes at Cathedral Meadows, which will include 120 detached, three-to-five bedroomed family homes and a further allocation of 30 affordable properties.

A bespoke range of seven different house types has been created for the development, with each property featuring an advanced Hive heating system, an Omega kitchen, Porcelanosa bathrooms, a Ring video doorbell, a full range of kitchen appliances, bi-fold doors and a fully-turfed garden.

Cathedral Meadows will also include a new play area, new landscaped areas and new areas of public open space, with the first occupants scheduled to be moving into their new homes there later this year.

Aisling Ramshaw continues: “The build quality, the high design specification and the style we offer as standard at Cathedral Meadows have been very well received by our show homes visitors, and it’s very pleasing to see a growing number of property reservations being taken by local homebuyers.”

For further information on the Own New reduced rate scheme, or on the Cathedral Meadows development, please visit www.bankshomes.co.uk/development/cathedral-meadows-development or call 0191 378 6200.

Let us make it Wright: How Wright Residential alleviates stress for landlords

Being a landlord can be rewarding, but it also comes with challenges—unreliable tenants, maintenance issues, and ever-changing regulations, to name a few. At Wright Residential, we specialise in making property management as stress-free as possible. Here's how we help landlords overcome common issues and enjoy a smoother letting experience.

Unlike agencies that juggle sales and lettings, we specialise in rentals, ensuring landlords receive dedicated service. With over 80 years of combined experience, our team offers expert advice, helping landlords navigate the complexities of the rental market confidently.

A common frustration with large agencies is constant staff turnover, making communication difficult. Our team is stable, with long-standing members, ensuring landlords always have a consistent point of contact. Finding good tenants is crucial, and we minimise risks with a rigorous vetting process that assesses financial stability, rental history, and employment. For landlords living far from their properties, we use technology to keep them informed, no matter where they are.

Maintenance issues are one of the most stressful aspects of letting, but we take a



proactive approach with regular inspections and thorough inventories. When repairs are needed, we rely on trusted, professional contractors to ensure quality work at fair prices. With over 300 regulations governing the rental market, compliance is essential. We handle all legal requirements, protecting landlords from potential risks and penalties.

Poor communication is one of the biggest complaints landlords have about letting agents. We prioritise clear, responsive communication, ensuring landlords are always informed and supported. At Wright

Residential, we build trust through excellent service, long-term relationships, and a commitment to making lettings stress-free. Hundreds of landlords rely on us to manage their properties efficiently. Whether you're a first-time landlord or an experienced investor, we provide the expertise and support you need.

If you would like to take the first step to stress-free letting, contact us today on 01912401818 or email us at info@wrightresidential.co.uk

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SCHOOL

CAREERS OPEN DAY | SATURDAY 26TH APRIL | 10AM-2PM



Image: Chapman Brown Photography

L-R: William Stobbs, Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Director, with Workshop Manager Phil Bassett as Esh rolls out defibrillator initiative across its sites

Esh Group committed to building a safer, greener and brighter future

As one of the North of England's largest privately-owned contractors, Esh Group is strengthening its commitment to sustainability, safety and investing in future talent. Through a wide range of initiatives across site operations and in line with its Constructing Local strategy, Esh is taking meaningful steps to support the future of the construction sector.

There's no time to be idle!

Esh Group has expanded its anti-idling campaign after seeing an 84% reduction in time fleet vehicles have sat idle during a four-month trial period.

As part of its Even Greener strategy – which sets out plans for reducing carbon emissions throughout the business and its operations – Esh used 18 HGV tippers from its fleet to understand the carbon emitted from idling, putting measures in place to actively encourage drivers to think about their impact on the environment.

With true idling being measured as vehicles being stationary for more than two minutes, the 18 vehicles reduced their idling time from a combined 392 hours in July 2024, down to just 60 hours in November – an 84% idling-time reduction, which equates to 15 return trips from Esh's headquarters in County Durham to London's Trafalgar Square!

Following the trial's success, Esh Group is now gearing up to roll idling monitoring and education out across its 258-strong fleet of vehicles, which will contribute to a further reduction in carbon emissions and improved fuel efficiency across operations.

Life-saving defibrillators introduced across North East and Yorkshire sites

Defibrillators have been installed across Esh Group sites as the business underlines its commitment to helping everyone who works on or visits an operational site to return home safely at the end of the day.

The contractor has invested in 55 defibrillators which have been installed across sites in the North East and Yorkshire as part of its Everyone Safely Home campaign.

Health, Safety, Environment and Quality Director William Stobbs, said: "We have an ongoing commitment at Esh Group to maintain our safety – built on an ethos that everybody working on one of our sites or at one of our offices, should return home safe in an evening.

"Part of our continuous improvement comes on the occupational health side too and we have had the full backing of the executive board to make a substantial investment to introduce this life-saving equipment."

Esh Group strengthens apprenticeships commitment with The 5% Club membership

Esh Group has reinforced its dedication to developing the next generation of industry talent after signing up to The 5% Club's prestigious 2024-25 Employer Audit Scheme.

In its inaugural year, Esh has achieved gold-accreditation membership, which recognises its proactive approach to recruiting and retaining apprentices and graduates and fostering career opportunities for young people across the construction sector.

Esh's apprenticeship cohort stands at approximately 8% of its workforce. Traditional routes for construction-themed apprenticeships have seen continued sign-ups in roles such as quantity surveying, engineering and groundworks, but this year, Esh has introduced a Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability apprenticeship to the mix. With the course aligning with Esh's ambitions to work towards a more sustainable way of doing business, 39-year-old mum of two Rachael Thompson, is hoping the course will not only grow her own skillsets and understanding, but



“

...Esh has a proud history of nurturing talent...

back up Esh's journey toward an 'Even Greener' future. The Social Value Coordinator, who delivers a range of employability and careers workshops to students in communities in which Esh operates, said: "We place great emphasis on corporate responsibility at Esh, and sustainability is such a huge topic within that. It's really given me an opportunity to learn more about Esh and several areas of the business I hadn't previously encountered.

"What's great about this opportunity is that it shows there's no set path in life, and learning doesn't stop when you reach a certain age. Apprenticeships aren't

just for school leavers—they're a great way to develop professionally."

Darush Dodds, Corporate Affairs & Social Value Director at Esh Group added: "Esh has a proud history of nurturing talent with many of our long-serving colleagues starting their journey as apprentices. We are dedicated to developing the next generation of professionals and are passionate about providing opportunities for growth."

To find out more about Esh Group, visit www.eshgroup.co.uk

Castle Peak Group executive search, driven by diversity

New research into diversity within the workplace reveals fascinating results.

Over the next few months, we're going to be looking at work which has been undertaken by Castle Peak Group to look at the progress...or lack of it...regarding diversity at executive and board level.

In this particular, and very extensive, piece of research, Castle Peak Group, led by the company's CEO James Carss, has focussed on the housing sector....however, even though James and his team have spoken to senior people within this particular industry, much of the research applies to other fields such as technology, manufacturing, finance, law, HR, sales, transportation etc...indeed any workplace is relevant for the simple reason that diversity is the right thing to do.

If you have a business which employs people, this research will apply to you.

Why concentrate on executive and board level? Simple...those people will be the decision-makers within that particular business. They will be the leaders that everyone will look up to in terms of guidance but also for setting an example of what's right.

This isn't some sort of lip service or box-ticking exercise...it makes perfect business sense to have a diversified workforce and leadership team, no matter what level. When we spoke to James last month he said...

"People are realising that having a diverse board or team of executives is not only the right thing to do, it makes sense purely from a business point of view. Diversity isn't just a buzzword. You need a combination of people from different backgrounds to bring a wealth of different experiences together.

"The real measure of our success is watching clients transform their leadership teams through inclusive hiring, seeing talented executives step into roles where they can drive genuine social impact, and building a business that proves diversity and performance go hand in hand."

So, even though this research will concentrate on the housing sector, the results and comments made by the leaders of some household names, will be something you should take notice of. In many cases

it might be a great example of 'been there, done it' and either had success or failure....but they will have learnt from it.

And so can you.

Castle Peak Group is perfectly placed to undertake this research because they are an executive search firm specialising in diversity and inclusion. Whenever they undertake the search for a suitable applicant to fill a particular role, as well as obviously looking at whether that person is qualified for the position, they also study the workplace into which are going. James and his team will have looked carefully at the make-up of the senior people within the business and ascertained whether the levels of diversity are appropriate. Remember, it's not only the right thing to do, it's good for business.

The research, titled Progress Under Pressure, speaks in-depth to more than a dozen housing sector leaders, and finds confidence that many of the programmes and initiatives aimed at growing diversity in senior roles are working, but an acknowledgement that there's still significant work to do to ensure housing leadership is representative across all characteristics.

Importantly, participants also noted they were seeing operational benefits from increased diversity, including better decision making at board level and improvements in customer experience.

In other words, diversity works.

Over the coming months here in Northern Insight, we'll be looking at the Castle Peak Group research and seeing how it can help you with your diversity at executive and board level.

If you'd like more information or would like Castle Peak Group to help with your recruitment then you can contact James Carss directly by calling 07802 531040 or emailing info@castlepeak-group.com

You'll also find out more details about the research and what Castle Peak Group can do for you by logging on to www.castlepeak-group.com



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*...Diversity
isn't just a
buzzword....*

James Carss with his dog, Bella

Where are we going?

We are now just over six months into our new government, and I don't think it will be unfair to say that they are probably one of the most quickly unpopular government ever elected.

For people who thought that the last administration had damaged the economy (particularly during the short tenure of Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng), Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves seems to have taken things to new highs (or is that new lows?).

I think nobody would deny that the economy is in a mess, following the vast expense of Covid – partly caused by true reasons, and partly caused by government wastes of money. However, the current policy of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to slightly decrease the level of National Insurance payable by employees is compensated by the increased costs to employers. An Employee on £37,430 per annum basic salary (the UK average), National Insurance contributions have dropped from £2,486 to £1,989 – putting £497 in their pockets. However, the Employer is now going to have to fork out not £3,909 for the privilege of giving a job, but from April £4,865 will be required – an increase of £956, a net difference of £459. It doesn't sound like a lot until one applies it across the UK workforce of 33,780,000 people – then the stark figure of over £15.5 BILLION becomes apparent. That's £29,500 a second that won't be spent on goods and services in the 'real' economy. You really think this is a good idea Rachel? Although from the maths you used to work out your work experience, maybe you come up with a lesser figure. How many shops and small businesses will survive this money not being available?

Talking of the costs of Covid, I make no apology for my belief that WFH is in many cases SFH (Shirking From Home) and quite apart from the direct consequences of employees not being supervised to work most effectively, there is the additional effect on town centres where shops, coffee shops, pubs and restaurants enjoyed the benefit of office workers (and others) spending money at lunchtime. That has been pulled away from them over the last several years with less people being in these offices and other places of employment.

At least Newcastle does have the benefit of the new HMRC offices, which will bring



Phil Bowe

congestion to the town (I still don't think they have thought enough about car parking) but it will at least bring another 4,000 heads into the City Centre. In themselves these will not be new jobs, but they are likely to generate trade and therefore will grow the local economy. Let's be thankful for small mercies.

Against this, we have our local infrastructure issues. At long last the Ashington to Newcastle railway line is operational, but apart from being several years after promised, all the stations are not yet open. That's the good news on balance. On the flip side, the long promised new Metro trains seem to be being delivered at a snail's pace – we need the new trains with extra capacity and extra reliability to get around – especially as we are seeing serious issues in our roads with the Gateshead flyover being potentially demolished (what that will do for commuting south of Gateshead Town Centre is anybody's guess), issues with the Central Motorway where repairs are now required, and scarily, issues on the new A1M where there are issues with an almost new road structure. Don't say the word 'Bridge' – especially with either the word 'Tyne' or 'Redeugh'.

So what does this all mean for property? I think it will revitalise Newcastle City Centre but the effect would have been greater had more money been allowed to be kept in people's pockets. What is gratifying is to see the take-up of new offices in the city centre, which is helping to stretch the Central Business District.

However I do fear for the congestion issues that the demolition of the Gateshead flyover is going to cause. This will have major impact on Gateshead and anybody travelling from south of the river to Newcastle and north of the river – composite action is required to replace the flyover. If town centres decay, then values rapidly drop – Bishop Auckland is a case in point. If City Centres can be allowed to flourish then I think we will see some rises in values (as we already have) in Newcastle and I think the Central Business District will grow, particularly down Pilgrim Street to Bank House, which bodes well for the new Stack on Worswick Street and others.

www.bivbowes.com

Appointment of new directors at YoungsRPS



L-R: John Turnbull (Chairman), Harry Morshead (Director), Graeme Bruce (Managing Director), Tom Whitehead (Director) and Charles Raine (Director)

Property and Business Consultancy, youngsRPS is proud to announce the promotion of Harry Morshead and Tom Whitehead to Directors, a strategic move that highlights the firm's commitment to its long-term succession planning and future growth.

This signals a new phase in the leadership in a business that has been fundamental to the property landscape in Northern of England since 1879.

Over the past 20 years, their fellow Directors and business partners, Graeme Bruce, John Turnbull and Charles Raine have evolved the business, and the services offered across the rural, residential, commercial and development sectors – offering a multi-dimensional and innovative approach to property solutions. In their new role, Harry and Tom will take the helm in guiding youngsRPS into its next chapter, focusing on client service and expanding the company's reach across its core markets. Their combined expertise and vision, supported by

the wider leadership team, will play a crucial role in ensuring the continued success and sustainability of the firm.

The future of leadership and growth

Harry and Tom's promotions reflect their dedication to the business and their ability to adapt to the dynamic needs of the industry. Both have been instrumental in shaping the company's strategic direction in recent years, contributing to its reputation for professionalism, integrity, and excellence.

Managing Director, Graeme Bruce, comments: "The promotion of Harry and Tom is a testament to their leadership qualities and their unwavering commitment to our clients and the communities we serve. This marks an exciting new chapter for us as we continue to build on our legacy and embrace opportunities for growth."

With decades of collective experience in rural enterprise, land management, and property valuation, Harry and Tom bring a wealth of knowledge to their new roles. Their leadership ensures that youngsRPS remains well-positioned to navigate the challenges of the ever-changing terrain across the property sector, while staying true to its original values.

Commenting on his promotion, Harry Morshead said: "I have worked for youngsRPS for the past 12 years, and in that time, we have seen an exceptional amount of change across global markets, culture and politics, which in turn has seen dramatic adjustments to the way in which our clients

conduct business. Whether that is in the rural, residential or commercial spheres, and/or whether they are landlord or tenant, we are committed to ensuring that our service and quality is aligned to meeting their objectives and more.

Tom Whitehead, adds: "We have encountered a considerable amount of change over the last four years. Brexit, war, a global pandemic and the recent change in government have created unparalleled challenges for the property sector. As a firm, we have adapted to ensure that we can continue to support our clients as they face uncertainty. Our team aren't just rural agents and property consultants; many are farmers themselves, and they have applied their hands-on farming knowledge to create innovative yet practical solutions for our clients, allowing them to navigate a new landscape and thrive. Similarly, our property specialists have worked tirelessly to support clients with valuations, tenancy advice, and sales to meet ever changing market demands. I look forward to working with the rest of the board to ensure that we continue developing our services as we move into this new era."

As the firm celebrates its 145th year in business, it is focussed firmly on the future. The appointment of Harry and Tom as Directors reinforces the firm's commitment to delivering creative solutions that meet the diverse needs of its clients.

youngsrps.com



Scremeston, Berwick

THAA_Architects: Designing sustainable and innovative homes

The UK is facing a growing demand for high-quality housing, and custom and self-build homes play a crucial role in addressing this need.

By giving individuals, the opportunity to design and build homes tailored to their specific needs, custom and self-build projects promote diversity in housing, enhance local communities, and encourage innovative, sustainable construction methods. We believe in empowering homeowners to create unique, well-designed spaces that improve quality of life while also meeting high environmental standards.

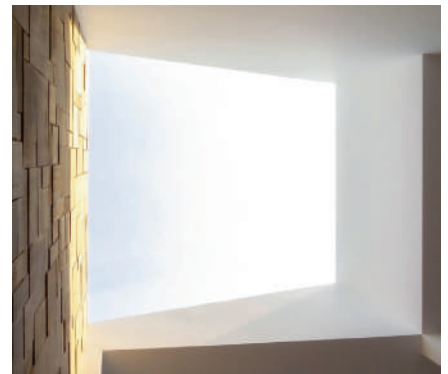
At THAA_Architects, we are passionate about creating high-quality residential and commercial architecture that is both innovative and sustainable. Our approach is rooted in thoughtful, context-driven design. Whether we're crafting new homes, transforming existing spaces, or restoring

historic properties, we focus on blending aesthetics with functionality. Sustainability is at the heart of what we do. We integrate energy-efficient solutions, high-quality materials, and modern construction techniques to ensure that every project is environmentally responsible and built to last.

From Paragraph 84 projects, designing exceptional homes in open countryside where planning restrictions are strict, to contemporary extensions that enhance the connection between indoor and outdoor spaces to the sensitive restoration of heritage buildings, our goal is always to design homes that reflect the needs and aspirations of the people who live in them. Paragraph 84 projects challenge us to push the boundaries of design, demonstrating outstanding architectural quality, environmental sustainability, and a deep connection to the surrounding landscape. By embracing innovative building techniques and respecting local character, we create unique homes that truly belong in their setting. We believe in balancing tradition with forward-thinking ideas, crafting homes that are both timeless and future ready.

With experience spanning urban, rural, and coastal settings, we continue to shape residential architecture with a commitment to quality, sustainability, and exceptional design.

To learn more about our work, visit thaa.co.uk. If you have a project in mind, do reach out to us at contact@thaa.co.uk



Painshawfield Estate, Stocksfield



Whitton, Rothbury



High Biggins, Kirkby Lonsdale



Prosper awards £440K in social value dividend payments

Procurement experts Prosper has awarded £440,854 in Social Value Annual Dividend payments to 12 social landlords.

The funding covers the procurement throughput with Prosper for the period 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2023 and is a 37% increase compared to the previous year. Prosper has allocated 15% surplus contribution, an increase of 7.5%.

The company, which specialises in the delivery of bespoke end-to-end procurement solutions, issues funding annually to landlord partners from its Social Value Dividend Fund.

The purpose of the fund is for partners to reinvest the money into projects and initiatives that improve the communities they serve.

The 12 landlords are located across the UK from regions including the North East, Yorkshire, Wales and the South West with believe housing based in County Durham receiving the largest annual payment of £157,900.

Rod Brasington, CEO of Prosper, said: "We are delighted to announce our Social Value Annual Dividend fund payments which will hugely benefit the communities our landlord partners serve. Landlords can allocate the funding to any project that helps their communities flourish.

"This year's Dividend has been boosted by a 15% surplus contribution which is a commitment by our Board and the total amount of £440K awarded this year is incredible. I'm really looking forward to seeing how this funding will impact local communities.

Newcastle City Council has been awarded a dividend fund of £107,691. Vicky McDermott, Director of Housing and Communities at Newcastle City Council, said: "We were delighted to be able to fund so many worthy community projects with the money we

received from Prosper last year and look forward to doing more of the same with this incredible sum. We are committed to making a positive difference to our neighbourhoods, and this funding helps us to deliver on the things that matter to our residents."

Karbon Homes has been awarded £95,941. Jessica Alexander, Social Value Coordinator from Karbon, said: "One of our key aims as an organisation is to help shape, strong sustainable places for our communities, and the social value commitments of our contractors and suppliers play an important role in elevating the support we're able to provide.

"We're delighted to receive this year's dividend from Prosper, which will enable us to support even more brilliant projects and initiatives across the North East which help our customers and communities to thrive."

While landlords can allocate the funding to support any project that benefits their communities, they are encouraged to spend it on projects that are educational, provide employment and training opportunities or support hard to reach groups.

www.prosper.uk.com



Bulien ranked among UK's top tech firms

A North East data consultancy has been named as one of the UK's fastest growing tech firms.

Bulien has been ranked 6th in the Tech 200, an annual ranking of the fastest growing tech suppliers in the UK public sector, published by Tussell & techUK.

Headquartered in The Core at Newcastle Helix, Bulien specialises in helping public sector organisations be more productive and make more informed decisions by better utilising their data.

Since its launch in 2018 by founders David Westwood and Chris McEleavey, the company has grown rapidly, creating 18 jobs and working with clients across the UK.

