

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

APRIL 2017



TIME TO CELEBRATE AT SABATINI & FRATELLI

business | property | media | technology | education | motors | arts | leisure

issue 22

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the April edition of Northern Insight

As we approach our second anniversary I am delighted to bring you our biggest magazine to date packed full of content and features.

Our cover star is the family run Sabatini and Fratelli restaurants, both of which are approaching significant milestones.

Look out for our new Staying Power feature profiling someone who has been at the top of their industry for over 25 years. Our old friend, David Hodgson MBE, is the first subject.

As ever we feature some of the regions leading social events from the past month including Allied Irish Banks St.Patricks Party, the annual Sport Newcastle Dinner and the RMT Budget Seminar.

For Business Lunch we visit Eslington Villa in Low Fell and also enjoy an overnight stay at the excellent Townhouse Hotel in Gosforth.

All this and much much more.

Thank you for your continued support. Till next month...

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher

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Editorial must be received by the 15th of the month or no responsibility is accepted for errors.

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Complaints will only be considered for up to a week after publication. Advertising must be received by the 20th of the month. No responsibility is accepted for errors.

NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ANNOUNCES NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE



Newcastle International Airport Ltd has confirmed the appointment of Nick Jones as Chief Executive. Nick has served in the role of interim Chief Executive since May 2016, having joined in 2015 as Chief Financial Officer.

Nick takes up his role at a time when the North East's largest airport is experiencing its strongest growth in almost a decade. During 2016, passenger numbers grew by 6% and a number of new routes were announced.

Prior to joining the airport, Nick spent six years as CFO at North East headquartered Aesica Pharmaceuticals. He began his career at Price Waterhouse where he spent 13 years, most

recently as a Corporate Finance Director in its Manchester office.

Nick said: "I am delighted to be confirmed as Chief Executive at one of the UK's most successful airports. I am passionate about the North East region and my aim will be to further improve connectivity for businesses as well as providing popular holiday destinations for people in the region. I also want to ensure we build upon our reputation for providing the most welcoming customer experience."

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council and Chair of the LA7 Airport Holding Company, said: "On behalf of the Local Authority

Shareholders, I am pleased that Nick Jones has accepted the offer to lead the airport at this important time. Our region needs a strong international gateway airport, generating huge benefits for the economy and many thousands of jobs. We look forward to working with Nick and his team to secure these outcomes."

David Rees of AMP Capital said: "AMP Capital is thrilled Nick has accepted the role of Chief Executive. His solid operations and management experience will ensure Newcastle International Airport remains a successful and growing business for the benefit of both customers and shareholders."

ATHENA RISK SECURE OFFICE IN USA

Athena Risk, expert in security risk management solutions, has opened a new office in the United States and launched an original smartphone app to help business people plan travel and assess risks.

The Newcastle-upon-Tyne-based company is targeting the United States to exploit a gap in the market where it can provide more comprehensive security management services than those available in the country.

Tampa-based universities have already shown an interest in Athena Risk's security risk management solutions with potential plans to work together in the future.

Operating across a variety of sectors, the company has a particular focus on the energy industry. A member of business development organisation NOF Energy, Athena Risk has experience in key energy regions including Africa, South America and South East Asia.

Athena Risk's smartphone app, the Travel Guardian,



features its global risk management software. The app can co-ordinate a risk assessment of every country in the world as well as provide helpful tips.

To provide the package, Athena Risk has to go

through the process of what the company does. It then assesses the company's target markets against recognised risks for the country, which can include terrorism, seasonal trends, cultural factors and power supply.

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JT DOVE CEMENTS FOUNDATIONS WITH CHARITY

Leading builder's merchant JT Dove has pledged its allegiance to a North East based charity that helps children with heart defects from across the UK by making an initial donation of £10,000.

The money was presented to Charlotte Campbell of CHUF (Children's Heart Unit Fund) at JT Dove in Newburn by Sales Consultant Kelly Thompson. The £10,000 donation is just the start, as the management team at JT Dove has pledged to support the charity for 2017 by raising another £20,000.

The funds have been raised through a range of events and collection tins at all 17 of their branches across the country. The events have included the Three Peaks Challenge, Coast to Coast rides and a Race Day.

Steve Robinson, Managing Director of JT Dove, said: "A huge well done to Kelly and all our team. The service CHUF deliver is life changing and that commands massive respect."



NEWCASTLE BASED SPECIALIST RECRUITMENT AGENCY CELEBRATES NEW SENIOR APPOINTMENT

Gosforth based niche recruitment firm Coleman James is going from strength to strength as it has announced a senior appointment to head up the Architectural division.

Dave Clazey has joined the firm in the position of Associate. He is exclusively focused on finding the best candidates to fill graduate to director level roles in the architecture industry.

Coleman James was launched by Andrew Mackay to service the recruitment needs for national and international organisations in the construction and built environment sectors.

Dave said: "When I first started in recruitment I was shadowing an architect. This enabled me to gain an in-depth understanding of both the design and technical requirements needed to succeed within the industry. Coleman James strength lies in the fact that both Andrew and I have many years of experience in the sector. I'm looking forward to being a part of their continued growth."



GUISBOROUGH ACCOUNTANTS ACQUIRED BY BALDWINS

Guisborough based SV Bye is the latest professional service firm to join the Baldwins Accountancy Group, expanding the reach of the group further south in the North East.

The last 12 months have seen Baldwins grow from 16 to 34 offices across the country as part of its national strategic expansion plan, employing over 800 staff with an annual turnover of around £50 million.

SV Bye follows in the footsteps of other North East accountancy firms Evolution, Rowlands and Alnwick Accountants by joining the Baldwins Accountancy Group.

SV Bye was originally formed in 1933. The firm helps its clients with taxation, audits, accounts preparation and book-keeping.

Martin Barber, Director at Baldwins, said: "We're delighted to welcome SV Bye to the Baldwins Group. Through our extensive network, we look forward to helping them to continue to build upon the solid foundations they have developed with the businesses in the North Yorkshire area."

LAW FIRM SETS THE PACE FOR 2017

Swinburne Maddison LLP, one of the region's fastest growing law firms, has set 2017 off to a cracking start by doubling the size of its Durham City accommodation at Aykley Heads.