David said: "We are absolutely thrilled to have been recognised by Tussell and techUK as one of the nation's fastest-growing tech suppliers to the public sector.

"The achievement is in no small part to the hard work and dedication of all our technical and commercial teams, who are constantly receiving outstanding customer feedback in our public sector work in partnership with Alteryx and Microsoft Power BI.

"As the UK public sector continues to embrace the possibilities of no code and low code software, the projects we deliver have proven to save our clients both time and money, while boosting efficiency."



CyberNorth to power Pathways for girls to access Cyber Security Careers

CyberNorth have announced a funding boost from Innovate UK which will support the launch of a first of its kind project in the North East in a bid to inform, equip and empower careers advisors and computer science teachers with the resources and knowledge to support young girls and women to access a career in cyber security.

Despite the opportunities to thrive in the high demand, lucrative sector, the growth of women in the cyber security field has stagnated in a sector where women hold just 17% of cyber security jobs nationally.

The transformative new project, Influencing the Influencer is set to launch in March 2025 and includes the development of a useful signposting portal with case studies, study route information and essential employer details in the region, and the trailblazing campaign has the power to change perceptions of careers in cyber security for young girls and women in the region.

The project will also implement a series of online and in person (Newcastle and Darlington) CPD events in March to help give careers advisors and teachers a thorough understanding of the jobs available in cyber security.

Since inception, CyberNorth has facilitated the development of the cyber security community in the North East and raised local, national and international awareness of opportunities and capacity in the North East.

The project will be led by Danielle Phillips who recently took the reins as CEO, and a key lobbyist in the mission to close the persistent gender disparities in the field. CyberNorth is itself pushing against the industry norm with female representation on their core management team now sitting at 60%.



TechNext is back for 2025

ONE OF the North East's most dynamic sectors will be showcased and supported this summer, as the first details of the region's biggest tech festival are unveiled.

TechNext, a celebration of the North East's thriving technology sector – will span five days in June, bringing together thousands of attendees who will share ideas, learn from one another and celebrate a sector that is thriving in the region.

Taking place between June 16 and 20, TechNext will feature everything from curated showcases to community-led fringe events, displaying the diversity, achievements, and innovation of the North East's tech scene.

The event – hosted by a partnership of North East businesses and stakeholders working collaboratively, and led by Dynamo North East CIC and Sunderland Software City working with BeaconHouse Events – is now in its third year, providing an opportunity for the region's tech community to come together and share best practice.

This year's programme has been fine-tuned based on feedback from attendees in 2024, with the major change to the festival being the creation of 'hubs' where a range of events and sessions will be held in the same location across each day, to allow people to attend more events across the course of the week.



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James Drake

Switch Off with Eclipse Wholesale

What is the Switch Off?

The UK telecoms industry is undergoing a major transformation with the nationwide switch off of old PSTN lines, first announced by BT Openreach in November 2017. PSTN (Public Switched Telephone Network) is an analogue line that also provides ADSL and FTTC services. This means all traditional telephone networks will be completely switched off by Openreach and replaced with a fully digital network. While the original deadline was set for 31st December 2025, it has now been extended to 2027 to ensure a smooth transition for all customers, particularly those relying on telecare services. A 'stop sell' policy came into place in September 2023, meaning that no new PSTN services can be provisioned. All customers will be required to find an alternative service by 2027, or their service will no longer work.

Why is it happening?

PSTN lines, some of which date back to the 19th century, are increasingly difficult to maintain and repair. With the rapid

advancement of technology, these ageing copper lines can no longer keep up with modern demands. The transition to an all-digital network will introduce countless new opportunities, making communication faster, more reliable and better suited for a fast-paced future.

The Eclipse Wholesale Switch Off Project

At Eclipse Wholesale, we are proactively working towards the 2025 deadline to transition all our partners to an alternative service, excluding those with telecare services. The reliability and support issues associated with PSTN lines make it key to transition to modern alternatives, with the number of faults on PSTN services increasing by 20% in 2023, causing a 60% increase in hours lost for customers on the analogue network. Many businesses have already adopted newer communications and connectivity solutions such as VoIP, SoGEA and FTTP. However, it is essential to recognise these solutions are not a one-size-fits-all replacement. Thousands of PSTN lines currently in use may not be suitable for a SoGEA or FTTP transition due to cost, compatibility or logistical challenges. These can include essential services such as lift lines, taxi call points, traffic management systems or alarm monitoring. In such cases, alternative solutions like IoT (Internet of Things) must be considered to ensure continuity and reliability.

Eclipse Wholesale began the process of

migrating all legacy analogue services to alternative solutions in the summer of last year and plans to have this completed by September 2025.

Our Managing Director, James Drake, says "The switch off is a pivotal moment in the telecoms industry and we're committed to helping partners make a smooth and successful transition. Although the deadline has been extended, Eclipse Wholesale is prepared and ready to assist partners through our 2025 project, allowing them to feel the benefits of an all-digital future sooner."

Steps you should take:

- Identify the assets in your estate that will be affected by the Switch Off.
- Make a list of all the devices currently plugged into the master socket and any extensions.
- Check each asset for calls, broadband markers or block terminals.
- Work with your provider on the migration paths available for each asset.
- Investigate if any alternative networks are available at the asset address.
- Use bulk migration tools if the size of your WLR (Wholesale Line Rental) estate is sizeable.

Eclipse Wholesale is fully prepared to guide our partners through this transition. Don't wait until the last minute, start preparing for the Switch Off today.

Switch Off with **Eclipse Wholesale**

0344 243 5555
 partner@eclipsenet.co.uk
 Eclipse Wholesale





The Future of AV Technology: Key Trends to Watch in 2025

The audio-visual (AV) industry is undergoing a transformative shift, driven by the rise of hybrid work models, digital learning, and changing consumer expectations.

As we look ahead to 2025, AV technology is set to play an even more pivotal role in shaping how businesses operate, collaborate, and engage with customers. To stay ahead of the curve, it's essential for businesses to understand these evolving trends and leverage innovative AV solutions to remain competitive.

This article explores the key AV trends for 2025 and how Universal AV can support businesses in adapting to these changes.

Network-Integrated AV Systems: The Future of Seamless Connectivity

AV systems are transitioning from standalone units to integrated, network-based solutions, allowing for better connectivity, scalability, and ease of management. This shift not only enhances real-time

communication across devices but also enables businesses to optimise their IT infrastructure and streamline operations. By adopting network-integrated AV systems, businesses can improve collaboration, enhance user experiences, and future-proof their technology investments. Universal AV is at the forefront of implementing these solutions, assisting clients in creating scalable, network-connected AV environments that align with their operational goals.

AI-Driven AV: Revolutionising Efficiency and User Experience

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is set to play an increasingly vital role in AV systems by creating more responsive, adaptive, and intuitive user experiences. From AI-powered digital signage that dynamically

adjusts based on audience behaviour to automated systems for tasks such as visitor check-ins, AI promises to streamline operations, reduce human error, and improve overall efficiency. In addition, AI can facilitate highly personalised interactions, enabling businesses to create more engaging environments that resonate with both employees and customers. Universal AV are incorporating AI capabilities into their solutions to ensure clients can harness the full potential of these cutting-edge technologies.

Smart Buildings: Integrating AV Solutions into the Workspace of Tomorrow

The trend towards smart buildings is rapidly gaining momentum, with AV systems becoming a central component in managing and optimising workspaces. Through the integration of Internet of Things (IoT) devices, businesses can gain valuable insights into space usage patterns, enabling more effective space management, energy efficiency, and cost reduction. AV systems can be integral to create flexible, collaborative, and optimised work environments that support the needs of modern, hybrid workforces. Universal AV is already assisting clients in implementing smart building solutions, helping businesses to maximise resource usage while reducing operational costs.

AV as a Service (AVaaS): Flexible, Scalable, and Cost-Efficient Solutions

“AVaaS or AV as a Service is also becoming increasingly popular, allowing organisations to spread the cost of purchasing AV equipment over a fixed period.

Throughout this duration, they enjoy benefits such as regular hardware and software updates, service and maintenance contracts, and the ability to scale their technology as needed.



As AV Technology continues to evolve and become engrained in more aspects of our day-to-day lives, there's likely to be a bigger number of organisations investing in AV as a Service, as this allows a more flexible approach to purchasing and implementing new technologies.”

Looking Ahead: Preparing for the Future of AV Technology in 2025

The future of AV technology is an exciting one, with networked systems, AI, smart buildings, and AVaaS poised to revolutionise how businesses operate, collaborate, and engage with their customers. As these trends continue to gain traction, businesses must remain proactive in adopting these technologies to maintain a competitive advantage and deliver enhanced experiences to both employees and customers. With Universal AV's expertise in implementing cutting-edge AV solutions, businesses can confidently navigate the evolving AV landscape and thrive in an increasingly connected world.

By staying ahead of these trends, businesses can not only optimise their operations but also create more dynamic, flexible, and innovative environments that position them for long-term success in the digital age. Universal AV is committed to helping businesses adapt to the future of AV technology, ensuring they are well-equipped to face the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead in 2025 and beyond.

www.uniav.com

Talking Technology

This month Northern Insight talks to...

Mike Carter

CEO, Roamer Robotics Ltd.

Did you always envisage a career in the world of Technology?

I was a teacher when computers first came into primary schools and I was not a fan. I could not see any reason why they would be used in school. As I was the youngest teacher in the school I was given the new computer to take home with me. I spent all weekend trying to get it to work, alas, unsuccessfully. I was worried about what the headteacher would say on Monday. When I went in the secretary told me that another package had arrived late on Friday. It was the tape cassette and some programs which could be loaded into the machine. I loaded a mathematics game and thought that the children would really enjoy working on the computer which they did. That was my first step into educational technology. I always had to remind the children in the class not to switch the plugs off at breaktime as that was when I would load the programs ready for the next lesson.

What tips would you give to someone looking to work in the industry?

The tech industry has always been changing rapidly and it is very hard to keep up. I would suggest that someone wanting to enter the industry should master a few key applications and be able to use them to a high standard.

Tell us about the most exciting project your currently working on?

Roamer Robotics is a small start up based in Gateshead and we have managed to get an order to provide the teachers in Miami-Dade County schools in Florida, USA with Roamer Robots. This has the potential to be a really impressive order if the schools then place an order for more Roamer Robots to use with their children in class.

Tell us about your team?

I am the CEO of the company and also responsible for operations. The Roamer Robot was invented by world renowned robotics engineer Mr. Dave Catlin. He is in charge of our technical development team. Mrs Sheila Walker is the Managing Director and responsible for moving the company forward.

What are your long term plans for the business?

Dave is busy working on the next development of the Roamer Robot which will employ wireless and bluetooth and also RFID technology. We are also exploring the use of AI and VR technologies to work with the Roamer Robot providing more phenomenal activities for all users interacting with Roamer Robot.

What's your favourite piece of technology?

For me it is the mobile phone. I know it has its detractors and it can be invasive, but used proficiently it is an amazing piece of kit. I was recently in London and had to reschedule my train back to the North East, I had just purchased a new phone and had to use my old phone for banking details. The old phone was no longer on a network and the WiFi was not great so whilst travelling on the Elizabeth Line heading to Kings Cross station, I shared the network with my new

phone, used my bank account details on the old phone and managed to reschedule my train on the new phone, all whilst travelling on the tube. Amazing!

Do you have any heroes or mentors?

I am a great believer in the work of people like Jean Piaget, Lev Zygotsky and Seymour Papert, educators and philosophers. They viewed education as something that was experienced, not something that was done to young people. They all celebrated the power of play. The epitome of this movement for me is the late Sir Ken Robinson. Robinson's key argument is that creativity is as important as literacy, but that our education system doesn't value it. In fact, he says, "we're educating people out of their creative capacities". He believes creativity is the crucial 21st century skill we'll need to solve today's pressing problems. (22nd May 2022)

When not working how do you like to relax?

I like to get out and walk. It clears my head and allows time to recharge batteries and relax. I am fond of visiting towns and cities with my wife. We always invest in a treasure trail, we find that we learn a lot more about places doing this. I like reading and am currently reading a fascinating book about the Huguenot persecution in France.

What's your fondest career memory?

Being presented with my MA Ed (Res) in 2010 from Newcastle University.

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

Work hard and plan effectively. Develop relationships and nurture them; the rewards will come over time. I believe, especially in the education market, that there is no need for the "hard sell" approach. If educators like the product and can see an educational value in it for the young people, they will invest in it. Be yourself!

roamer-robotics.com





Mike Carter

Building customer loyalty with digital solutions

By Claire Cundill, Chief Business Officer, Leighton

Over the past few months, I've had many conversations about the importance of loyalty and the best ways to cultivate it.

It's no secret that keeping an existing customer is easier (and cheaper) than finding a new one. But when it comes to building customer loyalty, good service, fair pricing and a bit of personalisation are just scratching the surface of what's possible.

Working in digital, I see every day how software can help businesses build stronger relationships with customers. But I also know that for many businesses, it's not always obvious how to make the most of these tools or even where to start. Here are four areas where I've seen software play a real role in keeping customers coming back.

1. Loyalty schemes (that actually get used)

Most businesses know about loyalty cards and points-based rewards, but a lot of schemes don't work because they're too clunky. If a customer has to jump through hoops to claim a reward, they'll lose interest.

A good digital loyalty scheme makes earning and redeeming rewards effortless. The Starbucks app is a great example. Customers earn points and can see their balance in real time through a tiered rewards system where regular customers can unlock extra perks and exclusive offers. This encourages people to keep spending to maintain their status, rather than just redeeming points and moving on.

Airline frequent flyer programmes use a similar approach, offering perks like priority boarding and lounge access to frequent travellers. The more they fly, the more valuable the programme becomes, keeping them loyal to one airline rather than shopping around.

Small businesses can learn from these examples, using mobile apps or even simple email-based systems. The key is making it effortless but meaningful. Customers need a reason to stay engaged beyond just collecting points.

2. Keeping customers engaged (without nagging them)

People don't mind hearing from businesses they like, but there's a fine line between useful reminders and spam. The trick is using digital tools to send the right message at the right time, based on real customer behaviour, not guesswork.

Online retailers send abandoned basket reminders to nudge customers towards a purchase. But this only works if it's done well. A generic "You left something behind" email is easy to ignore. A well-crafted message that highlights low stock or offers a small discount makes it feel helpful.

Streaming services do this brilliantly. Netflix doesn't just tell you what's new, it suggests what you'd want to watch based on what you've enjoyed before. This is where data makes the difference. Businesses that track customer habits, preferences,

and purchase history can send messages that feel personal, relevant, and well-timed.

For any business using digital tools to communicate with customers, don't just send messages. Make them matter. The more relevant and well-timed your communication, the more likely customers are to engage with it.

3. Turning customers into a community

Loyalty isn't just about transactions. Some of the strongest customer relationships come from people feeling part of something bigger. The more emotionally invested a customer is in a brand, the less likely they are to switch.

Businesses that build communities around their brand don't just create customers, they create advocates. Look at Peloton. People don't just buy a bike. They join a group, compete in challenges, and share their progress. This sense of belonging keeps them engaged beyond initial purchase.

Smaller businesses can do this on a local level, whether that's a private Facebook group, a customer forum, or exclusive in-person events. If people feel part of something, they'll stay.

4. Subscription models that keep people coming back

More businesses are shifting towards memberships and subscriptions to build long-term customer relationships.

Take Amazon Prime. People don't just sign up for next-day delivery, they stay for the extras, like exclusive discounts and free streaming. Retailers and hospitality businesses are experimenting with paid loyalty programmes, like Pret A Manger's coffee subscription where customers get exclusive perks for a monthly fee.

Subscriptions shouldn't just be about locking customers in. They should offer ongoing value that keeps people engaged.

The biggest mistake businesses make with loyalty is thinking it's just about offering money off. While discounts have their place, real loyalty comes from making life easier for customers, giving them a reason to engage, and making them feel valued.

Digital tools make all of this easier, but only when they're used well. The businesses that get it right use tech to build genuine connections with their customers. And when that happens, loyalty follows naturally.

leighton.com

“

*...If people feel
part of something,
they'll stay...*



Triathletes Dan Dixon and Rosie Bell.



RDA images: Michael Martin Photography

Andrew Skelton (SOS Group Director) presenting awards at the Riding Disability Association's National Championships

World Class digital office services

Providing copy, print, scan services at major, internationally significant, events has become a strong area of expertise for SOS Group.

This year, the Gateshead-based firm will be delivering at almost one major event every week and, as the SOS team are quick to point out, if they can deliver reliable digital office services by a swimming pool or in a field, they can certainly deliver them in a standard work environment.

SOS Group Director, Andrew Skelton, says: "Events are often very high pressure for everyone involved and we certainly thrive on that.

"Providing this kind of service support can range from a few days with just two or three devices, or it can be very involved across multiple sites and requiring up to 117 devices for weeks at a time.

"The logistics involved and client requirements vary enormously but what doesn't change is the necessity for us to create a strong project plan and then be flexible to adapt this wherever that might be needed.

"Every venue, from international swimming arenas and athletics tracks, to major conference centres, brings with it its own set of challenges and requires very specific and detailed planning.

"Any issue or possible issue encountered will be something we've seen and solved before at an event and that certainly translates

into a more standard office, service or manufacturing workplace.

"Clients appreciate our ability to problem solve, be that logistics, security, sustainability or cost. That's that challenge sorted, what's next?"

Established in 2002, SOS Group facilitates all business and event requirements, including communications and IT, and specialises in providing copy, print, scan solutions for clients from local start-ups to multi nationals.

It has a centralised office on the Team Valley as well as specialist engineers servicing accounts nationally from six regional hubs in London, Scotland, the North West, Midlands, South Yorkshire, South West and North East.

The company, which has achieved both ISO 9001 and ISO 27001, recently provided office services for the Labour Party during the General Election cycle, including local elections, by-elections, Scottish and Welsh conferences, regional conferences, national party forums and an Annual Conference.

In addition, it supported an extremely significant national inquiry and, over the last 12 months, has worked at 21 different locations across the UK to ensure the smooth running of events for clients including British Athletics, Aquatics GB, Swim England, British Taekwondo and the World Orienteering Championships.

For the last six years, SOS Group, has also supported the Riding Disability Association's (RDA) National Championships at Hartpury University & College in Gloucester.

The biggest disabled equestrian event of its kind, last year's Championship featured a record number of entries and spectators.



The Riding Disability Association's National Championships



Over three days, RDA participants took part in competition classes from dressage and showjumping to carriage driving, showing, endurance, countryside challenge, best turned out, vaulting and arts and crafts.

Throughout the event, SOS Group provided practical, hands-on technical support and equipment for the busy event administration team.

Clare Prysбет, Head of Fundraising at the Riding Disability Association, says: "Running a show of this scale, with hundreds of competitors and volunteers, is a huge logistical operation.

"We are therefore incredibly grateful for the long-term technical support provided by SOS Group, to help keep the event office running smoothly."

Andrew adds: "We're trusted by internationally recognisable names and have previously delivered services at the IAAF World Championships and World Paralympics competitions.

"Ensuring vital office services run smoothly, be that a sporting

competition, a major national inquiry or political event, means physically moving a proportion of a client's office, or an image of that office, and transporting it to another part of the country.

"In the last year, we've delivered fully operational services in this way in venues from Aberdeen to Plymouth. Across those events in total, approximately 2.15 million prints were produced for our clients requiring just four service interventions.

"That's a track record we're extremely proud of and everything we need to consider in advance of any event, any specific client needs and logistics, that's all just as relevant within a standard work environment like a hotel, a factory or a school.

"Ultimately, our clients are always assured that their requirements are met exactly and any problems they need to solve, we can provide the solutions."

For more information, please visit: www.sosgroup-ltd.co.uk



Andrew Skelton

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CMYK | Business Technology deploys life-saving device through partnership with Red Sky Foundation



CMYK | Business Technology has shown its dedication to community welfare by installing a publicly accessible defibrillator. CMYK purchased the defibrillator during last year's Red Sky Ball. Supported by their clients, Owben, this life-saving equipment is available 24/7 at CMYK's Newcastle headquarters situated on the popular quayside walkway and coast-to-coast route.

CMYK's long-term association with the Red Sky Foundation has raised thousands of pounds to date. Their recent pledge at the Red Sky Ball at Sunderland's Beacon of Light led to the installation of the new defibrillator, enhancing their commitment for community healthcare and wellbeing.