Swinburne Maddison has taken sole occupation of the 10,000 sq ft detached office building with this major investment signalling the start of a new phase in the development of the law firm.

Partner Martyn Tennant explained: "With more space at our disposal, I feel we are better placed than ever to provide clients with the high standard of professional support they have come to expect. We will be investing heavily and undertaking a significant refurbishment of our workspace over the next few months. As an ambitious team, we are now actively seeking to attract and recruit the best legal talent in the region to add strength and depth to our firm."



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TIME TO CELEBRATE AT SABATINI AND FRATELLI

There are two big milestones coming up for Fabrizio Saba, his son Cristian and the rest of the team at the family run Sabatini and Fratelli restaurants.

Their Fratelli restaurant in Ponteland is celebrating its tenth anniversary, while Sabatini on the Newcastle quayside will next year open its doors for the 25th year.

Both restaurants have become firmly established as two of the leading places in the region where you can find authentic Italian food and, especially at Sabatini in Newcastle, a true taste of Sardinia.

Fabrizio is proud of his Sardinian roots and he was determined that when he opened his exclusive Sabatini restaurant on King Street, which is part of the bustling Quayside in Newcastle, that it would not be just 'another' Italian restaurant serving the sort of meals that are offered in many of the big chains.

For example, the Sabatini signature dish is suckling pig which is specially brought in from London. It has become a favourite for parties of up to eight people. The restaurant is very much a family business and is managed by brother-in-law, Mark Bernardelli.

There are many dishes on the Sabatini menu that you won't recognise. For example, to start with your Antipasti could be Pane Frattau which is layers of Sardinian bread done in a lasagne style with fresh tomatoes and pecorino cheese.

For your main course, how about Spaghetti alla Bottarga con Vongole. It is one of the most popular Sardinian dishes consisting of a sauce made with dried mullet roe and clams, a touch of garlic, parsley and extra virgin olive oil. Put it this way, unless you've been to Sardinia, you are unlikely to have sampled anything like it. Why not enjoy terrific value by visiting during their Happy Hour... Mon - Fri 12.00-18.30, Sat 12.00-17.00.

Fabrizio's son, Cristian, is now part of the family run restaurants. He's worked his way up through the business and has also worked with catering and wine companies in the UK to find out more about the sourcing of top quality food and wine. He's also spent time in Italy discovering new and authentic dishes.

Cristian is a 'chip off the old block' in that he firmly believes in maintaining the Sardinian nature of Sabatini. However, Fabrizio freely admits that Cristian is also bringing new ideas into the business. There are exciting developments in the pipeline which will come to fruition sooner rather than later. Watch this space.

Cristian is also heavily involved with Fratelli in Ponteland. Fratelli caters more for the popular Italian dishes rather than leaning towards the Sabatini, exotic Sardinian flavours of cuisine. It has a terrific family atmosphere. They have happy hours (12.00-19.00 Mon-Fri, 12.00-17.30 Sat and 17.00-21.00 on Sundays), although the times may vary at certain times of the year such as Easter and Bank Holidays. There are two rooms which are available to hire, catering for between 20 and 35 guests. When the weather improves, you'll also be able to sit outside and enjoy some sunshine with your meal.

Both Sabatini and Fratelli have daily specials. Many of them reflect the seasons. Both restaurants also have occasional offers. It's worth joining their mailing list so that you'll never miss anything which is either special or happens to be one of your favourites. All you have to do is enter your email on their website. After that, you won't miss a thing. You can also book a table online.

Go on. Find out what the fuss is all about.

So, if you want a stunning taste of Sardinia, go to Sabatini on King Street on Newcastle's Quayside.
0191 261 4415 www.sabatini.co.uk

For a relaxing evening in super-stylish surroundings go to Ristoranté Fratelli at Bell Villas, in the centre of Ponteland.
01661 872195 www.fratelliponteland.co.uk



ST. PATRICK'S DAY CELEBRATIONS

To celebrate St. Patrick's Day in true North East style, Allied Irish Bank welcomed almost 100 clients, professional partners and staff to the Sandman Hotel for a night of true Irish entertainment.

Allied Irish, the specialist business bank who serve medium and large businesses throughout the UK used the event to say thank you to those who were involved in their success over the past year.

The Irish themed night saw guests greeted with live music, traditional Irish food and of course a few pints of the black stuff. A great night was had by all and Allied Irish would like to thank everyone who made the effort to attend.





APPRENTICESHIP REFORMS UNDER SCRUTINY AT ONE AWARDS AGM



(L to R): Linden Cook, Neale Coleman and David Hall of One Awards with Cheryl Swales from the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP).

The future of apprenticeships and the impact that changes in government legislation will have on employers and training providers came under the spotlight at One Awards' Annual General Meeting.

Employers, training providers and representatives across the education and skills sector attended the meeting at Sunderland College, where they heard from One Awards' Chair of the Board of Trustees, David Hall, and Director of Business Development, Neale Coleman, as well as guest speakers from One Awards' partnership organisations.

Graham Hasting-Evans, Managing Director of NOCN, a leading awarding organisation and apprenticeship assessment organisation, delivered a presentation on the apprenticeship reforms that are coming into effect from April 2017 and talked about the challenges faced by the Government that have pre-empted the need for reform.

Graham said: "Around a quarter of a million people enter the workforce each year with inadequate English and maths skills, which holds back people's productivity and their ability to get an apprenticeship.

"With mounting pressure to increase productivity in light of Brexit and the move towards globalisation in the UK economy, the Government needed to invest more funding in upskilling the workforce.

"I think that the Government's decision to place a higher emphasis on apprenticeships and vocational skills and learning is a good thing."

The Apprenticeship Levy, which is being introduced

on 6 April 2017, is an important factor in the fulfilment of the Government's promise to create three million new apprenticeships over the next five years.

The levy will require all UK employers with a payroll over £3 million, to invest 0.5% in the provision of apprenticeships. All employers, whether eligible to contribute to the levy or not, will have access to funding for apprenticeship training from 1 May 2017.

Delegates at the AGM also heard from Cheryl Swales, Project Manager at the Association of Employment and Learning Providers (AELP), who talked about the upcoming apprenticeship reforms and the DfE approved support programme available to all apprenticeship providers.