Craig Pratt, regional director at CMYK, commented, "We are pleased to have installed this piece of life-saving equipment at our offices, which will serve a busy part of the Newcastle quayside area. We hope it never has to be used, but it's here to save a life if needed."

This heartwarming story exemplifies true community spirit, with CMYK's client Owben stepping forward to make a significant contribution. Not only have they volunteered to install the life-saving device, but they've

also committed to placing a publicly accessible defibrillator at their Sunderland headquarters, demonstrating remarkable charitable leadership.

Sergio Petrucci MBE, founder of Red Sky Foundation, added; "I'm delighted with the support we receive from our partners and the help we've had from CMYK and Owben is evident by seeing firsthand the impact and the physical lifesaving device now in place. While we hope this latest defibrillator is never needed it really does give everyone peace of mind that it's there and that it can save every heartbeat."

Sergio remarked; "Red Sky Foundation's commercial partnerships are instrumental to us saving lives and this is just a brilliant example of how we can all work together for the greater good."

Andrew Corsar, managing director of Owben commented; "Owben are proud to have partnered with CMYK to deliver a lifesaving piece of equipment at their Newcastle HQ. Owben have partnered with CMYK for several years to provide critical IT solutions to our business. We partnered with CMYK not only for their IT expertise's but the core community values they hold and demonstrate as a business across the communities we operate in. When Craig approached us to install the defibrillator, we were more than happy to assist."

Andrew added; "2015 marks the 10-year anniversary of Sergio and Emma's daughter Lunas lifesaving heart surgery. Owben will pledge to support 10 local businesses that buy a defibrillator at the upcoming Red Sky Foundation Ball, by providing labour to install the units at their premises as our way of acknowledging this huge milestone for both Luna and the Red Sky Foundation."

Craig concluded; "We urge all organisations and companies to get involved with the Red Sky Foundation, the charity really does make a huge difference in our communities and provides vital support to families during the most difficult and challenging moments."

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YourFilm expand team with double hire to begin 20th year

A North East video production company has started 2025 with the announcement of a double hire into its expanding team.

Gateshead based YourFilm, which this year is celebrating their 20th anniversary, says the new recruits are an indication of their continued growth, despite challenging industry conditions.

YourFilm, who have created TV ads and promotional films for the likes of Flymo, Admiral, Nissan and Thomson Reuters has recruited Maddie Tipping as studio manager and Josh James as a junior animator.

Maddie, who studied law at Durham University, joins as studio manager, and will make sure the dozens of video projects the Gateshead HQ'd team are working on remain

on time and on budget.

At the same time, Josh James joins YourFilm as an animator and will be working across a range of projects, having finally found what he calls 'the perfect match' of his graphic design and animation talents that can then be put to commercial use.

Maddie, who secured a role as a paralegal at a top Newcastle law firm after her studies admitted she felt out of place in the legal industry: "I'd always loved drama and being creative and I think it took that time at the law firm to realise I just wasn't cut out for that type of career.

"I'm enormously grateful Kevin and Matthew have taken a gamble on me and I can't wait to get stuck into the great projects YourFilm are working on through 2025 and beyond."

Josh, a former Northumbria University student, said: "I'm already learning a host of new skills and processes around editing



and production. It's been a steep learning curve, but the team has been tremendously welcoming and helpful.

"Having felt a little frustrated in previous roles, bringing my animation skills to YourFilm feels like I've finally found the perfect match."



O to grow its talent community in 2025

Newcastle creative communications agency O has confirmed its commitment to young people by dialling up its grOw Programme in its 20th year.

O agency was formed in 2005 and has kept youth talent at the heart of its regional commitment, winning several awards in the last two decades for its workplace initiatives*.

It rolled all its commitments into a new programme after the pandemic, called grOw, which delivers its 'Ocademy' of work placements and internships, its 'On the Road' programme of school talks and its 'Open House' events for young people to come in and meet people working in a creative agency.

Now, as it celebrates its 20th year in business, O has committed to mentoring from all of its staff in 2025 to build a grOw Community.

Kari Owers, Founder of O agency, said: "The objective of establishing our grOw Community is to give all of our team the chance to lead a mentorship scheme which supports emerging talent aged 18-25.

"We will donate 20 hours per person in our 20th year to make a difference to a young person, from passing on our knowledge and skills, to helping them navigate the creative industry, build a network and access opportunities.

"We want to inspire young individuals aspiring to pursue careers in strategy, marketing communication, PR & influence, event planning, design & creative, video production and more, by connecting them with young people already working in the North East creative industry for a chat and some advice."

If you are aged 18-25 and would like to join the grOw Community and access mentoring advice please email Opportunities@O.agency with your name, age and contact details.

Frisk Radio announces Lancashire Expansion

North East Regional DAB station Frisk Radio is delighted to announce its upcoming expansion into Lancashire.

Utilising SS-DAB transmitters in Preston, Chorley and Blackpool, Frisk will bring its signature "Beats & Banter" formula to the region starting mid-April.

The move aligns with the mass rollout of digital out-of-home billboards by Frisk's parent company, Smart Outdoor Media. Mark Catterall, CEO of Smart Outdoor

Media said: "Our growing footprint across Lancashire makes this the ideal time to launch Frisk Radio in the same area.

With over 100 screens coming online, we can offer advertisers a unique, omni-channel opportunity to connect with their target audience across the region."

Stuart Landreth, Director of Frisk Radio said:

"We are very excited to introduce the Frisk brand to Lancashire. Our rapid growth, and success in the North East has shown there is a clear demand for an upbeat, dance-music focussed station in local markets."



Frisk Radio is available on DAB in selected areas of the North East, online at www.friskradio.com, and through the Frisk Player app.

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Phonetic Digital joins the growing North East B Corp™ community

North East digital marketing agency, Phonetic Digital has cemented itself as one of the north east's most forward-thinking and values-driven employers.

After months of rigorous assessment, they became a certified B Corp™ business, joining a community of companies committed to using their business as a force for good. The milestone was a fantastic way to round off an incredible first year in business, reinforcing their dedication to balancing profit with purpose.

But becoming a B Corp™ wasn't the finish line for Phonetic Digital, in fact, it's just the beginning. Managing Director Steven Parker added 'This certification challenges us to continuously improve, hold ourselves accountable, and drive meaningful change within our local community.'

What does it mean to be a B Corp™?

B Corps™, or Benefit Corporations, are companies that meet the highest standards of social and environmental performance, transparency, and legal accountability. Unlike traditional businesses that focus purely on profit, B Corps™ operate with a clear mission: to have a positive impact on their employees, communities, customers, and the environment.

To become certified by B Lab, businesses must complete the B Impact Assessment, which measures their performance across five key impact areas:

- **Governance** – Transparency, ethical decision-making and accountability.
- **Workers** – Employee well-being, fair pay and workplace culture.
- **Community** – Positive social impact, local

engagement and diversity.

- **Environment** – Sustainability, energy efficiency and waste reduction.
- **Customers** – Responsible business practices and customer satisfaction.

A B Corp™ certification isn't just a badge for your website, it's proof of real, measurable impact. To qualify, companies need to score a minimum of 80 points, demonstrating genuine dedication to doing business responsibly.

Phonetic Digital's journey

Our journey to certification took around 12 months. It involved taking a deep, honest look at how we do business, and how we can improve.

One of our biggest priorities at Phonetic Digital is employee well-being. Our team is at the heart of our success, which is why we proudly pay all employees a Real Living Wage and are officially accredited Living Wage Foundation Employers.

We also take sustainability seriously, actively seeking ways to reduce our environmental impact, whether it's minimising waste, or collecting rainwater from our office roof to water our plants! We believe that every action, big or small, contributes to a more sustainable future.

Beyond our social and environmental responsibility, we're committed to upholding the highest standards of accountability, transparency, and security. That's why we achieved our Cyber Essentials accreditation,

providing proof of our dedication to data protection and operating with integrity at every level.

As part of our commitment, we also updated our legal structure to reflect our responsibility to all stakeholders, embedding our purpose into the foundation of our business.

Finally, to maintain full transparency, we created a 2024 Impact Report, outlining our journey, our achievements and the steps we're taking to keep raising the bar.

A growing B Corp™ community in the North East

We feel incredibly fortunate to be part of the growing community of B Corps™ in the North East, with over 30 certified businesses in the region.

To support this movement, B Local North East, in partnership with B Lab, is creating a space for businesses to connect, collaborate and share knowledge, helping each other to grow and drive meaningful change.

With B Corp™ month taking place in March we're excited to work alongside other companies, learning from their experiences and finding new ways to make business better for everyone.

What's next for Phonetic Digital?

Becoming a B Corp™ is just the start of our journey. Certification isn't permanent and we'll be reassessed every three years, ensuring we continue to improve and push for better standards.

For us, this is more than just a certification, it's a commitment to always do better. We'll keep challenging ourselves, supporting our team, and finding new ways to use business as a force for good.

If you'd like to learn more about our journey, you can check out our 2024 Impact Report or get in touch with us at hello@phoneticdigital.co.uk

Same great ideas, now B Corp™ certified.



Newcastle agency hails launch of free marketing masterclass sessions as it sponsors local football club

A Newcastle-based marketing agency known for its highly targeted, data-driven campaigns has celebrated the successful launch of a series of free marketing masterclass sessions, as it announces its sponsorship of South Shields FC.

Aimed at marketing teams and business owners who want to achieve growth through their marketing efforts, the first session took place at South Shields FC where Who's Listening is now a club sponsor, and covered key topics such as elements of social, web, SEO and paid search, delivered by the Who's Listening expert team.

Managing Director, Shane Gammage said: "As we move into 2025 and our business continues to grow, we're looking for new ways not only to promote our business but also to give back to the local community. That's why this partnership with South Shields FC made perfect sense for us. I'm delighted that, in the short time we've been working together, we've already been able to help Pam and the team at PRS Inclusion & Training Services - something that resonates deeply with me given my daughter's autism diagnosis."

The first event, which took place on 31st January was very well received, with attendees noting the rapidly gained knowledge delivered in a clear and concise way, as well as valuable networking opportunities.

Carl Mowatt, Commercial Director at South Shields FC, added: "I am thrilled and very excited to have Who's Listening Ltd joining the club as a long-term partner and sponsor. I have already warmed to the ethos of Shane, Liam, and the team - their workshops and their support of PRS Inclusion & Training Services, an organisation very close to my heart, are truly commendable."

The forthcoming sessions run from 10.30am to 12.30pm on Wednesday 26th February (Social Media Marketing for Businesses in 2025) at Aidan House in Gateshead, and 10.30am to 12.30pm on Friday 28th March (An Introduction to SEO - The Fundamentals for Your Business in 2025) at South Shields FC with tickets available via Eventbrite.

Who's Listening has recently launched its free downloadable 'marketing trends for 2025' report which can be downloaded from the website.

Who's Listening is a full-service marketing agency with specialisms in social media, paid ads (meta and search), email marketing and websites, working with businesses across the UK. Rapid growth has seen the team almost double in size recently, with plans to recruit at least two more team members in the next 12 months.

Salesfire launches award-winning AI Teesside-based SaaS company

Salesfire have started 2025 with a bang. After months of development and testing, they launched their game-changing technology, Salesfire AI, on Wednesday the 22nd of January.

In the same week, this new technology won Best Martech at the Northern Digital Awards, giving them plenty to celebrate. The Northern Digital Awards recognises businesses from 'The Powerhouse North of England' who are at the forefront of digital marketing.

Chief Executive Officer, Rich Himsworth, and Chief Marketing Officer, Josh McGregor attended the event, which took place on Thursday the 23rd of January in Manchester, to accept the award. Speaking about the launch and award win, CEO Rich commented: "We are ecstatic. All of our teams have worked so hard to create this stand-out technology and receiving this award in the same week we officially launched Salesfire AI is fantastic recognition for what we bring to the eCommerce space." Salesfire, a business that provides retailers with intelligent customer journey optimisation solutions, received the award for its newly released Salesfire AI technology.

Salesfire AI is changing the game for eCommerce brands by enabling retailers to identify and retarget more of their anonymous shoppers with personalised messaging, without relying on third-party cookies. Using ID profiling technology, the solution can recognise returning visitors across different devices even when they are not logged in, understanding their interests in real-time and deploying highly personalised retargeting campaigns that drive sales. The technology



is adaptable for businesses of varying sizes. It enables SMEs to deliver a level of personalisation once only attainable by eCommerce giants while providing a solution for enterprise businesses to streamline their tech stack and automate their marketing efforts. The judges of the Northern Digital Awards expressed the impact this will have on the eCommerce industry, stating that it "was an interesting product, aligning seamlessly with the evolving Martech landscape, addressing privacy-first concerns whilst delivering personalised experiences with unmatched pricing

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L-R: Zoe Leaty, Sophie Anderson and Philippa Clothier

Philippa Clothier talks to us about International Women's Day

Clothier Lacey & Co has been a proudly female-founded business for over 25 years - what does that legacy mean to you and how does it shape the company today?

Hopefully my daughters, Zoe and Sophie, may take over the business at some stage. They've both been steeped in the world of marketing and PR since they were quite young. Whilst I have some highly talented, fabulous people in the business, attracting fresh, new talent is the life blood of any successful business.

International Women's Day is all about celebrating progress and empowerment - what advice would you give to women looking to build a successful business of their own?

Don't start a business unless you are totally committed. It is extremely hard work. Bloody mindedness, determination, competitiveness and the ability to work long after everyone else is fast asleep: these are all useful qualities. It often does not feel very empowering though - exhausting more like - definitely not for the faint-hearted.

The company has gone from strength to strength, what's been the key to sustaining growth and evolving in such a fast-paced industry?

It is important to be constantly morphing into the next big thing - standing still is not an option. Zoe, a geek at heart, has far more

of a technology bent than me and sees the future as being very much AI-shaped.

Clothier Lacey & Co has built a reputation for excellence in PR & marketing. What would you say sets the business apart from the competition?

A passion for excellence, our network of contacts, our reputation, our no-nonsense approach, our experience and... we don't take ourselves too seriously. We hugely enjoy our work and hope our clients enjoy the experience too!

Tell us why it's important to have a professional team for PR & Marketing...

In-house teams are an asset and have their place but can become inward-looking with only one 'client'. We bring a fresh, well-informed and objective perspective because of our daily engagement with different companies in various sectors.

Working together as mother and daughter must bring a unique perspective to leadership, how do you balance family and business while driving the company forward?

We often drive each other mad but we're both dedicated to the success of the business. Zoe is currently studying for a Post Graduate Strategic Leadership Apprenticeship whereas, I am self-taught. I often shock her by what I say. Work:Life balance wasn't even a thing when my girls were young - nor was political correctness.

How do your different strengths complement each other, what have you learned from each other along the way?

I take things personally, especially if we lose a client, which is rare. But it still upsets me. Zoe says - 'it's just business; don't take it personally'. She says I'm a pessimist, I say, I'm a realist. She is always optimistic.

Looking ahead, what's next for Clothier Lacey & Co? Are there any exciting projects/new services on the horizon?

Our focus is AI-driven, enhancing in-house processes and client services. We're upskilling our team and implementing automation to boost efficiency. With our new AI Search service replacing traditional SEO, we're ahead of the game. Stay competitive—get in touch to future-proof your digital strategy!

Who's more likely to be first to attend a meeting, and who's more likely to forget their coffee?

I'm often called 'the late Philippa Clothier' and alas, Zoe is a conscientious understudy. On the other hand, Sophie, my other daughter, is ALWAYS early and we drive her nuts. Neither of us would ever forget our coffees though.

Describe each other in three words.

Philippa on Zoe:

Knowledgeable, Dependable and Neophilic (look it up!).

Zoe on Philippa:

Relentless, Aggravating and Incredible.

Which song is top of your playlist right now?

I Follow Rivers - Lykke Li. It's an oldie but goody!

Top book recommendation?

I have three books waiting to be read: Boris Johnson - *Unleashed*
Rory Stewart - *Politics on the Edge*
James O'Brien - *How they broke Britain*

I will tell you if they're worth reading once I've read them.

Which TV show has you hooked right now?

The new series of *Unforgotten* - I love a good crime drama.

www.clothierlacey.co.uk

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“

...we love a challenge, problem solving is our thing...

L-R: Sarah McCrady with Nina Walton

Marketing and Media Matters

In the latest of this popular series of features
Northern Insight talks to...

Nina Walton and Sarah McCrady

Founders of Transforming Brands

Did you always envisage a career in the Marketing and Media Industry?

Nina: I did! Since the age of 17 I knew I wanted to pursue a career in marketing. I loved anything creative at school, from written content to art, so that career path always felt like a natural option.

Sarah: I've always loved being creative in some way or other and I was lucky that my school offered a GCSE in Graphic Design specifically. At the age of 12, my Mum also bought me the 'Usborne Book of Graphic Design' which was a lightbulb moment, I poured over every page!

What has been your career path so far?

Nina: After graduating from Newcastle University, I worked at Galaxy Radio, then at the Chronicle and Journal in various roles. After studying for my CIM marketing qualifications I joined PwC as their Marketing Manager, a role I enjoyed for nearly 10 years. I learnt so much there (special mention to Paul Woolston) and it drove my ambition to eventually start a business in 2014.

Sarah: After graduating, I got my first job at a design studio in Edinburgh and I absolutely LOVED IT! However, I always missed Newcastle and moved back a few years later. I worked at several local agencies, eventually becoming design director and then in 2015 I took the plunge into the crazy world of self-employment and never looked back.

What have been the biggest challenges you have faced so far?

Getting the balance right of working 'on' and 'in' the business, whilst keeping your eye on the overall vision. The industry continues to change at a rapid rate with each stage presenting different obstacles - but we love a challenge, problem solving is our thing!

Who do you respect most in your industry?

People with big ideas, tenacity and the conviction to go for it! There are so many amazing entrepreneurs and business owners in the North East who inspire us. We recently worked with Alice Rowen Hall, she's incredibly inspirational and we have massive respect for her and everything she's achieved.

Which fictional media character can you most relate to?

Nina: It would have to be Emily in Paris for me! She epitomises my teenage dream of working at a cool marketing agency in an amazing city.

Sarah: Maybe a Fairy Godmother given my role in transforming brands and sprinkling a bit of brand magic!

What is your greatest strength?

Nina: I'd say it was my ability to connect with people, my creativity and tenacity.

Sarah: I'm a pretty optimistic and enthusiastic person and I really love solving problems.

What is your biggest weakness?

Nina: I'm naturally quite cautious which can sometimes hold me back from seizing opportunities, but now I'm more open to trusting my gut and taking the plunge when things 'feel' right.

Sarah: Cooking! Unfortunately, my creativity does not extend into culinary skills - Thank goodness my husband is an amazing cook otherwise I'd probably be living on sandwiches!

What has been your proudest achievement?

Aside from our lovely children of course, it has to be running a business for over 10 years, that has given us a life we love and so much pride and satisfaction that we get to work with amazing clients every day...and help them succeed.

Everything we do, we do with passion and a smile, and I think that comes across to our clients. We are business partners but true friends too. We laugh, we cry, we share the ups and the downs, and we are really loving the journey.

What are your future career aspirations?

To keep doing this! And to help as many businesses as possible through powerful, empowering brand transformations! It's a really exciting time too as we've just launched a new product called the 'Brand Plan' which is proving to be really popular with clients, helping them see with clarity where their unique marketing and brand opportunities are.

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

Nina: Work hard, be nice to people and trust your gut!

Sarah: One mantra I tell others and live by myself is that you didn't come this far to only come this far! You deserve to give yourself the best possible chance of succeeding.

How do you see your industry evolving in the next 10 years?

The rise in AI is growing at an unprecedented rate which will invariably have a huge impact on the way marketing services are delivered. Brand marketing is also becoming increasingly popular as companies look to differentiate themselves and connect on a deeper level with consumers.

How do you like to unwind?

Nina: I love to spend time with friends and family, entertaining and cooking! Running is a real passion too.

Sarah: I'm quite a DIY nut and there's nothing I love more than a new power tool! I've laid floors, tanked and tiled bathrooms and recently built a huge multi-level deck in my back garden.

www.transformingbrands.co.uk



SCAN ME!



...A change is as good as a rest..

Spring is a time for change - Highlights PR's Keith Newman asked some of his RADAR members to tell us what the future has in store for their business.