Cheryl said: "Graham described the apprenticeship reforms as 'clunky' and I would be inclined to agree. There really are a lot of changes and challenges within the sector at present and a number of grey areas that are causing confusion amongst providers.

"The Future Apprenticeships Support Programme, commissioned and funded by the Education Training Foundation and delivered by AELP and strategic partners will help to support providers through these reforms.

"The programme focuses on areas such as delivering apprenticeship standards, end-point assessment,

employer engagement and understanding the systems and processes necessary for delivering high quality apprenticeships.

"It is also vital that the Government-backed financial guarantee of at least £1b for non-levy payers is realised in order to enable SMEs to continue to offer quality apprenticeships alongside levy paying employers."

One Awards' Director of Business Development, Neale Coleman, delivered a short speech which summarised the organisation's work over the last 12 months before inviting Chair of the Board of Trustees, David Hall, to the lectern.

Despite the current pressures on the education sector, David took the opportunity to reassure attendees about the solidity of the established working partnerships between learning providers and One Awards.

David said: "The education sector is a world of shifting sands at the moment and we face lots of challenges ahead, but I think that the potential shift in apprenticeship delivery is the right thing to do.

"Devolved funding arrangements and a push towards academisation within schools has left the sector in a precarious situation, but learning providers are in safe hands with One Awards."

If you are a business person or education specialist and you would like to know more about the Apprenticeship Levy, contact One Awards by visiting www.oneawards.org.uk

NORTH EAST RECRUITMENT FIRM APPOINTS SENIOR ROLE AT AGE UK NORTHUMBERLAND

A North East-based recruitment firm has helped to appoint a senior position at a high-profile charity.

Edward Reed, which specialises in mid to senior management level recruitment for the finance, HR, operations, sales and marketing and IT sectors was appointed by Age UK Northumberland to support the charity through the search and selection process of finding its new chief executive officer.

Age UK Northumberland is the regional branch of the national not-for-profit organisation, Age UK, which is well-known for its work with older people over the age of 50.

Fending off competition from a number of other well-established Newcastle-based recruitment firms to win the primary role on the account, Edward Reed was seen to be the best fit for Age UK Northumberland after they were recommended to the charity's chair of the board of trustees, Andrew Marsh.

Andrew said: "Edward Reed was referred to us through a member of the board who had worked with the company previously. Having worked within the not-for-profit sector before, Edward Reed had a strong pre-existing network of contacts and a sound understanding of our target audience.

"Edward Reed's flexible approach to the recruitment process allowed them to structure themselves around Age UK Northumberland's timelines without compromising on their quality of service, which was a huge benefit to us."

The successful candidate appointed to the chief executive role is Helen Mills. With a long history of working in the healthcare sector in various senior management roles, Helen was identified as the ideal candidate for the job following a rigorous interview process, supported by Edward Reed.

Helen said: "I have always loved working alongside older people. I come from a



really close-knit family and spent a lot of time with my grandparents growing up, who I deeply admired and respected.

"On hearing about the vacancy at Age UK Northumberland, I actually approached Edward Reed directly to enquire about the role. After speaking with the team there in more detail, I submitted my CV and was subsequently put forward for an interview.

"Throughout the recruitment process, I felt completely supported by Edward Reed. Chris kept me engaged and updated at each stage of the process and I was delighted when he called to offer me the job. I would recommend Edward Reed to anyone."

Managing Director at Edward Reed, Chris Stappard, said: "We have thoroughly enjoyed working alongside Age UK Northumberland on the appointment of their new CEO. Helen is a great fit for the role and we wish her lots of success in the future."

To find out more about Edward Reed, visit: www.edwardreed.co.uk

Powering Business on the Web

At Retox Digital, we work with clients of all shapes and sizes, from large, corporate clients to small start-ups who are venturing online for the first time.

As a boutique digital agency, our team has a broad range of digital skills and expertise and also a wealth of experience working within traditional creative and marketing environments. This enables us to provide a diverse range of tailored services to our clients, depending on their individual needs.

We work very closely with our clients to deliver a bespoke service to help and support them on their digital journeys. We help our clients to discover the possibilities that the web can offer their businesses, and develop and implement the technology and marketing strategies they need to get tangible results.

Having worked with many of our clients for over a decade, we feel very much a part of their journey, and their success stories have become part of the fabric of our own success as a digital provider. We believe in helping our clients to take as much control as they can of their digital activities and to help them



do just that, we have developed a range of tools from content management websites and eCommerce systems, to mailer and blogging tools, which put our clients firmly in control of their websites, online transactions and social media activity.

In this fast-paced industry, it can be extremely difficult for many businesses to keep up with ever-changing trends in

technology. To help keep our clients' marketing strategies fresh and ensure that they can continue to compete effectively in their relevant markets, we help clients to develop digital plans and perform regular reviews of their marketing activities to ensure that they're delivering the best customer experience.

At Retox Digital, we like to think of ourselves as a one-stop-shop for all of our clients' digital marketing needs. When our clients don't have the skills in-house to manage their marketing activities, we can provide bespoke training packages for them, or deliver services direct, working as part of their team to supply the creative, technical or marketing skills they need to power their business on the web.

To find out more about Retox Digital, please visit: www.retoxdigital.com or telephone 01670 785 786.

IT'S IN THE BRIEF



Steve Nelson, Operations Director for Calibre Secured Networks Ltd, provides advice for SMEs on writing an IT brief.

Preparing a brief for the provision of IT work and services should be among the first steps any SME takes when looking to invest in or upgrade existing technology. It's good practice and will go a long way to avoiding misunderstandings, project and cost overruns, and delivering the type of beneficial long-term partnership that everyone craves.

However, it can also be time-consuming, so it's vital that you consider some fundamentals before moving ahead, which includes placing yourself in the shoes of those tendering for your business. A good start might also involve sourcing some previously written briefs as best practice and to see how others have approached the task. Perhaps, you might even want to ask your business networks to share experiences and suggestions.

Consider the technical skills and competencies that will be required and clarify your budget. If possible, estimate the cost of delivering the work over the lifetime of the contract and whether or not the short-list of contractors will be resourced to deliver. Assess how the contract will affect your own workloads too, along with staffing and the ability to move forward while the new IT system is installed, commissioned and proof tested.