Finally taking a well-earned rest! It's been an incredibly busy start to the year, topped off with our Travel Show last month, which was a fantastic event. We had a great turnout, and it's been non-stop ever since, handling follow-up enquiries and helping people plan their dream trips. It's safe to say I could do with a holiday myself after all that! Time to recharge before the next big thing.

John Dixon,
Destinations by John,
0800 177 7857

It was a pleasure to launch our new luxury design service Antiques of the Future at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport Creative Industries Growth Summit at The Glasshouse International Centre for Music. It was a great way to start 2025 and I got to meet a wide variety of decision-makers and even ask MP Lisa Nandy a direct question at her fireside chat with Sara Davies.

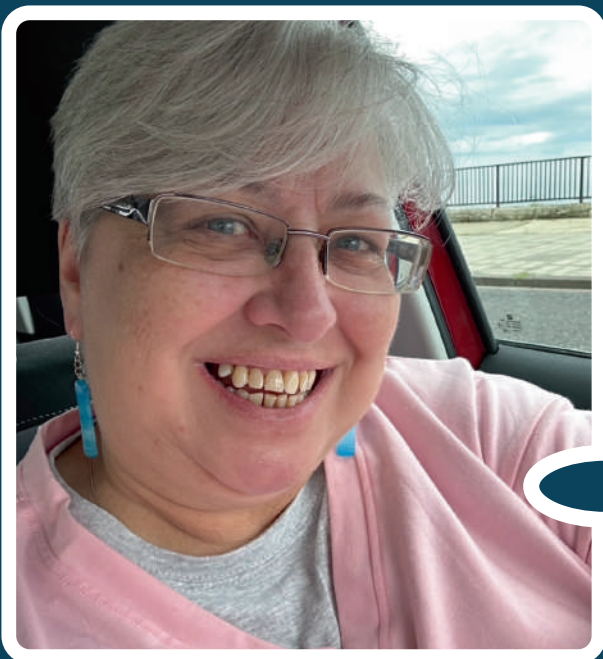
Antiques of the Future is all about using my 13 years of design expertise and my British supply chain to create beautiful products for our clients. Our mission is to also invest a percentage of the profits from this work to support the next generation of neurodiverse creatives. Being neurodiverse as is my son means I have a personal interest in helping this community to thrive.

Corrine Lewis Ward,
www.creativeheritagestudios.co.uk/design-services



With Spring just around the corner, I'm looking forward to a season filled with growth, both personally and professionally, as well as lighter evenings and warmer days and spending time with my two daughters and their partners and the furry members of our family too! Living just over the border of North Tyneside in beautiful Northumberland, getting out in nature is one of my goals especially as my professional diary is fast filling with exciting local, national, and potentially international work in my two specialist areas, digital literacy and information governance. All this, alongside welcoming new members to my monthly support service AskMrsWatson.com! Momentum is building, and I'm full of gratitude (and excitement!) for the opportunities coming —life is good!

Kate Watson, www.askmrswatson.com



“We are thrilled to once again be delivering holiday activities for young people as part of the Holiday Activities and Food Programme. Our team is dedicated to creating a safe, engaging, and fun environment where children can learn new skills, make friends, and enjoy nutritious meals. We can't wait to see the positive impact this will have on our community and the young people we support.”

James Palmer, www.leadinglink.co.uk



At Ridgetek, we have developed Customer Relationship Management systems (CRMs) for clients on several occasions and it got us thinking that we needed to have a tidy up and amalgamate all our communication systems into one place too.

We have now moved everything over to HubSpot and we are finding it much easier to store all the information about our Clients and workstreams in one space. This helps keep the whole team updated on everything that's going on at Ridgetek.

Rutva Patel, Ridgetek Web Solutions, www.ridgetek.co.uk

Last month our RADAR members appeared on BBC TV, BBC Radio, Local TV and many magazines and newspapers. To find out more about the benefits of becoming a RADAR member, contact keith@highlightspr.co.uk or call Keith on 07814 397951.

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A caring voice

“My passion as a Communications Manager in the NHS stems from a deep commitment to making a difference. It’s more than a job – it’s a purpose-driven journey”.

Laura Keen, External Communications and Marketing Manager

Veronica spoke to Laura about using the CIM’s master’s level qualification to advance her marketing knowledge and leadership skills. This was an eventful period in her life for many reasons, including the arrival of baby number two, graduation, and a promotion.

What was your journey into the NHS?

After university, I spent a few months working for an agency at the Home Office, where I eventually secured a permanent role in the ‘comms’ department. Working in the public sector was rewarding, so when a role at the Fire Service came up, it felt like the right next step. While I enjoyed working in that sector, my real passion was the NHS, so I was naturally drawn to an opportunity at North Tees and Hartlepool NHS.

As a senior comms and marketing officer, I had my first opportunity for post-grad education—the PG Certificate in Health Communications. The application process was competitive, but securing my place on the course reassured me that I could do it. I gained an in-depth understanding of the behaviours and knowledge required to effectively engage, involve, and communicate with the public about health matters. I was able to take this learning back into the workplace, and it really boosted my confidence, particularly around consultation. A few years into the job, an opportunity came up much closer to home at Northumbria Healthcare.



Veronica Swindale

What prompted you to pursue further professional development with nesma?

Although this was a level transfer, it was the right move for me and my family at the time. It’s an incredible organisation to work for, with genuine investment in staff professional development. Once in post, I researched the courses at nesma. After meeting with Veronica, I decided that the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme (Level 7) was the right choice of qualification for me.

Working through the CIM Marketing Leadership qualification has been invaluable. Although communications and marketing management in the health sector are incredibly exciting, we work in a complex, fast-evolving environment. Constantly juggling these questions, how do we use patient stories to drive behaviour change and empower the public to manage their own health? How do we quantify what we do and demonstrate the impact we can have on the organisation’s overall strategy? How do we overcome our biggest challenge of bridging our work into the overall strategy and demonstrating that we are the important thread that runs throughout?



Laura Keen

How do you feel about it now that you have graduated?

The CIM Marketing Leadership qualification combines marketing acumen with advanced leadership proficiency, providing the tools and insights needed to excel in strategic roles. As an External Communications and Marketing Manager, this qualification empowers me to craft impactful strategies, lead confidently, and drive meaningful change. It bridges the gap between marketing theory and practical leadership, enabling me to make informed decisions, inspire my team, and enhance communication efforts that resonate with diverse audiences. This qualification is not just about career growth—it's about making a lasting impact in my role and within the organisation.

How relevant was each module to you?

The first module, Contemporary Challenges, was really useful as it encourages you to bring 'real' work-based scenarios to the table and use the framework to produce a workable strategy. The second module, Leading Change, was a great opportunity to reflect not only on the organisation but also on my role as a leader and how I might influence and effect change. For the final module, I chose to focus on sustainable transformation in marketing, and this was a brilliant opportunity to reflect on myself and my personal development plan.

How did nesma support you through your learning journey?

Veronica and the team were supportive and available to answer any questions whenever needed. I was given the autonomy to set the learning pace, which is valuable when you have such a demanding day-to-day role. I ended up going into labour just before the final submission date! The team secured an extension on my submission deadline, which was a huge relief and another nod towards just how the course can flex around your personal needs. In the end, I secured a distinction, which I was really delighted with.

What was your biggest takeaway from this experience?

It's not just about your learning journey; you must bring the learning back into your workplace to ensure its valuable. I used the knowledge gained to improve my own area of work, using the theory to write an effective marketing strategy for one of our commercial arms. After successfully completing the course's second module, I was also delighted to secure a promotion at work.

"Continued professional development keeps your skills relevant and interested in your role. It also gives you the confidence and kudos to lead from the front and challenge where necessary."

What would you say to someone reading this considering the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme?

Set yourself a real challenge for 2025 and go for it. It will re-ignite your passion for the day-to-day and give you some food for thought about your future.

Whether you aim to refine your strategic thinking, stay ahead of industry trends, or become a more effective leader, this programme provides the tools, insights, and network to help you succeed.

Contact Jen at 07734 222 254 or email hello@nesma.co.uk

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UNIQUE magazines



A Love for Print

Collaborating with Northumbria University's Fashion Communications Students

On February 14th, you can see love everywhere, in all its forms. Whether it's giving flowers to those who raised you or sharing chocolates with someone who's always been by your side, Valentine's Day is all about expressing yourself and showing gratitude for what you love.

This Valentine's Day, we celebrated what's at the heart of Unique Magazines: print and people. We set up a pop-up shop at Northumbria University, teaming up with Fashion Communications students. They were in the thick of their final year projects, creating works that reflect their artistic vision and everything they've learned. While their projects could take any form, many were drawn to designing their own print materials.

Chatting with students at our pop-up store, they shared their uncertainties about the directions of their projects. However, as they flipped through our magazines and snapped photos of the eye-catching double-page spreads, they gathered plenty of inspiration for their own print projects.



The classroom we set up in was decorated with posters showcasing previous students' magazine projects. They had transformed their personal experiences and emotions into relatable stories for their final projects. Among these, a few stood out for their sheer creativity. One remarkable example, noted by both Chris and I, was a magazine entirely devoted to depicting fears as animals. This project used the metaphor of fear creatively, suggesting overcoming it by literally embodying the fear with a tattoo. We found this concept strikingly unique, reflecting the boldness that characterizes many of our independent titles.

We also saw stacks of magazine drafts, where students had added their own unique spins to classics like Vogue. They seemed inspired by the fashion communications department's extensive collection, which includes issues dating back to the 1980s.

As more students and lecturers stopped by, we had enriching conversations about the diverse world of print. We had the wonderful opportunity to work closely with Gayle Cantrell, an Assistant Professor specializing in fashion, product, and heritage at the School of Arts, as well as Chris Hodge, an Assistant Professor in Fashion Communications, to organise this pop up.

As magazine specialists, we were there to provide these creative and talented students with insights and resources to help them create something truly memorable. Even a single magazine displayed on our table could ignite a big idea, potentially leading to something extraordinary. We recognize our potential to inspire these ambitious students, and we're committed to making our magazines accessible to everyone.

We offered inspiration, shared ideas, and provided motivation, helping students see the vast possibilities in designing their own publications.

We believe that the fashion communications course is a starting point for many students growing love for magazines. With such engaging activities focused on print, it's hard not to fall in love with these fascinating keepsakes created by amazing talents.

Recently, we welcomed a new member to the Unique Magazines team Jessica Todd—a former Fashion Communications student from 2019 to 2022. Her extensive experience in fashion and magazines makes her an exciting addition to our team.

Looking ahead, we're eager to host more pop-up events to continue building our community and spreading our love for magazines, not just on Valentine's Day but every day of the year.

www.uniquemagazines.co.uk



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 Our Blog: www.themagazineclub.co.uk





Samuel Marriott-Dowling

Hard times create Marketing Powerhouses

The UK economy is currently on the decline.

What I have been asked a lot in recent weeks is: How essential is it to maintain a Marketing budget during financially challenging times? I always answer the same: Very.

When economic conditions become challenging, many businesses instinctively look for areas to cut costs - and marketing budgets are often the first to face reductions. Whilst it may seem like a good idea at the time to scale back on marketing

expenditures, doing so can have long-term consequences on both business operations, market share, and brand awareness.

The first impact businesses face when reducing their marketing spend is a reduction in their visibility and brand awareness amongst their target audience. Out of sight often means out of mind, especially when competitors continue to market aggressively. During the 2008 recession, companies like Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola increased their marketing spend while others cut back. As a result, they emerged stronger, capturing greater market share once the economy improved.

Consistent marketing efforts, campaigns, press engagement, and community management keeps your brand at the forefront of consumers' mind, ensuring that when spending rebounds, your business or organisation remains a top choice.

When competitors begin to slash their own marketing budgets, whilst you maintain yours (and potentially even increase it!), you create the opportunity to capture more market share. With less noise in the market, your messages can reach audiences more effectively, without disruption. A study by McGraw-Hill found that companies who maintained or increased their marketing during the 1981-82 recession saw 256% higher sales growth than those that cut back. So, sometimes in life and business, you have to spend money to make money!

Brand visibility and market share are not the only important factors to consider when maintaining your marketing costs -

the most important factor at the heart of any marketing strategy, is of course, your customers. During hard times consumers seek reliability and reassurance. Businesses that continue to engage with their audience and provide value-driven messaging build stronger relationships. Consistent communication helps reinforce trust and shows customers that your brand is reliable, even in uncertain conditions.

**Ensure to focus on empathetic and customer-focused messaging that resonates with current consumer concerns. Demonstrating how your product or service can genuinely help during tough times fosters loyalty - who doesn't want to buy from a brand or business that understands what people are feeling and aligns their messaging likewise?*

While it may be tempting to cut marketing budgets during financially difficult times, doing so can be detrimental to long-term success. Maintaining or increasing marketing efforts helps preserve brand awareness, capture market share, build customer trust, and position your business for future growth. Businesses that stay proactive and innovative in their marketing strategies during downturns are more likely to emerge stronger and more competitive when economic conditions improve.

In challenging times, resilience and strategic investment in marketing can be the differentiators that set your business apart and drive lasting success.

marriottcommunications.com

Northumbrian Mermaids- North East leading film makers go underwater to make beautiful film

Kaleidoscope, the North East's leading creative film & video agency recently made a emotional film about a group of midwives who met at work and through their shared love of the ocean decided to take up sea swimming together.

Lock down paid its toll on many- not least the midwives who worked through it but weren't able to get together and do activities to help them de-stress. After covid the group of women and men decided to try out sea swimming. They found that the shared experience made them more confident and calm. Come wind, rain or shine, they ventured to the Northumberland coast and unwound in the waves.

One of the midwife team commented; 'Initially you think... what am I doing- but then the adrenaline kicks in and you get addicted to the rush. Its been great for my mental health!'

The film crew at Kaleidoscope are not only highly experienced, they also have a lot of specialist kit- in this case a drone and underwater camera which allow them to follow the group into the water and take over head shots.

Craig, Founder of Kaleidoscope said: 'It was a real honour to film these guys - not only are



they doing an incredible job bringing new life into this world but they have also found a way to exercise together whilst improving their mental and physical health. The North Sea is freezing!!... but it was worth getting cold and wet to capture these guys and make a beautiful piece that highlights the bond they've formed'

Kaleidoscope are proudly based in Newcastle upon Tyne, they're one of the only companies in the North East providing such a wide range of video production services

and professional services in videography, documentary films, animation and photography.

The film was commissioned by the NHS and is called: *Northumbrian Mermaids:* www.youtube.com/watch?v=YQcqsNjKA5o

If you have a story to tell- let Kaleidoscope help you with it. Contact Craig on: craig@kaleidoscopecfa.com www.kaleidoscopecfa.com

Marriott Communications is an award-winning public relations and marketing agency based in Sunderland - influencing globally.

With a commitment to innovation, a lust for creativity, and a dedication to impactful storytelling on a global scale; we push the craft of public relations into art as we shape the future of businesses and organisations alike.





Louise Stephenson

WTTB leads the way in digital print...

A company which works with some of the biggest brands in the UK – as well as being a lifeline for smaller businesses – is going from strength to strength and just happens to be based in the North East.

When it comes to print solutions, it's not for nothing that WTTB has gained a reputation which is hard to beat.

Award-winning customer service, a dedicated Book Super Centre which prints everything from novels to notebooks, fast turnaround, top quality products – just some of the reasons why this digital print company has clients throughout the UK.

And it all operates from its headquarters at Sunderland BIC.

For an astonishing 15 years the company has been at the top of its game, providing its services direct to customers as well as to resellers who make their living on platforms like Etsy.

Add into the mix creating everything from banners to merchandise and helps to explain just why – in a highly competitive market – WTTB manages to stay ahead of the competition.

According to Managing Director, Louise Stephenson, the success of WTTB is down to a number of factors.

“We may be an online platform but talking to someone is literally just a phone call away,” she said.

“So if anyone does have an issue or a question, they can get straight through to one of our team who can help.”

It is that level of customer service which is one of the reasons why the company has been shortlisted in this year's prestigious Printweek awards for Customer Service Team of the Year.

But that's not the whole story. WTTB is always looking at ways to enhance its offering to its customers, which is why it has also created a door drop marketing service.

Printing leaflets and flyers are all well and good, but to really maximise their potential it's about ensuring they get to the right audience, at the right time.

WTTB uses a range of demographic management tools to help identify a target audience and when they will be most receptive to receiving information – and hopefully will then act on it.

For example a furniture shop might want to target people moving into new homes. WTTB has access to the insights which will show when new movers are most likely to be in the market for a new sofa or bed and so that information can hit their letterboxes at exactly the right time.

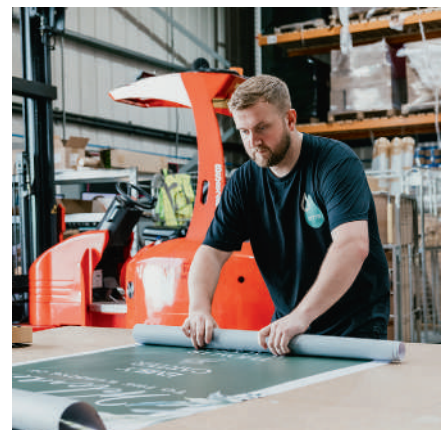
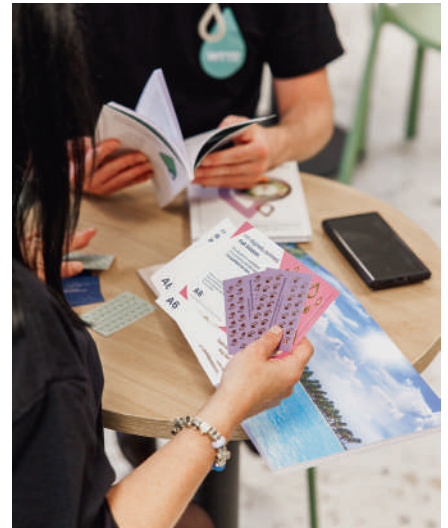
“With more people than ever working from home, information coming through a letterbox is much more likely to be read,” said Louise.

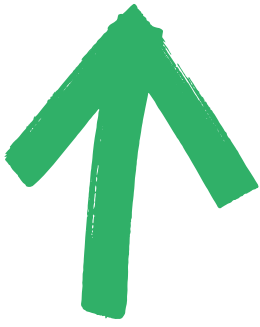
“We can help hit a particular demographic, a particular age group and/or a specific geographical location to ensure that marketing materials are really effective.”

With around 150 products available – a number that is constantly increasing – plus an incentive programme and a new all singing and all dancing website on the way, WTTB continues to dominate the market.

“We are very excited about what the future holds for us,” said Louise.

For further information visit www.wttb.co.uk





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Nicola Halse

The power of storytelling and how to captivate your audience

In today's saturated marketplace, simply having a great product or service isn't enough. As consumers are bombarded with thousands of marketing messages daily, it's difficult for brands to stand out. The secret to breaking through the noise is storytelling.

Storytelling is a fundamental aspect of human communication. Crafting compelling narratives can create emotional connections with your audience, it fosters brand loyalty and ultimately, drives conversions. In marketing, storytelling transforms a brand from a faceless entity into something relatable and engaging.

Facts and features alone don't sell your product or service, however, emotions do. A well-told story can evoke feelings of joy, nostalgia, empathy or even excitement, making it easier for audiences to connect with your brand on a personal level. Think of the Nike 'Just Do It', Coca-Cola 'The Happiness Factor' or Apple's 'Innovation Through Emotion' campaigns as great examples of storytelling within marketing.

So, how do you start to tell your story?

A great story starts with knowing who you're telling it to therefore it's crucial you understand your audience. Research their pain points, desires and values, think of the challenges they face and what motivates them, you can then align your

brand story with their experiences, creating a connection that feels personal and authentic.

Your story should answer questions such as why your company exists, how are you making a difference in your customers' lives and should include key elements such as a loyal customer or employee, show the struggles faced and explain how your brand provides a solution or brings about positive change.

Very similar to case studies or customer experiences, the most compelling stories follow a structure including introducing the character and the challenges they face, the struggles they face and how they discover your brand's solution and finally, the positive outcome achieved with your product or service.

Storytelling can be used in various different formats, video can have significant impact, social media can be used for behind-the-scenes content or testimonials, personal stories within email campaigns can boost engagement and conversions while the

About Us page on your website can be a great place to tell your brand's story.

While your brand plays a crucial role in the story, it's your customer who should be the hero. Show how they overcome obstacles with the help of your product or service. When potential customers see themselves in the story, they're more likely to engage and convert.

Avoid overly polished or exaggerated stories, audiences crave authenticity. Share real struggles, genuine emotions and relatable experiences to make your story feel believable and inspiring.

Using powerful visuals and descriptive language to make your story more engaging is key, whether that's imagery, music or colours, these can enhance the emotional appeal of your narrative, making it more impactful.

Ultimately, storytelling is one of the most powerful tools in marketing. It helps build emotional connections, strengthens brand loyalty and makes your brand memorable. By understanding your audience, crafting compelling narratives and using the right formats, you can captivate your audience and inspire them to take action.

Incorporate storytelling into your marketing strategy and watch as your brand transforms from just another company into a beloved, trusted name, remember, people don't just buy products, they buy stories, experiences and emotions.

For support with telling your marketing story, contact Nicola at Riverside Marketing Solutions at www.riversidemarketingsolutions.co.uk

Bonded's Latest Recruits: Ellie & Caitlin

Bonded is the digital and media agency that prioritises connection. Each month we connect with a different member of the team to get their take on all things digital media.

CONNECTING WITH

Join us in welcoming our latest recruits, **Ellie Cresswell** as **Director of Growth**, and **Caitlin Purvis** as **Senior Digital PR Manager**, bringing a wealth of expertise in business growth and digital PR to the Bonded team.



Ellie Cresswell
Growth Director

With a keen eye for impactful storytelling and data-led PR campaigns, Caitlin is set to enhance Bonded's digital PR offering.

"Digital PR is all about making meaningful connections," Caitlin explains. "I'm excited to bring my expertise to Bonded and drive innovative campaigns that not only boost visibility but also create lasting brand impact."



Caitlin Purvis
Senior Digital
PR Manager

Driving Growth: Ellie Cresswell

Ellie joins Bonded as **Director of Growth**, bringing over a decade of experience in client consulting, revenue generation, and data-driven decision-making.

Her role is pivotal in leading Bonded's new business strategy, ensuring we continue to deliver cutting-edge solutions that help brands thrive in an ever-changing media landscape.

"I'm thrilled to join Bonded and contribute to its exciting growth journey," Ellie shares. "For me, growth isn't just about numbers—it's about innovation, collaboration, and building strong client relationships that stand the test of time."

With an in-depth understanding of industry trends and a strategic approach to business development, Ellie's leadership will help propel Bonded towards new milestones. Expect to see her driving forward key initiatives, working closely with the senior team, and playing a vital role in shaping the agency's future success.

Elevating Digital PR: Caitlin Purvis

Caitlin Purvis joins Bonded as **Senior Digital PR Manager**, bringing a wealth of experience in SEO, content marketing, and outreach from her previous roles at large UK agencies.

Caitlin's approach focuses on blending creativity with analytics, ensuring that Bonded's campaigns deliver measurable results while keeping audiences engaged. Whether it's securing top-tier media coverage or crafting compelling narratives, she is dedicated to elevating our clients' presence in a competitive digital landscape.

"We're excited to welcome Ellie and Caitlin to the team. Their expertise will be invaluable as we continue to innovate and push boundaries in digital and media."

Steve Underwood,
Managing Director

For more information visit:
www.bondedagency.com





“

...the outside world is so much more challenging for young children...

In conversation with...



Mowden Hall School

Phil Sturt

Head, Mowden Hall School

Tell us a bit about your background and career so far.

I was brought up in Lancashire, where I attended Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School before moving to Nottingham University to study BSc Genetics. Shortly after university, I joined the British Army, where I was commissioned into The Royal Artillery, serving with 39th Regiment RA in Afghanistan, before moving to 5th Regiment RA.

I joined the teaching profession in 2011, starting my career at Durham School, where I went on to run the Combined Cadet Force, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, was a Senior Housemaster and taught GCSE and A Level Biology.

In 2022 I made the move into the Prep sector, joining Mowden Hall School as the Assistant Head (Pastoral Care), before being appointed as Head in January 2025.

What do you hope to bring to your new Headship at Mowden Hall?

I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to lead a school such as Mowden Hall. The school is in a strong position both in terms of pupil numbers, but also in relation to its ethos.

At Mowden we understand the significant importance of character and values for children - this is what we are really known for - and so of equal importance to a strong academic education is the need to ensure that children take opportunities to test themselves. This can be on stage or in the concert band, to push their own boundaries on the sports field or in the swimming pool but also to have great fun each and every day in our incredible 50 acres of beautiful countryside! We want happy children, because happy children have the confidence to test themselves in the classroom and not be scared to fail.

So, what do I hope to bring to this role? To be honest, my overriding hope is that this strong message of our values and "style" of education gets to as many people as possible, as the offer we give at Mowden is incredible. The more children that can experience it the better!

Tell us about your team at Mowden Hall.

I tell prospective parents that I see Mowden Hall as an extension of their family. I want children to see coming to school as an opportunity not only to learn and have fun, but to feel safe testing themselves and pushing to reach their goals. Whilst the incredible facilities help in so many ways (seriously, they are breath-taking), it is our people that make the place so special and I am not just talking about the teachers. I would put money on nearly every member of staff here, be that Grounds, Domestic, Boarding or Business staff (not to mention Academic) knowing every child in our community. They make it their business to build relations with them, so that they can recognise when a child is feeling sad or needs a bit of help but also for those opportunities to praise success as well. Prep School staff have a unique opportunity to make a positive impact on a young person's life and I am incredibly proud of how well we do it here.

What are your priorities for your first year?

Building trust is central to the success of a Headmaster. Parents bestow on me the responsibility to ensure that their child is both educated and develops as a young person in a safe environment.

I know that what we have here is special and that any child that joins us will benefit immensely from their time at Mowden - I am not concerned about this - what I want to ensure is that both the children and parents trust me to lead this place in a responsible, but visionary manner to ensure that we really do make the most of their time here during these special years of their life.

What is your proudest achievement in education, so far?

Supporting Mowden Hall to achieve the Wellbeing Award for Schools last year, meaning that the school is recognised for everything that it does to support everyone in our community.

continued...



How has the world of education changed in the last decade?

There has been a significant shift towards recognising the importance of mental health and wellbeing throughout a child's education since I started in the teaching world. I think that this is caused by two separate factors.

Firstly, we are much better at recognising and identifying those children who require extra support. They do not necessarily need a diagnosis as such, but a little extra support to learn how to better-understand their emotions and how to communicate their concerns.

Secondly, the outside world is so much more challenging for young children. I remember as a child always being told by older generations that "it was a lot harder in my day". I genuinely believe that this current generation of children will find it tougher than I did, and so it is imperative that as a Headmaster I ensure that they are prepared for that future.

For me, pastoral care and a focus on mental health and wellbeing should be seen as the foundations on which we build a child's education. Get the foundations solid, through strong support and development of character, and the potential for success is huge. If we get it wrong, and focus too heavily on academic success at an early age at the expense of a holistic education, that "academic building" will simply collapse under the pressure of public examinations and life in general at a later stage.

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

PPPPP....Prior Preparation Prevents Poor Performance!

At times, we need to be able to "wing it", but those risks

are mitigated by preparing well when we can and building reserves of go-to resources.

An ability to be flexible and respond quickly to changing circumstances is always a great strength in this line of work too!

What has been your biggest challenge in your career?

When I joined Mowden Hall, I wanted to make sure that our youngest children feel as much a part of our community as everyone else, so I offered to teach Year 2 Science once per week. I would bring the children to the Science Laboratory (yes, with high tables and stools to sit on) and teach them their syllabus, but in a different environment. I have been to war, I have taught Oxbridge candidates A Level Biology and I have raised two children of my own (alongside my wife!) but I can confidently say that Year 2 Science on a Wednesday morning has been the biggest challenge of my career, but I wouldn't change it for the world!

Do you have any heroes or mentors?

Not really, and I get asked this a lot. What I do have however are traits in people that I aspire to have myself.

Honesty, hard-working, empathy and a sense of perspective are traits that I see in so many people young and old that I continually work to maintain myself and impart on the children in my care.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I run a lot (not necessarily very quickly, but frequently) and I also engage in battle with the local slug and snail population surrounding my vegetable patch. I am contractually obliged to say that I unwind by spending time with my family (!), and I thoroughly enjoy that time. As much of it as possible is spent being active and outdoors.

www.mowdenhallpst.org





Mowden Hall
School



One of the Leading Prep Schools in the North of England

Mowden Hall School is a happy, caring and creative school wherein each child is known and valued.

We believe that schooldays should be magical for every child.

Come and visit us to find out more and discover the *Magic of Mowden* for yourself.



To book your personal visit to Mowden Hall School, please contact:

✉ admissions@mowdenhallpst.org

☎ 01661 842147

Celebrating Diversity

By Geoffrey Stanford, Headmaster, Royal Grammar School, Newcastle.

The Royal Grammar School, Newcastle, recognised for Outstanding Commitment to Inclusion

At a time when Equality, Diversity and Inclusion is under pressure, it was a real pleasure to see the publication of the report from our recent inspection specifically highlighting the RGS's "commitment to promote a highly developed awareness of and sensitivity towards diversity in the pupils" as a significant strength of the RGS.

Under the new ISI framework, the accolade of "significant strength" is a rare distinction that is awarded if it demonstrates a clear, measurable, and profoundly positive impact on pupils if the aspect of the educational provision:

1. shows a deep understanding of and aspiration for pupils' development of knowledge, skills, and understanding.
2. is attributable to the knowledge, skills and decision making of leaders, managers and/or staff.
3. has very clear and highly beneficial impact for pupils involved.

The report states that "pupils speak with confidence about cultural and economic diversity, neurodiversity and protected characteristics. Their participation in voluntary and partnership opportunities within the community, and their behaviour, reflect this positive approach to inclusion." This was illustrated by the success of a student-led week-long cultural festival organised by RGS Diversity, which aimed to help people become more confident and prouder of their backgrounds and ethnicity. The celebration of world cultures here at RGS featured musical and dance performances, national dishes that were served at lunchtime, and a range of activities



Geoffrey Stanford

such as Japanese calligraphy lessons. The week culminated in a joyful day of cultural dress, where students proudly wore outfits ranging from saris to kilts.

In recent years, following an audit exercise, the school has embarked on a transformative journey to enhance our approach to EDI. This initiative led to the implementation of an action plan, resulting in significant developments across various facets of our institution. We have systematically integrated EDI themes into our schemes of work and proactively promoted diversity in our recruitment materials. Our Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision has been restructured and centrally relocated within the school, ensuring that students with SEND receive support to perform on par with their peers. Additionally, we have actively invested in expanding our fundraising efforts for bursaries and partnership initiatives.

Alongside these advances, we recognise the need to diversify our teaching staff further

to provide representative role models for our students. While we diligently work towards this goal, we are committed to fostering an environment where all staff members serve as allies. This commitment is particularly vital given that our student body is notably diverse, encompassing individuals of all faiths and none. In a world where conflicts are increasingly prevalent, it is essential for our students to appreciate the value of diversity. We encourage them to consider the perspectives of others and subscribe to the ethos at the RGS of developing a sense of belonging and a belief in each other. If, for whatever reason, someone does feel marginalised, our robust pastoral systems are designed to identify concerns and provide necessary support through peer mentors and trusted adults. Above all, we strive to ensure that every student, regardless of their background, enjoys a positive educational experience at RGS.

www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk





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SCHOOL
AGES 3-18

Letting the lives of
our students speak

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SCHOOLS
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• AWARDS •



From The Headteachers Study...



Catherine Lennox

Catherine Lennox

New Headteacher of St Wilfrid's RC College, South Shields.

Catherine Lennox joined St Wilfrid's RC College, South Shields, in September 2024 as the new Headteacher. St Wilfrid's RC College is part of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust (BCCET), which has 25 primary schools and five secondary schools across South Tyneside, East Durham and Sunderland.

What has been your career path so far?

I am originally from Richmond, North Yorkshire. I studied history at Nottingham University and completed my postgraduate degree in Newcastle. I worked at St Thomas More Catholic School in Blaydon from being an NQT to deputy headteacher. It is a lovely school; I worked in a range of roles there from history teacher to curriculum lead in history and then moved into senior leadership.

Why did you join St Wilfrid's?

It's a fabulous school and I was attracted to its ethos around faith and learning. I work in Catholic education because of its focus on young people's development as well as their academic education.

What is your initial view of Bishop Chadwick Catholic Education Trust?

The Multi-Academy Trusts all have very distinct identities and BCCET's vision is very clear of 'Better Schools, Better Communities, Better Futures in Christ'. The Trust really stands by those values and that is what has impressed me the most since joining BCCET.

How have you been welcomed by your new team?

Everyone at school has been so supportive and patient. Everyone is on board with what we are trying to achieve at St Wilfrid's and they are so dedicated and committed. The support has been fantastic, not only the practical help from my business manager and deputy headteacher but the fact I can collaborate with the Trust's chief standards officers too.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

Interacting with the pupils. When I am having a busy day, I enjoy taking some time out to talk to the pupils. We have amazing young people in school. I learn so much from them too. Watching them grow, being part of their educational journey and seeing the impact of that on them is wonderful. Leadership can take you away from the classroom, but spending time with pupils is my favourite part of the day.

What improvements have you implemented so far and plan to bring in?

We have established our new behaviour curriculum called St Wilfrid's Way, which lays down all our expectations for behaviour across the school. St Wilfrid's Standards sets out our expectations of pupils in

the classroom. We held a great event at the end of Autumn term praising the pupils for their achievements. We have also introduced visualisers in every classroom and launched new opportunities for lunchtime activities such as academic enrichment, sports and art.

What has been your proudest achievement in your career?

I love watching other leaders grow and develop and watching them thrive because of the culture that we have built, the support they receive and things that we have put in place. When you see other leaders grow in confidence and the impact of their work and that ripple effect – that is when I feel the proudest.

What are the key challenges facing the education sector?

The main challenges affecting the education sector are ensuring an education system that is fit for our pupils now, and in the future, and ensuring an engaging and relevant curriculum for all pupils – not just about academic pathways, but a curriculum that is appropriate for all learners. Our challenges in the North-east are different to those in other parts of the country, so we need a regional response to funding to allow schools to meet the changing needs and challenges of our cohorts. We are also facing the challenges of recruitment and retention as teaching is no longer as attractive an option for many graduates.

What has been the best piece of leadership advice you have received?

Leadership is about action not position. It's not about a job title; it's about how you act, how you think, and how you behave.

What is your leadership style?

For me, at the heart of leadership is the premise of servant leadership. It's not about status or position; we are here to serve the school, the pupils and the community. In terms of my style, I'm quite a pace-setting leader. I set the standard and the expectations but combine that with building a consensus to build the team. Leadership is not about one person: it's about valuing the input of the wider team. You would be foolish to think you know everything.

How do you unwind?

I am a married mum of two daughters aged 12 and 15 so my free time is spent with my family. Like many working parents, I go home and make the tea and help with homework. I like going out with my dog, a Cavalier King Charles spaniel called Rupert and it's an unusual one, but I love doing DIY! I really like painting; it's a great distraction. We live in a Victorian house on the coast and as a history teacher, I love to spend time painfully restoring it.

There are places available at St Wilfrid's.

To find out more about the school, visit www.st-wilfrids.org

Find out more about BCCET at www.bccet.org.uk





Anne-Marie Chiswell

Picture: BAC

Bishop Auckland College welcomes new Assistant Principal who is 'pivotal' to future achievements

Bishop Auckland College's new Assistant Principal for Business and Community is focused on contributing to the growth and development of the region after starting her new role.

The College, rated as good with outstanding features by Ofsted this month, has officially announced Anne-Marie Chiswell's appointment to the leadership team position.

The 41-year-old brings a wealth of experience and a huge passion for education, having worked in the Further Education (FE) sector for many years.

Originally from Hereford, Anne-Marie moved to the North East for university and discovered her love of teaching while working with secondary school students.

She said: "I found teaching through working with Year 10 secondary students running radio production tasters while at university.

"That opened up my passion for working with young people to unleash their creativity and provide opportunities to inspire them and open their eyes to the creative industries and their potential careers."

Anne-Marie went on to complete her PGCE, taught media production and then progressed into various management roles in FE.

She is excited to join Bishop Auckland College and help boost the economy across the area through building partnerships and

helping more people into work.

A prime example of this is the College reopening the McIntyre Centre, an iconic Grade II listed building on Newgate Street, as a hub for community engagement, skills development and job creation in the heart of the town.

"This is a really exciting role I'm taking on offering an incredible opportunity to build stronger connections between the college, local businesses and the wider community," said Anne-Marie.

"I'm excited to take on the role at such a pivotal time for the North East. This region is brimming with exciting opportunities, thriving industries to emerging sectors driving innovation and growth.

"Equipping learners with the skills needed to access these opportunities is essential. I look forward to working closely with local businesses and community partners to address skills gaps, provide training that meets employer needs and help our learners build an exciting career in this region."

Anne-Marie is also excited to be working with the experienced team at Bishop Auckland College and forging strong relationships with local businesses to

provide learners with the skills they need to succeed.

She said: "I look forward to collaborating with local businesses and community partners to bridge skills gaps, deliver training tailored to employer needs and empower our learners to achieve their potential."

Bishop Auckland College believes Anne-Marie's leadership and expertise will be invaluable in strengthening its links with the business community and providing students with the best possible opportunities for success.

Shaun Hope, the Principal and CEO of Bishop Auckland College Group, said: "After a very competitive recruitment process we were thrilled to appoint Anne-Marie.

"She brings a wealth of experience of leading work with businesses and community organisations and support them with education and training.

"Already Anne-Marie has started to implement that experience with our partners here in South West Durham.

"It is a really exciting time here at Bishop Auckland College, we are on the back of an Ofsted inspection that highlights the journey the College is on to become outstanding.

"We recently opened the McIntyre Centre, our state of the art training facility in the heart of Bishop Auckland.

"We have continued to partner with local community organisations as we look to expand the work we do for the local people in our area.

"Anne-Marie will be pivotal in leading this work and supporting the College's future achievements."

For further information about Bishop Auckland College check out bacoll.ac.uk

Durham Sixth Form Centre - Spring Open Event

Durham Sixth Form Centre is delighted to announce its Open Event is taking place on Thursday 10th April 2025, from 4.30pm to 7.30pm.

Prospective students, parents and carers are invited to explore the wide range of opportunities available, meet with our specialist staff, hear about our students' outstanding achievements and experience the vibrant community that makes Durham Sixth Form Centre an excellent place to study.

During the Open Event, you will have the chance to:

- **Talk** to our specialist teachers to learn more about the diverse range of over 30 A-Level and almost 20 vocational courses tailored to suit different aspirations and career paths.
- **Meet** current students to hear first-hand about their personal experiences, including their academic journeys and enrichment opportunities such as The Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award, national/international trips, local clubs and societies.
- **Tour** the facilities, including the science labs, art studios & gallery, tv studio, theatre and classrooms.
- **Discuss** future pathways, from university preparation to apprenticeships and employment support, with our expert Progression Team.

"We look forward to welcoming students and their parents/carers to our second opening evening. Our staff are on hand to answer any question you might have about post 16 education. It's a great opportunity to see and hear what we stand for; high quality teaching and learning alongside excellent care and guidance which brings out the best in all our students." Jo Lain, Principal.

Whether you are looking to continue your education in a challenging and inspiring environment or seeking guidance on your next steps, this Open Event will provide the information you need to make an informed decision about your future.

For more information visit www.durhamsixthformcentre.org.uk



DURHAM
SIXTH FORM CENTRE

OPEN EVENT

Thursday 10th April

4:30pm - 7:30pm



durhamsixthformcentre.org.uk



Celebrating female leaders and educators for International Women's Day 2025 with The Education Network



Vikki Lowrey



Courtney Munro

International Women's Day is a time to celebrate the achievements of women across all industries, including education. From the classroom and beyond, women have long played a vital role in shaping the sector, yet leadership positions remain largely male-dominated.

The Education Network, a specialist education recruitment company, is committed to bridging this gap by working alongside inspiring educators who advocate for inclusivity and demonstrate the importance of strong female role models.

Breaking barriers in education recruitment

Vikki Lowrey, director at The Education Network, has built a successful 17-year career in recruitment while balancing motherhood. Throughout her career, Vikki has shown that women can excel in leadership roles while managing both parental and professional responsibilities. As a single mother in a demanding industry, Vikki offers valuable insight into the changes needed in education recruitment. She is passionate about increasing female leadership in the sector. "Although the education workforce is predominantly female, leadership roles are still largely held by men. It's time to change that; we need more women in leadership roles."