You may also need to consider how important those tendering for the work are to your business: go for a partner who's prepared for a long-term

investment in you and your business. This will help you to see things from the provider's side of the fence.

You should always be open to receive questions by phone or email if your brief is unclear or specific sections need clarification. Make sure the IT provider is serious about the job and isn't overstretched, and consider the benefit of a non-disclosure agreement before you both move ahead. Don't forget you will also want the IT firm to make a creative contribution and provide ideas.

You may want to breakdown the brief to cover the separate provision of help/service desk, desktop support, network management, network and content security, infrastructure and platform, maintenance and support, audit services and asset management, IT infrastructure transition services and delivery, service integration/service integrator, disaster recovery/business continuity, back up and data services, and asset disposal.

Ensure your requirements are unambiguous and unequivocal, setting clear deadlines and timescales. Write this section at the end of the brief but also add it at the beginning in summary format, focusing on how you expect the provider to meet/solve your needs, requisite qualification documents, how value for money (and not price alone) will be demonstrated, contract management and details about the team that will expedite the

contract. Identify potential financial, commercial and legal risks that might also have an impact or cause for concern.

Drill down to ascertain more about relevant experience and job credentials and make it clear in your brief when and how the goods and services will be delivered. If the provider is successful in winning your business, ask them to explain how they will manage the project, providing details of costs, industry and company certifications such as ISO 27001, as well as the individual qualifications of those who will undertake the work. Details covering relevant experience, and their background should also be included.

Ensure that there's a section about how they propose to help you with the General Data Protection Regulation (are they aware of this? If not, more at Calibre's website), and any aftercare arrangements within the price.

Make sure the provider's tender is delivered on time; you may want to dismiss bids or tenders that arrive after the closing date. And don't be surprised if these documents are delivered in person, by hand – remember a lot of effort has been invested in their preparation. And make it clear if you will take calls to check if you have received the documents and be prepared to offer any initial thoughts and feedback.

WHAT A DIFFERENCE AN LPA MAKES



Elsie and Edie were sisters, their lives almost identical.

They both married lovely husbands and each had two children. Elise had two girls and Edie had two boys.

They worked hard and saved hard to provide for their families. They bought houses and both reached the exciting day on which they were able to pay off their mortgages. Their houses were their own!

Sad times followed when their husbands died in their 60's. Elsie and Edie survived the challenging times with the support and help of their wonderful families. They continued to live in their homes for many years.

As time ticked on they began to struggle and their memory began to fade. It was just little things at first but as time passed it became more apparent to their children that mum was getting forgetful and she wasn't managing the way that she always had done in the past. Their respective children took on more and more of their mums day to day tasks, particularly mum's paperwork.

Whilst the two sisters were similar in so many ways, Elsie had always been super organised and practical. Edie was a bit more of a dreamer, more than content to believe that everything would "work itself out!"

The day arrived when their children knew that

something needed to be done as their mums really weren't managing.

Thankfully, Elise (the organised one) had visited her solicitor, with her late husband and together, they had each drawn up a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) in relation to their financial decisions. Elsie's daughters contacted the solicitors and collected Elsie's LPA. They visited their mum's bank and registered the LPA. The time soon arrived where Elsie needed to move out of her home and so, using the LPA, Elsie's daughters sold Elsie's house and invested the money to generate an income to pay for Elsie's care.

For Edie, it was a different story. She had no LPA. Her sons took advice but with no legal authority to act on mums behalf, they began the lengthy and expensive process of applying to the Court of Protection for a Deputyship Order.

Edie's boys were told that it would take 6-12 months to be finalised and sure enough the Court issued the Deputyship Order and Edie's sons received it 10 months after making their initial enquiry.

The cost of obtaining the Deputyship Order was over £2000 and every year from now on (whilst their mum is alive) they will be required to pay a further fee to the Court of Protection and submit

accounts detailing Edie's income and expenditure.

About a month into Edie's sons application for the Deputyship Order, Edie deteriorated and had to move into a care home where there were people on hand day and night to help her if she needed. With no access to Edie's bank accounts or legal rights to sell Edie's house, her boys found that the only way was to pay Edie's bills out of their own income and savings. They were ultimately reimbursed, when the Court issued the Deputyship Order and they were able to register it at Edie's bank. When the Court Order arrived, they were also able to put her house on the market for sale but sadly over the course of the year house prices had dipped and they received less than they might have had they sold the house when their mum first went into care.

If only Edie had made an LPA when she was well enough they often thought. What a difference it would have made!

If Elsie and Edie's stories strike a chord with you then please take steps today to put in place a Lasting Power of Attorney. Louise Miller at Mincoffs Solicitors will be pleased to guide you through the process and answer all of the questions that you may have. Louise can also help with Court of Protection applications if a loved one is struggling and has left it too late to make a Lasting Power of Attorney.

KYLES ANNOUNCE NEW PARTNER



Kyles Legal are delighted to announce that Amy Hossack, having been with the firm since its inception 7 years ago, has been made a partner.

Amy, who originates from Sunderland and qualified with a degree in law from Northumbria University began her legal career at a small firm in Newcastle that specialised in prison law.

Since leaving that firm she has gone from strength to strength with Kyles Legal and has become a qualified solicitor, has obtained her duty solicitor qualification and is also now qualified as a higher rights advocate and able to

represent clients in the Crown Court. Although she specialises in work that sees her act for clients in prisons all over the country, Amy regularly now appears at police stations and magistrates courts across the region looking after clients old and new who have the misfortune to be facing a criminal charge.

Amy's appointment is thoroughly deserved and her addition to the partnership is a big step forward for the company.

For an initial chat, or to make an appointment to see us telephone 0191 2571051. For more information go to www.kyleslegalpractice.co.uk

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NEWCASTLE BUILDS POST-BREXIT TRADE LINKS WITH THE MIDDLE EAST



Newcastle NE1, the city's Business Improvement District (BID), is supporting the city's businesses to forge worldwide trading links as the country prepares for Brexit.