Inspiring the next generation

Strong female role models in education, both in teaching and recruitment, are crucial for inspiring young women. Courtney Munro, compliance administrator at The Education

Network, emphasises this point: "Having strong female teachers motivates young women to push themselves, work hard and aspire to success."

Courtney, who transitioned from a teaching background to The Education Network, highlights the importance of strong leaders: "When I first joined The Education Network, I was supported and trained by a highly skilled female colleague. Having strong mentors can make a huge difference to a person's confidence and sense of belonging."

As an integral member of the compliance team, Courtney now trains new recruits and ensures that candidates have a smooth journey through the recruitment process. "It's incredibly rewarding to get a candidate registered, cleared for work and placed in a role within a week. That kind of impact makes for a positive experience for both the candidate and the client."

The future of women in education recruitment

While women are well-represented in education recruitment, Vikki believes there's still progress to be made. "In order to drive meaningful change, we must rethink hiring strategies to eliminate unconscious bias and champion more women in leadership roles."

Courtney is excited about her future with The Education Network, "The role

of a compliance administrator is always changing, and I look forward to continuously learning and developing. The Education Network is a fantastic place to expand my skills."

The Education Network is committed to creating an inclusive and empowering work environment for women, as highlighted by CEO Kevin Gill: "At The Education Network, we are incredibly proud of the talented and hardworking women who make our company what it is."

"Their dedication, passion and leadership inspire us every day and we are truly grateful for their impact - not just within our business, but across the education sector. We are committed to supporting their professional and personal growth by creating opportunities for development and encouraging more women to build successful careers in recruitment."

"This International Women's Day is an opportunity to recognise their achievements and reaffirm our commitment to championing women in our sector."

Looking ahead

Significant progress has been made in supporting women in education recruitment, but there is still more to accomplish. Increasing female representation in leadership roles, offering greater flexibility and focusing on mentorship are key to ensuring continued success for women in the sector.

With The Education Network, the future is bright for women in education. With continued advocacy, the sector will continue to evolve, offering even greater opportunities for women in the years to come.

www.theeducationnetwork.co.uk



Welcome to Jesmond

With its eclectic mix of great bars, fantastic restaurants, top businesses, leisure facilities and quality retailers Jesmond truly is one of the jewels in Newcastle's crown.

In this special feature we showcase some of what this vibrant area has to offer...

To Stay... *staying*

Jesmond Dene House

Offering space and peace and room to breathe this stunning boutique hotel has 40 bedrooms, an upmarket restaurant (Fern), great wedding facilities and spacious meetings and events facilities.

www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk



Jesmond Dene House

Holiday Inn Jesmond

A modern and welcoming retreat with 119 contemporary bedrooms which is ideal for both business and leisure travellers. Fratellos is an authentic Italian restaurant serving delicious dishes while Zio Bar is a great place to unwind. Also the perfect venue for meetings, events and celebrations.

www.hinewcastle.co.uk



Holiday Inn Jesmond

The Caledonian Hotel

Combining Georgian architecture with a contemporary edge the Caledonian has 89 spacious ensuite bedrooms, a fully equipped conference and banqueting centre and a range of dining options.

www.peelhotels.co.uk

The New Northumbria Hotel

At the new Northumbria Hotel you will find 55 welcoming ensuite rooms, each varying in their own individual style, from spacious standard rooms to modern superior rooms and indulgent suites. Also part of the Malhotra Group the leisure and care group which includes venues such as Leila Lily's, Three Mile and Pizza Dough Co.

www.thenewnorthumbriahotel.co.uk



The Cairn Hotel

A stylish modern boutique hotel offering comfort and convenience at an affordable price. 78 beautifully designed rooms are all equipped with modern amenities giving everything you need for a comfortable stay.

Dining at the Cairn includes Sohe, a chic Asian fusion restaurant offering bold flavours and 97 & Social, a lively cocktail bar with a contemporary dining space.

www.cairnnewcastle.com

The New Kent Hotel

32 bedrooms suitable for families or individual travellers. All rooms offer ensuite facilities, TV, refreshment tray, radio system, direct dial telephone and comfortable chairs.

www.newkenthotel.co.uk





Boutique Hotel in the Heart of Jesmond



Nestled on the outskirts of Jesmond Dene, a leafy park dotted with quaint bridges and waterfalls sits Jesmond Dene House Boutique Hotel and Fern Dining Room & Bar.

We have space, peace, and room to breathe. We don't take our good fortune for granted. All this makes us even more passionate that our guests are well looked after; above all, feel at home, because it is a home, albeit quite a grand one! We're passionate about detail and Geordie hospitality. Often, it's the little things that make the difference!

Fern is an upmarket neighbourhood restaurant where the cooking is skilful, with a focus on creating fine, flavoursome food, where there's both respect and passion for the ingredients. Dishes inspired by the rhythm of the seasons.



JESMOND DENE HOUSE

NEWCASTLE – UPON – TYNE

drinking **To Drink...**

The Lonsdale

A pillar of the local community with live sport, expertly kept beers, hearty Sunday roasts and a main menu of pub classics and small plates for sharing with friends and family. A proper local and true home away from home.

www.greeneking.co.uk

The Punchbowl

Sitting in the heart of Cradlewell bypass this is a haven for beers, wines, cocktails, Mexican food and Sunday lunches. Look out also for Taco Tuesday, Wing Wednesday, Student Meal Deals and Bottomless Brunch.

www.punchbowlnewcastle.com

As You Like It

A venue which truly does have it all. Three sprawling floors, four stunning bars, beautiful restaurant with casual bistro style menu, live music and DJs every weekend, private dining room and Jesmonds only 2am license.

www.asyoulikeitjesmond.com

The Carriage

Plant based food, Craft Beer, Sunday lunch, Local Casks and Dog Friendly. This great bar also runs a popular quiz night and has an excellent outdoor seating area.

Follow on Facebook

The Collingwood Arms

Long established pub preparing Latin dishes alongside lagers, cask ales and wine, with quiz nights and a patio.

Follow on Facebook

Phoenix Bar

Located in the heart of Osborne Road the Phoenix bar is situated over three areas. The Restaurant provides the ultimate dining experience, for the more private occasions. The Main Bar, for a more casual dining setting and The Sports Bar to watch all your live sports and play some games.

www.phoenixbarjesmond.co.uk

Osbornes Bar

At the heart of Jesmonds nightlife Osbornes is simply the “in place” attracting both young and old, students and professionals. The venue has two bars offering a diverse drinks selection, heated outdoor terraces including outside TV’s and Sheesha Garden. Daily offers and happy hour game guarantee a great night out for all.

www.newnorthumbriahotel.co.uk



The Carriage



The Lonsdale





RGS
NEWCASTLE

FROM
**STUDENT
WELLBEING**
TO
**FINDING
MEANING**



THERE'S MORE
TO LIFE **AT RGS**

DISCOVER MORE
www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



Royal Grammar School Newcastle
Fee assistance available



To Eat... *eating*

Peace and Loaf

A wonderful restaurant offering a seasonal menu which frequently changes based on the best seasonal and locally sourced ingredients available. There is also a tasting menu served Wednesday to Saturday, lunch and evening, a set menu and seasonal five course lunch. Packages are also available for intimate groups to full venue hire for larger parties.

www.peaceandloaf.co.uk

Willi's Cafe

A cosy, independent cafe serving hearty breakfasts, brunches and lunches. A terrific place to host a business meeting, catch up with friends or for a Saturday morning post Park Run pitstop. The friendliest of welcomes and great service guaranteed.

Follow on Facebook and Instagram

Pizzeria Francesca

Hugely popular family run Italian restaurant serving traditional cuisine.

www.francescasjesmond.com

Santana's Restaurant

Traditional Italian restaurant, offering freshly prepared and tasty food, friendly staff and quick service.

Follow on Facebook

Lovage

This lovely restaurant offers a relaxed intimate setting with dishes created by a small team of dedicated chefs and front of house staff. The menu boasts vibrant and flavourful Mediterranean inspired dishes, delicious small plates, generous sharing plates and large dishes to enjoy. A set menu is also served on Sundays offering a traditional Sunday roast.

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

Avanti

This esteemed Italian eatery has been delighting diners with its authentic cuisine and warm atmosphere for over two decades. Boasting a diverse menu featuring classic dishes crafted with the freshest ingredients and traditional recipes, Avanti offers a gastronomic journey through Italy's rich culinary heritage.

www.avantinewcastle.co.uk

Branches

A multi award winning restaurant which aims to provide its customers a contemporary dining experience in a beautifully modern decor surrounding. Branches has won Tripadvisor Travellers choice award for multiple consecutive years and appeared consistently in their top 10 restaurants in Newcastle upon Tyne.

www.branchesrestaurant.co.uk

The Valley Junction

Dine in style in the characteristic old signal box and railway carriage adjacent to the Carriage pub. Fine Indian dining within an elegantly refurbished, stylish and modern restaurant.

www.new.valleyrestaurants.co.uk

Arlo

An informal eatery, filled with Alpine memorabilia and retro knick-knacks which creates a warm and homely feel. Whilst a popular brunch and daytime haunt, the evening bistro and beautiful bar are not to be missed. Look out also for the in-house bakery for amazing cakes, scones and quiches to eat in and takeaways or celebration cakes for that special occasion.

www.arlojesmond.com

Dabbawal

An open kitchen, bright interiors and illustrations create a relaxed environment made for great food to be enjoyed with great friends. Superb authentic Indian street food served in a perfect urban oasis.

www.dabbawal.com



Peace & Loaf



Willi's



Arlo



Lovage



Dream making to trailblazing

An all-girl education will help your daughter be the girl she wants to be.

Register now at newcastlehigh.gdst.net



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HIGH SCHOOL
FOR GIRLS**

GDST
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

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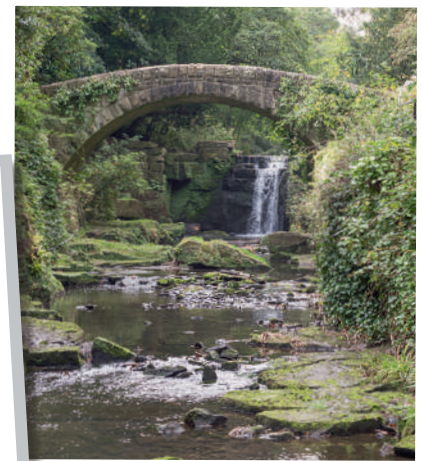
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The Wizard of Oz at Tyne Theatre & Opera House, Newcastle

This Easter, audiences are invited to follow the Yellow Brick Road to the Tyne Theatre & Opera House for a spectacular Easter pantomime version of *The Wizard of Oz*.

On Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th April 2025, Enchanted Entertainment presents a magical adventure packed with dazzling dance routines, well-known pop songs, and plenty of audience participation – perfect for all ages.

Bringing the much-loved characters of Oz to life are some well-known stage and screen stars including Stevi Ritchie, best known for *The X Factor* and *Celebrity Big Brother*, as the Tin Man, Steve Royle, Britain's Got Talent finalist and comedy performer, as the Scarecrow and Lewis Denny, a familiar face at the Tyne Theatre, as the Cowardly Lion. They will join Dorothy and her loyal dog, Toto, as they are swept away by a tornado and transported to the magical Land of Oz. With the help of their new friends, they must make their way to the Emerald City to seek the help of the wonderful Wizard of Oz. But will they outwit the Wicked Witch of the West before she captures them in her dungeon?

Producer Jezz Weatherall said: "We're really looking forward to touring during the Easter holidays with this fantastic show. It's got a great cast of TV stars as well as a spectacular team of professional actors, singers, and dancers."

Dear England to play Newcastle Theatre Royal

Following a record-breaking run in London's West End, the National Theatre has announced a highly anticipated tour of its smash-hit production, *Dear England*. The 2024 Olivier Award-winning 'Best New Play' will visit Newcastle Theatre Royal (Tue 11 – Sat 15 Nov 2025) in a co-production with Josh Andrews and Stuart Galbraith of JAS Theatricals.

Written by the multi-award-winning stage and screen writer, James Graham (*Sherwood*, BBC One; *Quiz*, ITV) and directed by the Almeida Theatre's Artistic Director Rupert Goold (*Patriots*, *King Charles III*), *Dear England*, tells the uplifting, at times heartbreaking, and ultimately inspiring story of Gareth Southgate's revolutionary tenure as England manager in this gripping examination of nation and game.

Playwright James Graham said: "I am beyond delighted and grateful that *Dear England* is heading out on a nation-wide tour across England. To put the National Game on the stage of the National



Time-travel tale explores WWII North Shields

Andrea Hewitson, a talented author from Rowlands Gill, has released her debut children's novel, *A Flight in Time*. The book takes readers on an enthralling journey through time as they follow a young boy who uncovers his home's World War II history in North Shields.

The story begins when the boy's family moves into a terraced house in North Shields. While renovating the house, he discovers old paper planes—decorated like Spitfires and Hurricanes—hidden in the ceiling. This discovery triggers an extraordinary adventure, transporting him back to the same house during the 1940s Blitz. Immersed in the dangers and resilience of wartime life, the boy embarks on a poignant coming-of-age journey.

During World War II, North Shields was significantly impacted by the Blitz, with its proximity to the River Tyne and industrial areas making it a prime target for German bombers. One of the most devastating events was the bombing of Wilkinson's lemonade factory, where 173 lives were tragically lost. These real-life events are woven into the fabric of *A Flight in Time*, offering readers a poignant reminder of the wartime sacrifices and courage of local communities.

"I want this book to be a gift for teachers—a way to engage students not only in storytelling but also in local history and its significance," Hewitson explains. "It can be used across English, History, Geography, and even Drama classes."



Theatre and then in the West End back in 2023 was an utter dream. Now, to head out on a nation-wide tour feels like winning the treble. As someone from a community that had limited access to culture growing up, I'm especially aware of how vital it is to share work of such a scale beyond the capital. And as a lifelong theatre and England fan, the chance to tell a story about the beautiful game and through the prism of Gareth Southgate's transformative term has been a privilege."

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L-R: Alison Gwynn (Chief Executive of North East Screen), Sara Davies, Antonia Hurford Jones and Duncan Gray (Founder at Twenty Six 03 Entertainment). Courtesy of Barry Pells

A vibrant and versatile space

Tyneside Cinema's Corporate Venue Hire supports local businesswomen.

By Emily Duff

Tyneside Cinema, nestled in the heart of Newcastle, has long been a cultural hub for film lovers and creatives. But beyond its iconic Grade II-listed art deco building and its role in highlighting global cinema, the Tyneside is also a vibrant and versatile space for corporate events, playing a pivotal role in supporting local entrepreneurs.

One of its most recent high-profile events was the launch of BBC's *The Big Idea Works* by Sara Davies, a local businesswoman and star of *Dragon's Den*. By choosing Tyneside Cinema for her event, Davies highlighted the venue's appeal to those looking to elevate their brand in a unique and inspiring environment while reinforcing reciprocal support for the local economy.

Tyneside Cinema is an excellent choice for businesses seeking a distinctive venue for their events. Whether it's a networking event, launch party, or corporate meeting, the cinema offers a range of spaces suited to all types of occasions. Hosting monthly business breakfasts for Women of Steel, the Tyneside provide a platform for collaboration in a creative yet practical setting. Its partnership with organisations like NE1 and the Chamber of Commerce further emphasise its role in fostering local business connections and utilising the talents across the North East.

The cinema's flexible and competitive pricing ensures that events are both

accessible and impactful. For instance, when North East Screen booked the cinema, Tyneside Cinema offered a tailored deal, proving its commitment to providing bespoke packages for businesses of all sizes.

Tyneside Cinema also plays an active role in championing women in business. The venue has partnered with the global WOW (Women of the World) Festival to host "Think Ins" where participants, regardless of gender, help shape the future of the festival as it makes its North East debut. For this, Tyneside Cinema provided a dedicated space, the Coffee Rooms, offering refreshments and a welcoming environment for collaboration and discussion. This initiative is just one example of how Tyneside Cinema offers more than just a venue - it provides a platform for dialogue and growth, particularly women-led initiatives.

Beyond corporate events, Tyneside Cinema plays a key role in nurturing local talent. The cinema regularly supports initiatives like New Writing North, providing discounted spaces for screenwriting courses. As part of its commitment to the arts, Tyneside Cinema also houses a screenwriter-in-residence, further strengthening its connection to the creative industries in the North East.

Tyneside Cinema is dedicated to supporting

the next generation of creatives. Involved with the Young Women's Film Academy, they display the work of young female filmmakers. For International Women's Day, the cinema will screen *Bend It Like Beckham*, which will be presented by the Academy and followed by a showcase of short films made by them. Additionally, the Tyneside played a pivotal part in the MOBO Awards Fringe Events, hosting workshops with local youth groups and schools. These workshops, which culminated in the premiere of a youth-created video alongside live performances from local rapper Kay Grayson, are just one example of how the cinema is helping to shape the future of creative industries in the North East.

With affordable rates, flexible event spaces, and a commitment to supporting local businesswomen and creatives, Tyneside Cinema is the ideal venue for corporate events. More than just a venue, it's a partner in creating meaningful, impactful events.

By choosing Tyneside Cinema, you're not only selecting a historic, but iconic venue also - you're supporting a local business that is deeply committed to empowering creativity in the region.

Find out more here: bit.ly/41Bqb59



Turning setback into success: An artist's journey to a thriving small business



When Siobhan (Shiv) Murray was made redundant in 2024, she could have seen it as a setback. Instead, it became the push she needed to fully embrace her artistic passion.

Now, through her business, Art by Shiv, she is steadily growing her presence in the creative world, offering art prints, gift illustrations, live wedding illustrations, custom stationery, and greeting cards.

Shiv's journey began in 2020 during the pandemic, when she started painting for friends. What began as a creative outlet quickly turned into commissions from strangers. However, returning to full-time work meant putting her growing business on hold.

That changed in 2024. After deciding to explore digital art and rebrand her business, an unexpected redundancy accelerated her plans. She launched her first collection of prints, introduced her popular 'speedy illustrations', and stepped into the wedding industry with live guest illustrations.

"The response from my first live illustration event was incredible," says Shiv. "It made me realise this was something special." By January 2025, she had officially launched her wedding illustration packages, offering couples a unique, personalised experience for their big day.

Shiv has big plans for 2025. She is gearing up for her first in-person market and is set to expand her product offerings, all while balancing part-time work to pursue her dream full-time.

Siobhan Murray



"Being made redundant was a huge turning point," says Shiv. "Without it, I might not have taken the leap. Now, I get to create art that brings people joy, and I couldn't be more excited for what's to come."

For more information on Art by Shiv and to explore her collection, visit www.artbyshiv.uk or follow her Instagram @artbyshiv.uk



“

...We are proud to have created such a compelling piece of theatre...

Catrina McHugh MBE

Strong women telling powerful stories

As March is the month when International Women's Day takes place, SASS Media wanted to devote our regular page to the remarkable women from Open Clasp Theatre Company, in Newcastle and their co-creators.

We've been working with Open Clasp, an award-winning feminist theatre company tackling big issues that some women in our society face, for several months now in a bid to help promote their plays - and we have to say we are in awe of the powerful work they do.

Open Clasp is the multi-award-winning theatre company behind New York Times Critics' Pick *Key Change* and *Sugar* on BBC iPlayer.

Playwright Catrina McHugh MBE is an advocate for using the stage to shine a spotlight on issues ranging from sex workers' rights, to how mothers in prison are treated.

Her play *Rupture*, is on tour in the North East this month, from the 5th to the 18th.

This hour-long one-woman show sees the character *Destiny*, who was co-created by women in HMP Low Newton, escape onto a prison roof.

From there, the audience discovers for themselves how deep the threads of systematic and societal failures on women in prison go and watch as *Destiny* decides to take back control.

The play comes hot on the heels of the tour of the film version of another Open Clasp Theatre Company play, *Mycelial*.

This play was co-created with sex workers from the North East and New Zealand and Catrina visited New Zealand on the film's tour towards the end of 2024.

Highlighting her pride in *Mycelial*, she said: "It has been a long process, but the results, in the form of a groundbreaking play which is asking important questions about the way sex workers should be treated, are extremely rewarding."

Despite her nerves at the New Zealand showing, Catrina felt extremely proud of the film four years after the workshops with sex workers and one year after the film version was created.

She admitted to feeling emotional as she joined the panel of speakers after the second showing of the play in New Zealand.

"It felt so epic and I felt so proud of Open Clasp and the co-creators who took a leap of faith back in 2020, with workshops online during a pandemic," she said.

"It was a huge production for us to create, but through true collaboration, we have achieved something remarkable with it."

The same can now also be said of *Rupture*.

Catrina wrote the play following a series of workshops as part of the Parental Rights in Prison project with NEPACS – a North East charity supporting families affected by the prison or care system - and Durham University.

In England and Wales, women account for around 4% of the prison population and around 60% are mothers (PRT, 2022). It is estimated that over 17,000 children per year are affected by maternal imprisonment (Kincaid et al., 2019).

Catrina says: "Rupture is a great example of how the arts can be used to challenge perceptions around incarcerated women.

"We have been co-creating theatre with women in prison for over 10 years and are committed to the community of people who are incarcerated in this country as talented theatre makers with voices which need to be heard and as our audience.

"We are proud to have created such a compelling piece of theatre, which explores the harsh realities of prison life for women and particularly, incarcerated mothers."

Three cheers for Open Clasp and the important advocacy of women their creative works achieve!

They are truly changing the world one play at a time!

For more stories on Open Clasp and other SASS Media clients visit www.sassmediatd.co.uk



Rupture



Cragside's little neighbour has a big story to tell

Nestled just outside Rothbury, on the southeastern side of the renowned Cragside Estate, Cragend Farm is where history, heritage, and sustainability converge. Lou Renwick, along with her family, has transformed this once-derelict farm into a thriving hub of agricultural innovation, historical preservation, and rural charm since purchasing it in 2011.

Cragend Farm is steeped in history, having been an integral part of Lord Armstrong's pioneering Cragside Estate. Armstrong's innovations in sustainable energy and industrial efficiency are etched into the fabric of the farm, with remnants of his visionary engineering still visible today.

During restoration, the Renwick family uncovered two rare Gilbert Gilkes of Kendal turbines, a hoist, a weighbridge, and a one-of-a-kind hydro-powered silo used to create silage for cattle. These fascinating artifacts reflect Armstrong's forward-thinking approach and have been meticulously preserved, offering visitors a glimpse into 19th-century ingenuity.

"Lord Armstrong was ahead of his time, blending technology with sustainability," says Lou Renwick. "We are proud to continue his legacy while integrating modern farming techniques that honour the past."

Cragend Farm offers industrial heritage tours where visitors can explore these remarkable innovations and learn about Armstrong's vision for the estate. The tours bring Northumberland's heritage to life, making the farm a must-visit destination for history lovers and engineering enthusiasts.



Jesmond Dene House unveils a new culinary Vision with the appointment of Executive Chef Gareth Rayner

Jesmond Dene House is delighted to announce the appointment of Gareth Rayner as its new Executive Chef. Bringing a wealth of experience and a passion for culinary excellence, Gareth is set to elevate the dining experience at one of Newcastle's most renowned boutique hotels.

Originally from Hartlepool, Gareth has an impressive background in fine dining. He has worked at prestigious establishments such as The Gin Trap in Norfolk, earning three AA Rosettes as Chef Patron. He also played a key role in opening Forge at Middleton Lodge and served as Executive Chef at Wynyard Hall.

Known for his dedication to using the finest seasonal ingredients, Gareth aims to bring Jesmond Dene House back to how people remember it while infusing a fresh, contemporary feel. Embracing the 'neighbourhood dining' ethos, he plans to introduce a regularly changing menu that reflects local produce and the changing seasons. His new menu is set to launch in March in Fern, promising guests refined yet approachable dishes that celebrate North East flavours.

Ramside Hall Hotel to create multi million pound golf facility

A County Durham hotel is investing more than £6m in creating what will be one of the UK's top golf facilities.

Ramside Hall Hotel, Golf and Spa already has two championship courses, which brings players from across the region and nationally. And now the hotel is building a multi-million-pound golf academy, leisure and entertainment hub.

The ambitious development will include a 43 bay TopTracer driving range, a six-lane indoor bowling alley, sports bar with interactive electronic games such as darts and shuffleboards, pool tables and large screens which will show major sports events.

A new academy - which it is hoped will attract more golf professionals - will include new short game practice and coaching areas, a new retail outlet and a 120 seater function room.

The phased opening of the development will take place between March and August.

Hotel owner, John Adamson, believes the development is a great asset not just for Ramside but for County Durham.

"These new facilities will have something for everyone, just for



golfers," he said.

"The bowling alley and the sports bar with the electronic games will hopefully attract people who just want to enjoy some fun activities but don't necessarily want to play golf.

"At the same time, the Golf Academy will mean that anyone who is interested in learning the game - or who wants to improve their existing game - can also make use of the state-of-the-art facilities."



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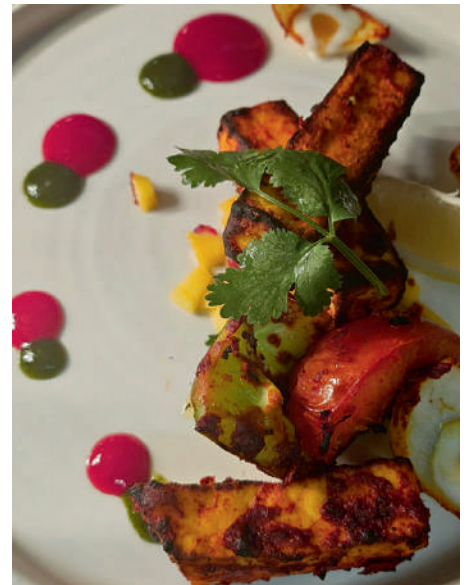


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Maybe I'm Amazed

By Michael Grahamslaw

Friday night, two unabashed curry aficionados and a superb local Indian restaurant hot on the heels of a prestigious award win. Does life get much better?

It certainly didn't for my son Jack who was looking for any excuse for a blowout after his yearly Dry January abstinence.

Our visit to Amaze Gourmet Spice – which occupies a slice of Monkseaton's burgeoning culinary strip – however, would prove a level up from your typical curry and Cobra jamboree.

Amaze, which has recently scooped the impressive New Fine Dining Restaurant of the Year in this year's North England Prestige awards, offers Indian fine dining in lavish surroundings.

Inside, the dining area is a real sight to behold. Bathed in rich shades of royal blue and gold, its atmosphere is decidedly regal and was portentous of the dishes to come.



In line with modern dining sensibilities, we'd perused online menu PDF's meticulously, and exchanged WhatsApp messages on our respective orders, however, our plans were foiled when invited to try the restaurant's flagship 'culinary journey' menu.

This proved no bad thing.

Amaze's journey heritage menu is the restaurant's signature selection, perfect for group dining, which can be enjoyed as a multi-course experience or full blown, tapas-style feast. Expect a winning mix of snacks, starters, traditional curries and tandoori specialities.

Starters arrived thick and fast and proved a tapestry of the Indian good stuff.

The Chef's Tandoori Trio was a highlight of the evening. This dish featured a selection of tandoori bites, each cooked to perfection and bursting with flavour. The Tikka Roast, available in both chicken and lamb, was mildly spiced and roasted in the tandoori oven. The meat was tender and juicy, with a subtle smokiness that added depth to the flavour profile.

Our main courses were nothing short of spectacular. The Dakeswari Chicken, a creamy korma-style curry made with fenugreek, butter, and sweet almond, was a luxurious dish that melted in the mouth – and was washed down with gusto by a couple of excellent pints of Indian lager.

The rich, creamy sauce was perfectly balanced, with a hint of sweetness that

complemented the tender chicken.

For those of us who prefer a bit more heat (guess who), the Rawlpindi Chicken (Madras) was an excellent choice. This dish featured a robust blend of cardamom, cloves, dry red chillies, bay leaf, tomato and a hint of sweet vinegar. The result was a complex, flavourful curry that packed a punch without overwhelming the palate.

Mains were served up with basmati pilau rice and pillowy naan breads, providing the perfect accompaniment to the rich and flavourful curries. Rice came fluffy and fragrant, while the naan breads were soft and buttery, ideal for soaking up the sauces with aplomb.

This had been a sumptuous meal and a real feast for all the senses, so, we lingered further into the evening over coffee and liqueurs while soaking up some more of the ambience.

Throughout our visit, we were looked after superbly well by owner, Mohammed and his team. Their recent award marks the latest in a long line of celebrations for his multi-award-winning family who have also won accolades with Jashn in Gateshead and Turmeric Gold in Coventry.

If this visit was anything to go by, Amaze Gourmet Spice may prove their most exciting venture yet.

For more information, visit www.amazeexperience.uk



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Chris Reay – Mountain Leader and Chef to TV Celebrities

Creating a meal and a day to remember for Robson Green and his Grantchester co-star, Kacey Ainsworth.



When it comes to event catering in the North East, one of the most highly respected companies is Epicurus (www.epicurus.co.uk). As well as cooking-up delicious food using locally sourced produce and ensuring top quality service, they also offer party & event equipment hire, service staff & bar staff hire.

Epicurus can take care of your catering needs.

Running the company is one of the North East's leading chefs, Chris Reay. He launched Epicurus in 1998...things got off to a highly successful start.

Then March 2020 arrived. Everyone was told to stay at home which, obviously, is not what an outdoor catering company needs to hear.

"I'd thrown everything into my great passion...cooking... and given up a successful career in TV production to launch Epicurus," said Chris. "Covid brought everything to a halt. At least I had time to indulge in my other passion...walking in the wonderful North East countryside."

Which turned out to be the starting point for Chris's other venture...Fells' Kitchen. Chris is a fully qualified mountain leader....so...why not take people on a lovely walk and provide stunning food along the way.

That's how Chris ended up on BBC TV. He provided food and a walk for a couple of well-known TV personalities. The show is 'Robson Green's Weekend Escape' where Robson takes other celebrities on countryside walks. The show, available on BBC iPlayer and which aired on February 10th (Series 3:1) sees Robson with his Grantchester co-star Kacey Ainsworth walking up Warden Hill near Hexham.

And that was where Robson and Kacey met Chris. He acted as a guide pointing out features like where the North Tyne and South Tyne meet...with the Cheviots and North Pennines in the distance...but the important moment took place in a sheltered hollow near the top of the hill.

Robson said, as he and Kacey tucked into their Fells' Kitchen meal prepared by Chris... "It's the first time I've had a meal with a 360-degree view of the area which is within easy reach of where I live. Everybody should do this once in a while...loved the walk, loved your company and your food is exceptional."

For the record, Chris cooked them scallops and black pudding followed by a dessert of blood orange posset with crushed amorette biscuit.

Chris organises walks across Northumberland, Durham, North Yorkshire and the Lake District... although he'll go further afield if you give him plenty of notice.

"I speak to the client, find out what sort of food they like, where they'd like to go and, importantly, how capable they are. Sometimes it's just a casual stroll... other times it's something a bit more strenuous."

Fells' Kitchen - catered outdoor adventures; a unique experience of exhilarating exercise with nature as your backdrop, and then relax with a meal prepared in front of you by one of the region's most experienced chefs.



L-R: Kacey Ainsworth, Robson Green and Chris Reay

Photos: Zoila Brozas



Interested in a stunning walk and stunning food? Visit Chris's website.... www.fellskitchen.co.uk... and check out the shop page for general bookable experience days. You can contact him directly to discuss dates & locations.

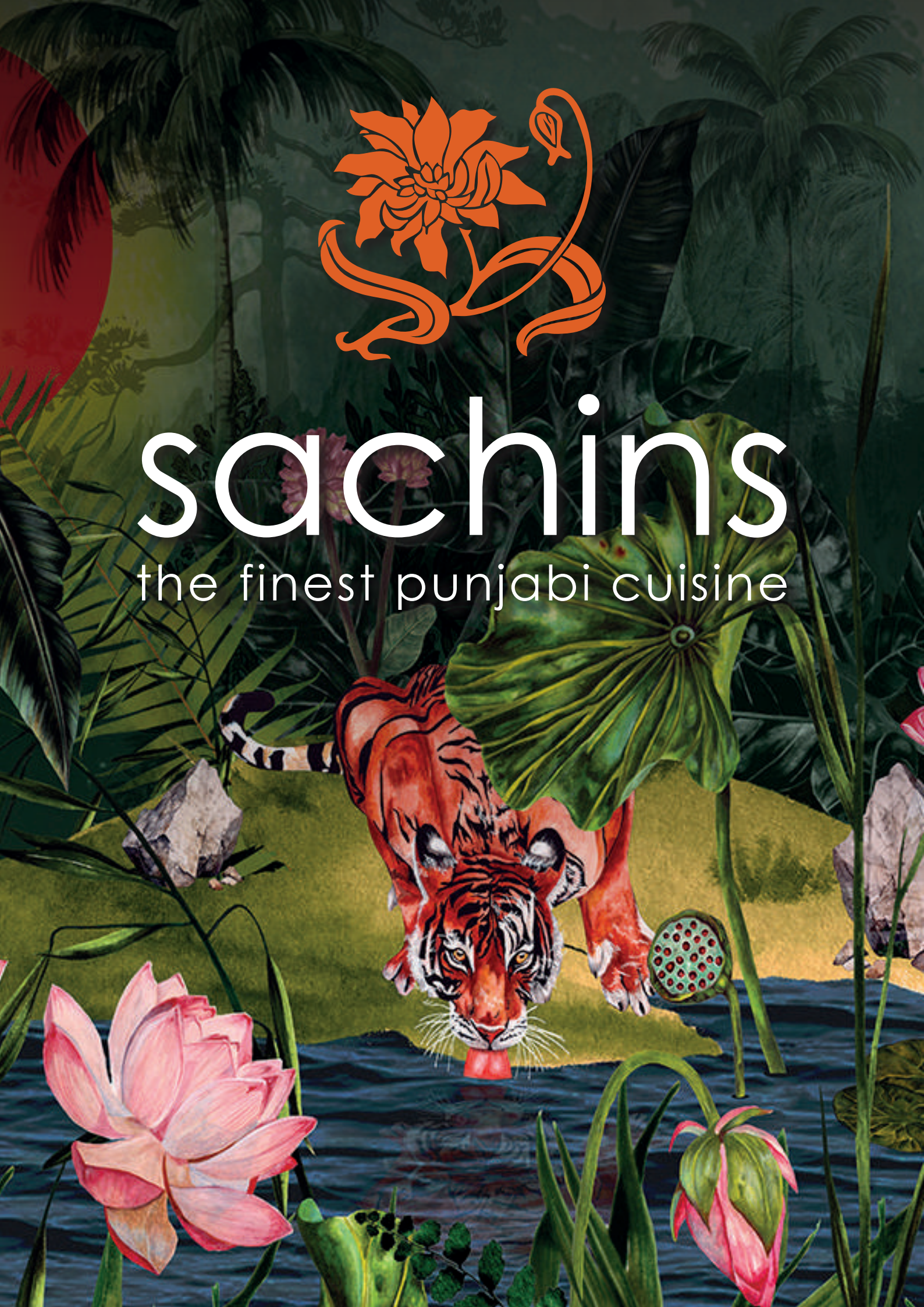
This is best if you have a group of up to six or eight and want to organise a special birthday party, corporate day or event for someone.

Keep up with Fells' Kitchen on Instagram @fellskitchen or follow Chris on Facebook @fellskitchenadventures



sachins

the finest punjabi cuisine



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"We are extremely proud of the food we serve at Sachins restaurant. There is nothing artificial about our food, we don't use crazy-hot spices or extra colouring in our dishes and all our spices are roasted and ground right here on the premises. Our reds come from chillies, our yellows from turmeric and so on."

Bob Arora

Head Chef and owner of Sachins

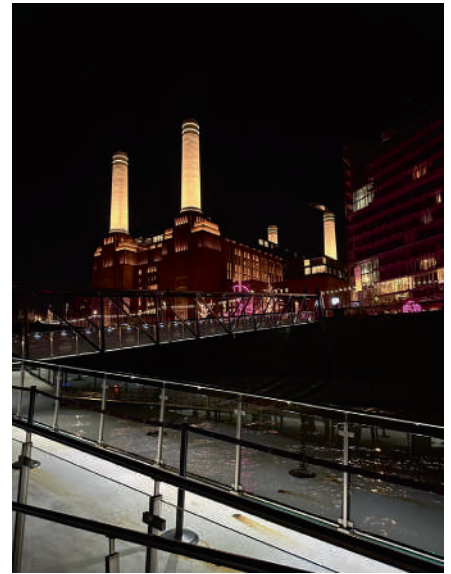
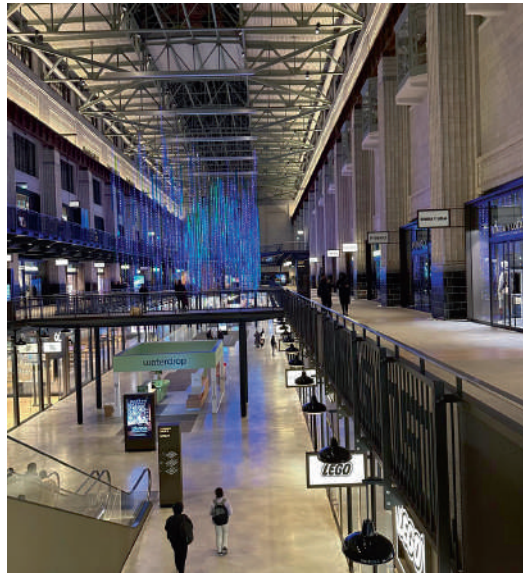


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Places to go...Battersea Power Station, London



Coming out of the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras recently, I spotted a series of posters for London's newest retail and leisure attraction at Battersea Power Station, an iconic building which once appeared on a Pink Floyd album called Animals with an inflatable pig between the four towers (1977).

The fare for a trip on the Thames Clipper (now sponsored by Uber) is £9 in the central zone, a substantial hike from what it used to be, even if you use an Oyster card. But it enabled a good view of the South Bank and the receding Power Station, and the Houses of Parliament on the north side. I arrived back at Kings Cross to catch the last and cheapest train of the night arriving at 0122 in Durham. Battersea is worth seeing, even though I didn't spend any money there and left a deposit at the public lavatories instead. But I will return to marvel at both the architecture and the prices!

Remember March is a good month to visit London by LNER, Grand Central or Lumo. Come April, fewer cheap tickets are available, and prices creep up for the summer season.

I had three hours before the last train north at 2200 so a trip to Battersea seemed like a good idea, and I took the Northern Line to Kennington to pick up the other branch from Charing Cross to Battersea Power Station, the only tube station with the word Station in its name.

This gave rise to a debate when it opened in 2021 as to whether this new terminus should be called "Battersea Power Station Station"! It's a short walk to the building, an Art Deco feast dating from 1935 which at one time supplied a fifth of London's needs. Closed and derelict since the mid-1980s, the whole 42-acre site has been redeveloped by Malaysian investors, and it opened to the public in October 2022. They must be proud of their success.

Stuffed full of high-end retailers including Rolex, Cartier and Apple, there are three floors to explore including a cinema and Lift 109 which takes you up inside the north-western cooling tower to the top from where you can view 360 degrees inside the lift car 109 metres from the ground. Just think, if they had measured it in yards, it would be Lift 119 instead. However, the adult price for the ascent is £23.60 for adults and £17.55 for under 16s. Luckily it had closed for the evening, so I was not going to be tempted.

The malls echo what the power station was like in its heyday, and one of the restaurants is set up in one of the old control rooms, complete with original equipment. A wide range of eating establishments are available late into the night, and surrounding streets have been built up alongside where there were once coal trains stabling. On the western edge is The Arches beneath the railway line where a row of bars and restaurants appealed to the late-night visitors.

I had intended to return on the Northern Line tube to Kings Cross despite the listing of four consecutive trains to Edgware via Charing Cross on my arrival. The Arches had led down to the River Thames and the river bus pontoon from which I took the photograph shown here which was the only view available of all four towers. A boat to North Greenwich was due in two minutes and could take me in 23 minutes to Blackfriars where the train could take me to St Pancras, ideal for my train at Kings Cross.

alexnelson@nationalrail.com, www.nationalrail.com

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Alex Nelson (Ticket Guru)

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On the Tee Box - Gosforth Golf Club

Location: Affectionately known as “The Bridalpath” the club is in a secluded area and only 2.5 miles north of Newcastle

Setting: The course sits in a parkland setting and is always presented in fantastic condition. It provides a fun golf challenge with a mixture of long holes and interesting short holes.