NE1 has organised a visit from the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce (ABCC), which represents businesses in a number of Arab states. Led by ABCC Secretary General and Chief Executive Dr Afnan Al Shuaiby, and ABCC Director of Trade Service Abdeslam El-Idrissi the delegates visited leading Newcastle companies and institutions.

NE1 Chief Executive Sean Bullick said: "The result of the EU referendum brought an element of risk to the North East's position as an exporter and while we are sure the Government will do its best to maintain our trade links in Europe and build more in the wider world, we are taking the initiative and are proactively building links that will sustain and grow Newcastle's economy, regardless of the result of the Brexit negotiations."

The visit focused on some of the areas where companies in the Newcastle City Region have complementary interests in the Middle East, namely subsea engineering and renewable energy, science and healthcare, and education.

It was organised to promote opportunities for business, investment, trade, knowledge transfer and learning, and to strengthen links between Arab speaking countries and Newcastle.

Highlights of the trip included visits to Pearson Engineering at the city's historic Armstrong Works, Shepherd Offshore in Wallsend, the Institute for Genetic Medicine at the International Centre for Life and Newcastle University.



Bruce Shepherd, Managing Director of Shepherd Offshore, said: "The visit was extremely informative, we will be having a further meeting to discuss future projects in the Eastern Mediterranean and Gulf".

In addition to this, the visitors hoped to raise the economic, trade and diplomatic profile of Arab nations by meeting and sharing ideas with regional figures on issues such as research, governance, regional economics and new technologies.

Professor Lyle Armstrong, Professor of Cellular

Reprogramming at the Institute of Genetic Medicine, said: "What we do with our STEM work in Newcastle affects everyone in the world. We want to role this out as a treatment for any disease, for anyone in any part of the world. International trade links are of enormous importance to us not only for finding new markets that we can adapt our cures to, but also for attracting inward investment that helps our university and our corporate operations to prosper.

Abdeslam El-Idrissi said: "We are delighted to have visited Newcastle and would like to thank our hosts Newcastle NE1 Limited for helping to organise our trip. There are a number of areas where the interests and expertise of Newcastle and the Arab nations complement one another and we are keen to explore them.

"This visit has allowed us to further friendship, co-operation and engagement with the people and companies of the North East. It is clear that there is much commercial potential in Arab-British collaboration which we hope to unlock."

Sean Bullick added: "We are honoured to have welcomed the delegates from the Arab-British Chamber of Commerce to Newcastle. This is an excellent opportunity to showcase what Newcastle city region's world class businesses have to offer countries in the Arabic world. We have world leaders in sectors such as offshore and renewables, science, health, science and education, all of which are areas of interest to our visitors."

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NEW INHERITANCE TAX RULES - WILL YOUR ESTATE NOW BE FREE OF INHERITANCE TAX?



Passing on your home or preserving the family's inheritance is often a key concern for many people. The summer budget of 2015 announced the biggest inheritance tax change this decade. The new 'residence nil rate band' increases the current inheritance tax threshold from £325,000 to £500,000 if your estate qualifies.

Current Rules

At present, each individual has a tax free allowance of £325,000. Anything above this allowance is taxed at 40%, although the tax rate it is reduced to 36% if you leave at least 10% of your estate to charity.

If you are either married or in a civil partnership then you can transfer your spouse or partner's unused tax free allowance on their death. This is because transfers between spouses and partners are always free of inheritance tax. Therefore, if you leave your entire estate to your spouse or partner there will not be any tax to pay on your death and then when your partner dies they will have a tax free allowance of £650,000.

From April 2017

The inheritance tax threshold will gradually increase by £175,000 per person by 2020/21, increasing the total inheritance tax free allowance to £500,000 per person and £1,000,000 for a couple. This additional allowance is only available when you leave your home to your descendants.

How will the rules apply to you?

If I leave my home to my step children will this apply?

Yes. The legislation includes step children, adopted children and grandchildren.

I do not have children. Can I leave my home to my nieces and nephews?

No. The legislation restricts the new allowance to direct descendants only.

My home is worth less than the allowance. What happens in that case?

The allowance applies only to the value of your residence. If your home is worth less than the new allowance then the surplus tax free allowance will be lost and cannot be applied to any of your other assets.

Do I need to change my Will?

You should review your Will with a solicitor to ensure that your family can take advantage of the new allowance following your death.

Example

Mr and Mrs Smith have an estate worth £1,000,000. The estate comprises of savings and investments of £650,000 and the family home worth £350,000.

Mr Smith dies and leaves his entire estate to Mrs Smith. Mrs Smith dies and leaves her entire estate

to her children. There will be no inheritance payable on Mr Smith's death. The tax calculation on Mrs Smith's death will be:

Before April 2016

Estate of £1,000,000 with a property value of £350,000

Less: £650,000 nil rate band taxed free of tax
£350,000 taxed at 40% = Inheritance Tax Bill of £140,000

After April 2021/2021

Estate of £1,000,000 with a property value of £350,000

Less: £650,000 nil rate band taxed free of tax
£350,000 residence nil rate band
£0.00 taxed at 40% = Inheritance Tax Bill of £0.00

Conclusion

Many families who might have been subject to a large inheritance tax bill could now pass their family home on free of tax. Couples who leave their entire estate to each other and then their children will have an inheritance tax free allowance of £1,000,000.

Jessica Morton is a solicitor with Newcastle law firm Sintons. To speak to her about this or any other matter, contact her on Jessica.morton@sintons.co.uk or 0191 226 7801.

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THREE NEW PARTNERS AT SINTONS

Law firm Sintons has named three of its lawyers as new Partners. Anna Barton, Jane Meikle and Tom Wills have all been promoted within the Newcastle-based firm, taking its Partner count to 31. Anna is Head of Conveyancing and manages the residential property team. Jane, a well-known banking and finance specialist, is Head of Banking and Tom, a real estate lawyer, is Head of Agriculture and Estates. Phil Ridley, Practice Director at Sintons, said: "Anna, Jane and Tom are highly rated lawyers. We are delighted their expertise, hard work and commitment have been rewarded with partnership. They are renowned for delivering an outstanding service through their understanding of clients' needs and they take pride in what they do and how they do it." With more than 220 employees, Sintons is one of the largest full service, law firms in the North East and serves clients throughout the UK and further afield.