Length of course: The course measures 6001 yards from the Men’s white tees and 5489 yards from the Ladies red tees.

Facilities: We have a main lounge and separate bar area. Our dining room is on the first floor with wonderful views over the course. We also have a covered practice facility with astro turf bays and an excellent pro shop offering tuition to golfers of all levels.

Longest Drive: The longest drive hole is the 18th.

Toughest Hole: Undoubtedly the 7th where it is always a challenge to achieve a par.

Signature Hole: This would be the 4th where you have a blind tee shot over a brough and out of bounds on the right. This is then followed by a tough second shot which needs to clear a wide burn and is played to an undulating green.

Course record: 62

Competitions: We have a busy competition schedule which also incorporates midweek tournaments.

Membership prices: We have various Membership options available and fees are competitive.



Full information is available from the Secretary Grahame Garland on 0191 285 3495, option 3, or visit the website www.gosforthgolfclub.co.uk



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Staying Power

By Michael Grammslaw

It seemed an apt time to visit the Staybridge Suites.

The Newcastle hotel, which has just completed a £1.8 million renovation of all its bedrooms, has been a top choice on Trip Advisor in the city for the past 12 years. It consistently receives the highest marks in the hotel group's own IHG ratings, and it's easy to see why.

The hotel - which stands proudly on the city's Buxton street (five minutes from the city centre) - is managed by the experienced hotelier Lisa Crocker, whose father Neal was also a client many years ago. This personal touch added a layer of history to our visit and as a reminder of my many (many) years in the game!

Pitching up for our first overnight stay of 2025, parking proved a breeze with the 85-berth car park, and we quickly made our way to our guest room.

The recent modernisation project was evident in the sleek, contemporary design of the room. Each suite comes with a fully equipped kitchen and living area, making it perfect for both short trips and extended stays. The kitchen was stocked with all the essentials, and the living area was spacious and comfortable, providing a true home-from-home feel.



A hallmark of the Staybridge Suites experience is the range of amenities available to guests. Complimentary Wi-Fi ensures all guests stay connected, while the state-of-the-art fitness studio – for those looking to keep fit on the road – provided the chance to sweat out some of the party pounds.

The laundry facilities were a convenient addition, especially for those on longer stays. The 24/7 reception and Grab and Go Pantry were also incredibly handy, offering snacks and essentials at any hour.

Location is another major advantage. Just a stone's throw from the Quayside, it serves as an ideal base for exploring the city. We took a leisurely stroll along the Quayside, enjoying the scenic views and buoyant atmosphere, while enjoying a few excellent pints of Vitamin G in the process.

Returning to the hotel, our suite enveloped us in a haven of comfort and style featuring plush bedding, polished wood and heavy drapes ensuring a restful night's sleep.

The modern bathroom was equipped with high-quality toiletries (enjoyed by Lisa) and swish power shower (enjoyed by yours truly after a morning run).

Throughout our stay, the staff at Staybridge Suites went above and beyond to ensure we had everything we needed.



Whether it was providing local recommendations to a few unsung local eateries or assisting with any requests, their dedication to excellent service was readily apparent.

Our stay was a perfect start to the new year, and we look forward to returning in the future for business or leisure.

For long-term residents, the hotel even hosts evening socials every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. These events provide an opportunity to enjoy free food and drink while mingling with other guests. It's a thoughtful touch that fosters a sense of community among the residents.

For us, however, it was back to home and reality. If only we could stay another day!

For more information, visit www.ihg.com/staybridge/hotels/gb/en/newcastle-upon-tyne



Blu Sunday

By Michael Grahamslaw

Thoroughly intent in squeezing the last drops out of the weekend, my wife Lisa and I screeched down to Durham for an overnight stay which will live long in the memory.

Durham remains the Quintessential British University city, a maze of cobbled streets, buoyant nightlife and riverbanks so picturesque it makes you want to pick up a paintbrush.

Also, “Not far, but far enough” from our base at Northern Insight HQ in Newcastle, the city is a solid choice for the weekend staycation.

Occupying an enviable location on the banks of the river, the Radisson Blu is undisputedly one of the best hotels in the area, combining easy city centre access with the best features of a more rural retreat, such as in-house spa and destination restaurant.

A recent £5 million refurbishment has elevated its guest experience yet further and proved the perfect time to revisit for a recharge of the batteries.

Central to the new-look Radisson is its extensive ground-floor transformation,

comprising swanky hotel reception, cutting-edge conference facilities and a stylish new bar area overlooking Durham Cathedral and Castle.

While I’m sure this bright and airy space will assume even greater splendour during the Summer months, it still really emitted that “wow factor” on our arrival in the bleak midwinter.

Few hotels boast so many UNESCO world heritage on the doorstep with the city’s world famous attractions within walking distance, so, with this in mind, we ditched the bags to survey all downtown Durham had to offer.

Returning to the hotel, we were equally impressed by the high quality of our newly-renovated guest suite.

The hotel comprises 207 bedrooms in total, each resplendent with that trademark Radisson contemporary design and technology.

Wrapped up in a warm glow and clean-carpet smell, Room 416 proved a haven of comfort and convenience, well equipped with Flat Screen TVs, plush armchairs and boutique toiletries. Most impressively, it even featured a hi-tec Nespresso coffee machine and panoramic views of the river.

After a quick blast in the walk-in shower and a change for dinner, we arrived at the hotel’s new, in-house eatery Jozef’s.

An all-new dining concept, Jozef’s Riverside Bar and Restaurant, raises a glass to Count Józef Boruwalski, a polish-born musician who famously retired to Durham during the twilight of his years in the early 19th century.



This interestingly offbeat restaurant eponym is echoed by the restaurant’s lively atmosphere and eclectic selection of drinks.

After kicking off with a brace of creative cocktails, Lisa and I kicked off with Tomato and Basil Soup and Roasted Beetroot Salad. For the main event, Lisa enjoyed the roast chicken breast atop creamed cabbage, bacon and her favourite dauphinoise potato while I waded into the pan-roasted fillet of bream with king prawns in a chilli and lemongrass broth.

Both dishes boasted a wondrous depth of flavour, piqued further by an excellent Sauvignon Blanc.

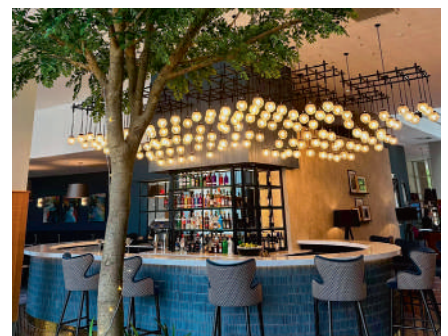
The following morning, after a full eight (!) hours sleep, we were refreshed enough to venture down to the spa for a morning tune up. Here with the latest resistance and cardio equipment, we worked up a strong appetite for a salubrious breakfast back in the hotel’s riverside restaurant.

We left both highly impressed by a venue not content to rest on its laurels. The revamped Radisson Blu Hotel offers a range of versatile spaces to cater to diverse needs.

Its upgraded main events space has received rave reviews for its flexibility and impressive ambience. It is the perfect venue for conferences, corporate events, weddings and private celebrations.

A safe choice, then, for any business or leisure traveller.

For more information, visit www.radissonbludurham.com



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Culture Club

Micky Cochrane

Micky Cochrane is an actor, producer, singer and a personal trainer. He will be performing at Newcastle Theatre Royal in June in *Carrying David*. Here he tells us what he likes in the world of culture.

Who is your favourite author and why?

I tend to be a reader of plays more, but I remember loving the books of James Herbert.

What would be your three Desert Island Discs?

Pills, Thrills and Bellyaches - Happy Mondays. Just a great snapshot of a moment in time and a movement.

Revolver - The Beatles. I could listen to this over and over. Taxman is a great start to an album and Here, There and Everywhere is just beautiful.

Accelerator - The Future Sound of London.

Who is your favourite film star and why?

If I had to pick one I'd go Gary Oldman. Effortlessly intense.

What are your top three films? Tell me about them.

The Warriors. Nostalgia for me. First film I saw on tape. One that you can talk about with mates and quote over a couple of beers.

Goodfellas. I remember not being able to take my eyes off this film. It puts you through the mill, brilliant performances and something that keeps you on the edge.

Rocco and his Brothers. It's epic and intense. Great film.

Which poem left a lasting impression on you?

The Send Off by Wilfred Owens.

I read this out as part of a remembrance Sunday event and it stuck with me. The words, images and music. I can feel and hear it right now, talking about it.



Micky Cochrane

What box sets have you enjoyed?

It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia. They've done around 16 seasons now and it has become something I look out for and still get excited about.

Who is your favourite artist or performer?

I loved watching Sean Lock. Still watch his performances and clips and they make me laugh and make me happy. I did the stage version of *'I Daniel Blake'* in 2023 and Dave Johns who was great friends with him told me some stories about the two of them. Fantastic.

What is your favourite venue?

Live Theatre. It was always somewhere I wanted to perform and have had the chance to do it quite a few times. In 2006 I was in *'A Nightingale Sang'* which is a brilliant play and had a brilliant cast. For one of the shows, I had 23 friends and family all in together, all round the front of the stage. I was never more than a few paces away from them. Terrifying and exhilarating.

Which musical instrument do you particularly enjoy?

Guitars, seeing as I've always been in guitar bands. Love a violin and I'd love to learn piano.

From the world of Arts and Culture who would be your ideal dinner party guests?

I'd love to listen to Malcolm X and Muhammad Ali. I love sport and also how he became the most famous person in the world. I'm sure those two would have some working out to do.

Billie Holiday, fascinated by her story.

Joe Wilson for some Geordie representation. I played the man who wrote 'Keep Your Feet Still Geordie Hinnie' and often wondered what he really sounded like and if we'd have a good bit banter.

Johnny Vaughan would regale us with some great stuff. Love listening to his podcast.

Micky Cochrane is in *Carrying David* at Newcastle Theatre Royal 21/22nd June.

Summer Wellness Retreat

Relax. Unwind. Smile.



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When exercising, joint health is essential

Training on softer surfaces like grass, sand, or astro turf provides big advantages over hard surfaces such as concrete.

Softer terrain helps absorb impact forces, reducing the stress on your joints and minimizing the risk of pain or long term wear.

Over time training on the right surface can support overall joint health and longevity.

Benefits of softer surfaces for joint health

Reduced Impact Forces

Concrete and other hard surfaces do not absorb shock well, meaning that every foot strike sends a strong impact through your feet, ankles, knees, and hips. Softer surfaces like grass and sand absorb some of these forces, reducing stress on the joints.

Decreased Risk of Injury

Hard surfaces can lead to repetitive stress injuries, including shin splints and stress fractures. Softer surfaces provide cushioning, which can help prevent these conditions.

Encourages Stability and Strength Development

Uneven ground like sand and grass uses more of the the stabilizing muscles around the joints, improving overall strength and reducing the likelihood of an injury.

Lowering the Risk of Chronic Conditions

Long term training on concrete may contribute to degenerative conditions such as osteoarthritis due to the continuous stress placed on the joints in exactly the same area, repetitively. Using softer surfaces can slow down these effects.

Enhanced Comfort and Endurance

Training on softer surfaces can be more comfortable, allowing for longer workouts without causing joint fatigue or discomfort.

Ideal for Rehabilitation

If you are recovering from injury, softer surfaces provide a more forgiving environment that allows a gradual return to exercise with less risk of re-injury.

Better for Aging Athletes

As we age, joint cartilage naturally wears down. Training on softer surfaces can help reduce excessive wear and tear, allowing you to keep training for longer in life.

Promotes Natural Movement Patterns

Running or training on soft ground allows the foot to move more naturally, reducing the risk of poor biomechanics that could lead to joint issues.

Safer non-weight bearing gym equipment for joint health

There are several pieces of equipment in the gym designed to offer a cardiovascular workout while minimizing joint strain. These include:

VersaClimber

A low-impact, full-body cardio machine that simulates climbing, engaging both upper and lower body muscles without excessive pressure on the joints. We are the only gym that runs VersaClimber classes north of London. They are hugely motivating 30min high energy sessions and ofcourse joint friendly.



David Fairlamb

Cross Trainer

Offers a smooth, gliding motion that reduces impact on the knees and ankles compared to running.

Stationary Bike (Recumbent or Upright)

Provides cardiovascular benefits while keeping the weight off the lower body joints.

Rowing Machine

Engages multiple muscle groups while keeping stress off the knees and ankles.

Seated Leg Press Machine

Strengthens leg muscles without requiring full weight-bearing motion.

Resistance Bands

Joint-friendly strength training without the heavy strain of free weights.

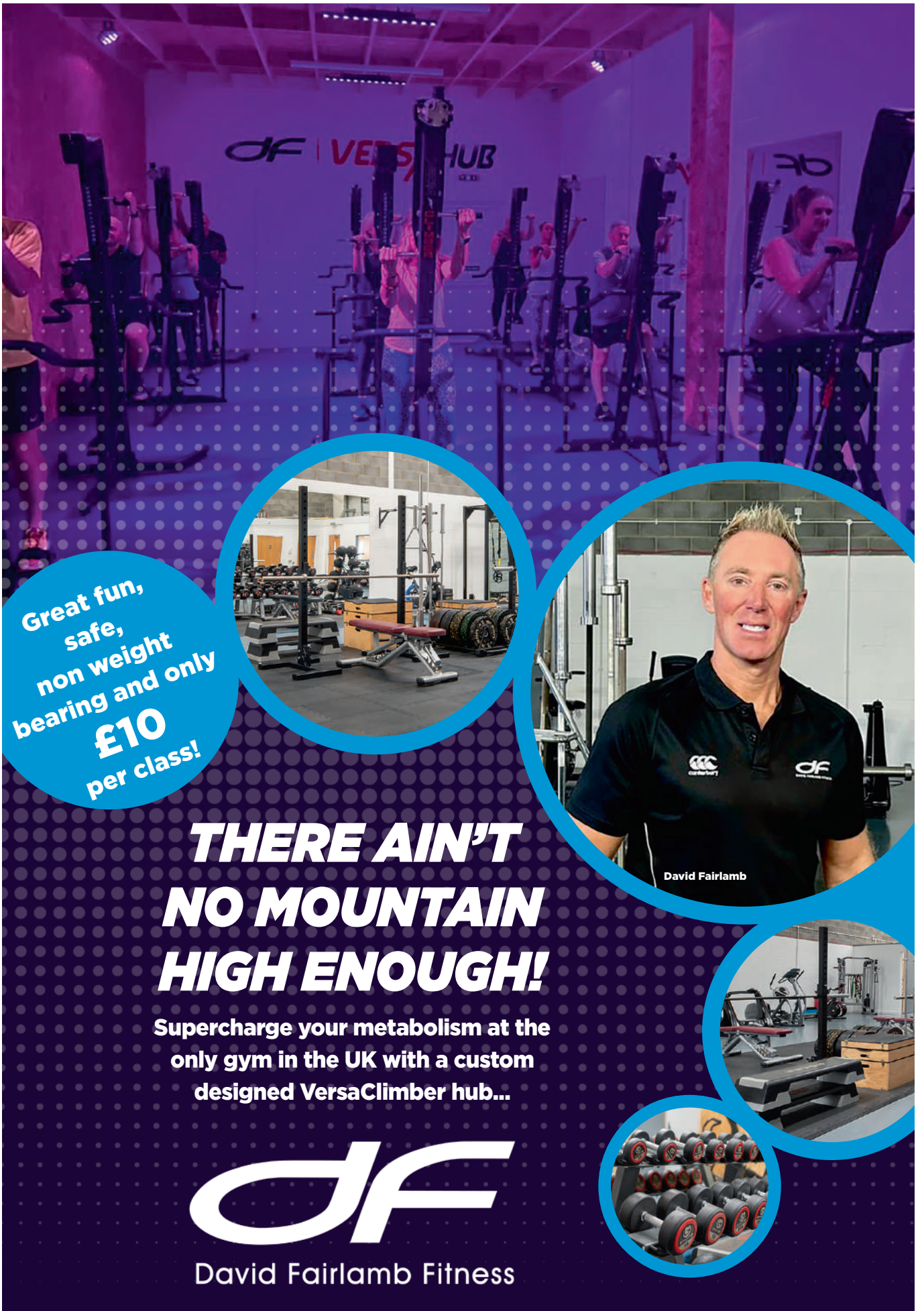
Cable Machines

Controlled resistance training that minimizes joint stress.

David's summing up

By training on softer surfaces and utilizing joint-friendly gym equipment, you can protect your joints and maintain long-term mobility, ensuring a healthier and more sustainable fitness regime.

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David Fairlamb Fitness

A new fragrance in town

Maison Berger Paris launch new stunning home fragrance collections for Spring Summer 2025. Now in stock at Blagdon Gallery.

Maison Berger Paris, the renowned French heritage brand synonymous with exquisite home fragrance and design, proudly introduces its highly anticipated 2025 collections.

Inspired by timeless elegance and cutting edge innovation, the new offering showcase Maison Berger's continued commitment to enriching homes with a unique blend of style and functionality.

Founded in 1898, the famous Lamp Berger continues to pursue its path of excellence as market leader. Originally the system of diffusion via catalysis was invented to destroy odours and purify the air. Today over 125 years later the Lamp continued to not only purify but fragrance the air, thanks to its catalytic burner which is unrivalled in its perfuming quality.

Each Maison Berger fragrance is expertly developed with top perfumiers. There are several fragrance families each characterised by their elegance and olfactory signature. Over the years the collection has evolved to introduce new products such as Bouquets, Mist Diffusers and Car Diffusers.

Cannelo Lamp – NEW for SS25

Cannelo Lamp Berger is a sublime portrayal of elegance and refinement. This lamp, is beautifully inspired by the contemporary trend of the fluted design. Its slightly rounded silhouette, conceived by designer DeVog, emanates an unmatched sense of softness. Available in three colour options – Paprika, Green and Grey.



Cosy Lamp – New for SS25

Introducing the Cosy Lamp Berger Gift Pack, an authentic icon from the Cosy Collection.

Designed by DeVog, this catalytic lamp showcases a gentle and ample design that radiates a sense of comfort and tranquillity. It is paired with the Cozy Musk fragrance, which ushers you into a singular sensory journey. The top notes unveil the gentle allure of orange blossom, leading to a soothing heart of Roman chamomile. The base notes of white musk unfurl a pure, delicate scent, setting up a warm and enveloping ambiance.

NEW Fragrance – Blue Seduction

This new fragrance invites you on a revitalising sensory journey. Drawing inspiration from the refreshing scents of the sea, it infuses your home with a crisp breath of fresh air. An invigorating blend of aquatic notes, zesty grapefruit, sharp coriander and maritime pine creates a captivating top note. The heart notes, composed of marine notes, cool mint, mystical incense and transparent florals, gradually meld into a base of oakmoss, warm amber, sturdy cedar, earthy patchouli, and gentle musk.

NEW Fragrance – Home Sweet Home

This fragrance invites you to a unique journey of comforting warmth. Drawing inspiration from the snug and cosy feeling of our family nests, the Home Sweet Home scent is marked by its refreshing green and aquatic notes, reminiscent of nature's freshness. The heart of this fragrance unveils a rich bouquet of cinnamon, clove and lily of the valley, contributing a warm, spicy touch. In the base notes, amber intertwines with patchouli, sandalwood, vanilla and musk, fostering a serene and soothing atmosphere.

MINERAL Bouquet Collection

Inspired by natural stone & glass our NEW mineral bouquet collections provides a style home fragrance solution. Available in many colour options and fragrances there are the "must have" pieces of the season. Each bouquet, comes with 180ml fragrance included and refills are available making this a great investment piece for your home. Fragrances include the best selling Liliflora, Blue Seduction, Pure White Tea and Wilderness.

Maison Berger is part of the The Emosia group. The Emosia group markets a wide range of complementary fragrance products such as Berger lamps, scented bouquets, electric diffusers, car diffusers, candles and more. Today, Emosia boasts the most complete range on the fragrance market, thanks to emblematic brands such as Maison Berger Paris, My Jolie Candle and Ambiances Devineau.

Emosia employs nearly 600 people at five manufacturing sites. Two of these brands, Maison Berger Paris and Bougies la Française, hold the Entreprise du Patrimoine Vivant (EPV) label, which recognizes French companies with outstanding craftsmanship and industrial expertise.



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