SOLICITOR APPOINTMENT AT MINCOFFS

Newcastle Law Firm Mincoffs has announced that Leanne Kettlewell has joined its Commercial Property team, after completing a two year training contract at the firm and successfully qualifying as a solicitor.

Since joining in March 2015, the team recognised Leanne's dedication and aptitude for the sector and are delighted to have her join on a permanent basis.

Leanne studied for a BA in History at Northumbria University, achieving a Second Class Honours, Upper Division. She then went on to complete the Graduate Diploma in Law and the Legal Practice Course at Northumbria University Law School, where she attained a Commendation in both.

Leanne commented: "I am really excited to finally qualify as a solicitor and to be staying with Mincoffs as I have thoroughly enjoyed my time here whilst on my training contract. I look forward to developing my career further within Mincoffs."

Head of Commercial Property, Ryan Bannon, added: "I am delighted Leanne is joining our team. 2017 is already looking very promising for the firm. We are very happy to have Leanne on board."

NEW HIRE SET TO STRENGTHEN SECURICLAD'S SALES TEAM

High security modular panel systems manufacturer Securiclاد has strengthened its sales team with the appointment of Mark Sutherland as Project Coordinator, with the task of supporting the sales team as demand for the company's products hits an all-time high.

Mark will be a dedicated point of contact for customers, managing all aspects of after-sales service to ensure customer requirements are fully met, whilst overseeing the timely delivery of orders.

Highly experienced in both engineering and project management, Mark has a BSc in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering as well as a Foundation Degree in Subsea Engineering.

Prior to joining Securiclاد, Mark worked in the oil and gas industry for several high-profile companies such as global oil engineering firm National Oilwell Varco.



Mike McColl, Managing Director of Securiclاد, said: "We're delighted to welcome Mark to the team. His combination of engineering expertise and project management skills will be invaluable in helping us to manage our growth while continuing to provide high quality products and offering an exceptional level of customer care."

NEW TRAINING MANAGER TAKES THE REINS AT SALAMANDER

Sunderland-based Salamander Pumps has appointed a new training manager. With 13 years as a qualified plumber under his belt, new manager Ken Vance is well placed to help further develop Salamander's UK-wide training framework.

Ken joined Salamander in 2010 on the technical help desk and has worked towards completing a two-year HNC in Manufacturing Engineering at the same time.

His new role will see him work with merchants who sell the Salamander range of brass, whole-house and mains boosting pumps, to help them give the best advice to customers. He will also train plumbing students at

colleges around the UK, as well as Salamander's support engineers and team of regional business development managers.

Ken also has plans to develop the company's installer training programme, which provides telephone and on the spot support via one to one and group sessions.

Salamander's Technical Director, Gareth Richards, said: "This is an exciting time for Salamander. We are confident that the skills and experience that Ken brings to the job will make a very positive contribution to our continued success."



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PUTTING PLANS IN PLACE FOR OUR FOUR-LEGGED FRIENDS



Hannah Foulds

With around 11 million UK households owning a pet, a significant number of people have a four-legged friend that they care for very dearly and consider an important part of the family.

As the nation's love for pets goes from strength-to-strength it is becoming more commonplace for people to worry about what would happen to their beloved pet should they die before their furry friend. As part of National Pet Month, Hannah Foulds from Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP explains how owners can ensure that their pets are cared for should the worst happen.

Personal Chattels are defined by the Administration of Estate Acts 1925 and UK law regards a deceased person's pets as Personal Chattels. If specific provisions for what should happen to a person's pets are not made within their Will, their pets shall legally form part of their estate as a Personal Chattel and will pass to their residuary beneficiary.

So, what would you like to happen to your pet upon your death? For people who would prefer their pet not to form part of their estate, it is a

good idea for them to stipulate in their Will who will take over ownership.

Therefore, they could indicate that they wish to leave their dog to 'John Smith' and this shall ensure their dog, should it survive its owner, will pass to the said 'John Smith'. Pet owners can also make provision that should the person receiving the pet accept responsibility, they will receive a pecuniary legacy (cash gift) from their Will.

However, owners can also stipulate that should their pet have predeceased them, the pecuniary legacy will fail as the pet has died. It is always advisable to ask the person who the pet would be left to if they would be willing to look after the pet upon the owner's death. Should they refuse after the owner's death, once again, the pet would form part of its owner's estate and pass to the residuary beneficiary.

It may be that the owner is leaving their estate to a certain person but do not wish to leave their pet to them and they have no other person to leave the pet to. In this instance, owners could consider including in their Will that they wish to leave their pet to a particular Pet Charity for rehoming. They could also include a pecuniary legacy to pass to the charity should they so wish. It would be advisable that the owner contacts their considered Pet Charity to ensure they do offer a rehoming programme.

Millions of people own pets, but a lot have not considered what would happen to their pet should they die. Including provision for pets in their Will will put an owner's mind at ease that they will be looked after and cared for in accordance with their wishes after their death.



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ONLINE DIVORCES – CAN YOU END A MARRIAGE WITH A CLICK?

We may be used to shopping or buying holidays over the internet, but what about divorce agreements? Ward Hadaway Family lawyer Louise Cannell-Mirza looks at the situation.

It is understandable that separating couples wish to initiate and finalise divorce proceedings as quickly and painlessly as possible.

However, the use of online divorce services could create more problems than it solves.

The internet is certainly the go to place for grocery shopping, holiday bookings and maybe even to find a new partner, but lawyers would struggle to agree that it can effectively be used on separation.

Whilst the divorce process can appear merely a paperwork exercise - issuing a divorce petition, applying for Decree Nisi and in turn for the Decree Absolute to finally dissolve the marriage - the contemporaneous issues that undoubtedly flow cannot be handled so easily.

A generic website certainly cannot tell you how to share the marital assets, how to claim against a spouse's pension, how to maintain the family

business, who should remain in the family home and, importantly, how to arrange the care of the children going forward.

All lawyers are well aware that the divorce is only part of fallout from separation and is often the most simplest to resolve.

It is the wider issues such as securing appropriate financial disclosure and ensuring that any financial agreement reached is in your long term best interests that need timely, sensitive and specialist advice.

At Ward Hadaway we offer a tailored service offering advice upon your individual circumstances to navigate towards the best outcome for you, in the most effective and efficient way possible.

That may be through negotiation or a referral to arbitration, mediation or the issue of court proceedings; whichever approach is best for you.

We are a full service law firm with the ability to secure advice from colleagues in a range of sectors that are relevant to you or to your business.

Our family team includes specialist children lawyers who can guide you and your family through to life post-divorce, ensuring your children's welfare remains paramount.

The danger is that by rushing to finalise a divorce, people are leaving themselves vulnerable to the loss of financial claims against each other.

Alternatively, if matters are not finalised appropriately, people could leave themselves open to future and unexpected claims from ex-spouses.

The first step on separation must be securing appropriate and specialist legal advice to ensure that any 'quickie divorce' doesn't leave you with long-term complications.

For more information on the issues raised by this article, please contact louise.cannell-mirza@wardhadaway.com or call 0191 204 4407.

FUNDING FOR GROWTH



The recently announced £145m North East fund could help over 600 businesses over the next five years, presenting great opportunities for SMEs across the region.

The former Jeremie 2 fund offers different types of equity investments and loans to companies to accelerate growth, investment and job creation. Not surprisingly, the marketplace is buzzing with talk about this significant amount of new funding.

Opportunities to secure funding are often missed by businesses because of a lack of awareness or understanding about suitable funding options available to them.

There is a traditional mindset of sourcing investment through a bank or using cash reserves, but these might not be the right, or best option. Some businesses use brokers who can access funding from different funders, but brokers will naturally promote debt finance solutions.

It may well be that equity is the right answer for SMEs looking for funding, but they need to ask themselves what sort of funding they need.

Entrepreneurs looking to grow their business are often understandably keen to hold onto their equity, but there's a fine line to be drawn and relinquishing some equity may be exactly the right course of action to take their business to the next level.

The potential for North East business is huge but SMEs aren't necessarily aware of all the opportunities available to them. The former Jeremie 2 fund is just one source, but there are alternative financing products - including peer to peer lenders and crowd funding - available.

Whatever type of funding businesses need, it's crucial that leaders talk to those who can guide them through the process and find the best deal for them. These conversations are invaluable, and it's important to start talking and forming relationships at an early stage.

SMEs shouldn't seek advice at the point that they need funding, but well in advance. Business leaders will need to think differently and get ready for investment – for example, thinking about business structure, corporate governance or bringing on board non-executive directors. I find, when clients come to me early, it is easier to help them build up a strong network of trusted advisers and make the most of the support available.

Despite concerns about the impact of Brexit and general uncertainty about the economy, there are now some great opportunities for SMEs and I believe there's never been as much investment funding available.

Andrew Cawkwell, Partner,
Banking and Restructuring Team, Muckle LLP. Tel: 0191 211 7957
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HIGH HEELS: HIGH STAKES!



Jane Sinnamon

It may be reasonable for an employer to expect and require workers to dress professionally for work particularly in client/customer facing sectors. In fact, it is not unreasonable to expect men and women to dress differently by virtue of their sex.

However, refusing (and being punished for refusing) an employer's request to wear heels that are between 2 and 4 inches high is not likely to be an issue encountered by men in the workplace. It was an issue Nicola Thorpe (a Receptionist) was confronted with when she was sent home without pay by her employer for refusing to wear high heels!

Background

On 25 January 2017, the House of Commons Petitions Committee and the Women and Equalities Committee (the Committee's) published its conclusions in a report called 'High heels and workplace dress codes' (the Report) following an investigation into an online petition Nicola Thorpe submitted requesting that dress codes requiring women to wear high heels to work be illegal. As part of the Committee's investigations, they interviewed some 700 individuals who all gave stark examples of employers asking workers to wear revealing clothes, dye their hair, re-apply make up during working hours and wear high heels, to name but a few.

The Law

The Equality Act 2010 (EqA) was introduced to prohibit discrimination because of a protected characteristic such as gender, sex, religion either directly (where an employer treats a worker less favourably) or indirectly (where an employer operates a provision, criterion or practice that places

one group of workers at a particular disadvantage to another group). Unlike direct discrimination, an employer can defend indirect discrimination where such a practice can be objectively justified, such as for health and safety reasons.

The Committee's Findings

In response to Ms Thorpe's petition, the government said the EqA currently adequately protects female workers from discriminatory dress codes.

However, the Report suggests otherwise and recommends significant changes to current laws on the basis they do not go far enough to adequately protect workers.

As a starting point, the Report concluded that there is damage to a worker's health and well-being as well as an impact on performance at work physically where they are required to wear high heels. This is quite a straight forward conclusion. However, it also concluded that a dress code of this nature (or similar) left female workers feeling humiliated and sexualised in comparison to their male co-workers.

While there have been cases on the issue of dress code with reference to religion for instance, the same cannot be said for sex discrimination arising from a 'high heel' dress code. The concern is that this is because workers feel too insecure to raise issues that are quite delicate and personal in nature.

The relevance of the Report for employers

It's likely an employer would struggle to justify the

requirement for a female worker to wear heels, to project a smart image for instance, when the same objective could be achieved by a women in smart flat shoes.

Despite the Report's findings, there is unlikely to be significant changes to the law but more likely amendments to legislation that perhaps seek to financially penalise businesses for discriminatory treatment.

In the meantime, an employer is likely to be in breach of the EqA where they require a female worker dress in a way that is not equal to a male co-worker and which places them at a detriment, either in terms of comfort or because they feel sexualised by such a practice.

This is an area that has and will continue to attract scrutiny and media attention, which is all the more reason for businesses to be wary of the pitfalls even in the most well intended dress codes policies.

Awareness is therefore essential to avoid claims under the EqA and adverse publicity.

What Next?

The Report has recommended that ACAS produce detailed guidance on dress codes in July 2017.

A parliamentary debate on this topic is scheduled this month with an expected published response in May.

Without delay, businesses should review all implied and express dress code policies.

If you would like Collingwood Legal to review your dress code policy, please contact me on 0191 282 2884 or at jane.sinnamon@collingwoodlegal.com.

NAMING AND SHAMING & THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE

By Claire Rolston, Solicitor, Director, CLR Law

Government names and shames

The government issued a press release in February naming and shaming those businesses who had not paid the National Minimum Wage (the "NMW"). In total 359 businesses were named including Debenhams, Subway, Lloyds Pharmacy and Heron Foods. In the case of Debenhams, an accounting error had led to nearly £135,000 having to be repaid to 11,858 workers.

The press release stated that over 15,500 workers had received back pay following HMRC investigations and that penalties of over £800,000 had been imposed.

Who has to pay the NMW?

All employers must pay the NMW to their workers. This covers employees and the broader category of individuals providing personal service who are not in business on their own account. There is also an apprentice rate for those under 19 years of age or over 19 but in their first year of apprenticeship.

What counts?

Basic pay, bonuses, commission, piece work payments and the accommodation allowance all count towards the NMW but tips and most benefits in kind do not.

NMW rates

The applicable rate depends on the worker's age. From 1 April 2017 the hourly rates are as follows:

- National Living Wage - Over 25 - £7.50 (from £7.20)
- Standard Adult Rate - 21 - 24 - £7.05 (from £6.95)
- Development Rate - 18 - 20 - £5.60 (from £5.55)
- Young Workers Rate - Under 18* - £4.05 (from £4.00)
- Apprentice Rate - £3.50 (from £3.40)

*but above compulsory school age.

Enforcement

HMRC will investigate compliance and can impose penalties as well as requiring back pay to be paid. Individuals can also bring civil claims.

How to comply

To ensure you comply with the NMW, you should:

- familiarise yourself with the NMW provisions and rates;
- keep accurate records of pay and hours for each worker which should be kept for a minimum of 6 years;
- properly investigate any grievance or informal complaint; and
- take advice in respect of individuals working on-call and/or sleeping at their place of work.



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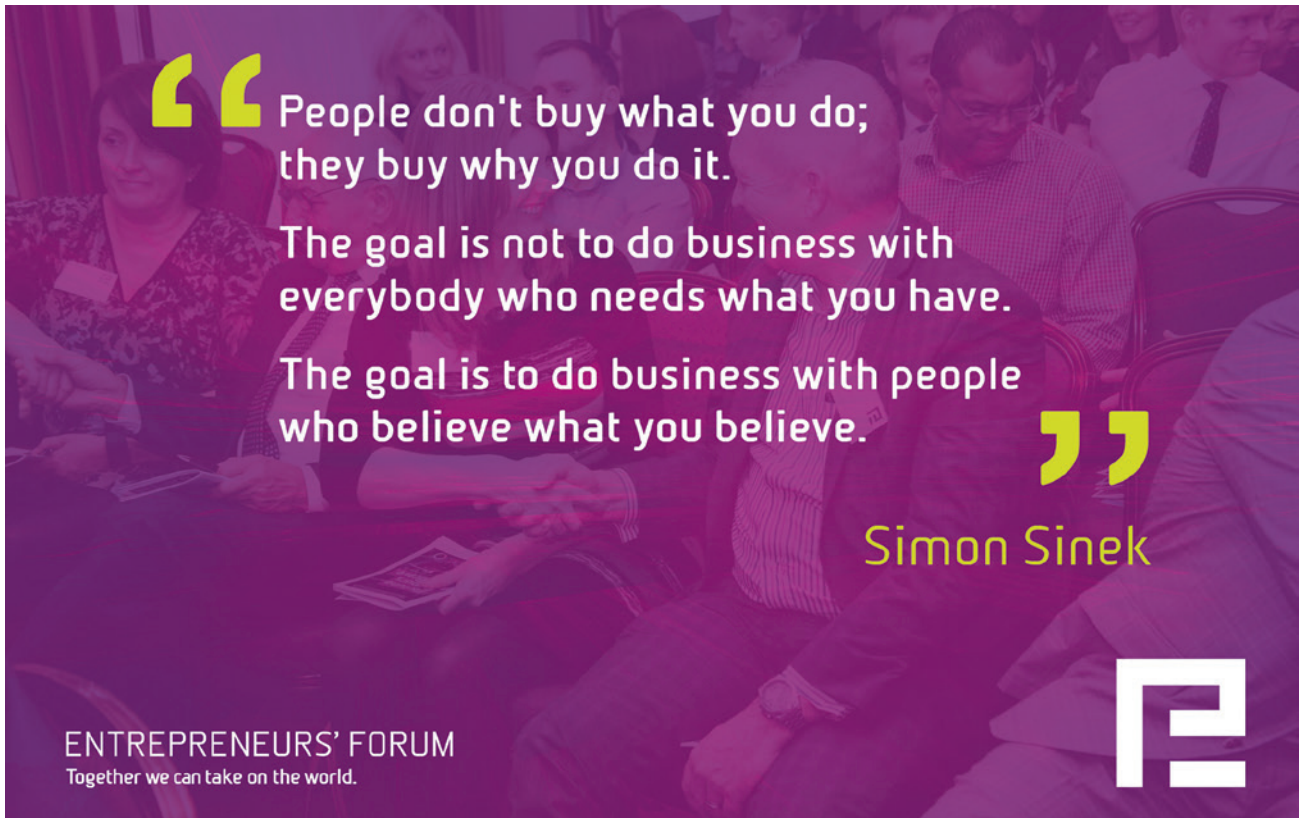
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GREAT BUSINESSES ARE BUILT ON TRUST

By the Entrepreneurs' Forum



Trust is more important than ever before if you want to be successful in business. Ahead of cash, credit and stock, it's perhaps the most valuable commodity of them all.

Whether it's between a business owner and their shareholders, a manager and their team, or a company and their suppliers and customers, being able to share a common purpose is the foundation for any fruitful relationship.

Of course that's not to say purely commercial agreements don't work, but people are drawn repeatedly to those they consider trustworthy and without this a relationship will quickly become transactional.

By building trust you can increase the value of your partnerships. All you need to do is find mutual ground and make sure each party has confidence in the other's ability to deliver on their part of the vision; but that's easier said than done.

In today's virtual world, people and businesses have the flexibility to adapt the way they work quickly and continually, meaning that instead of being able to trust in the power of a company to create relationships, the playing field is much more open and complex.

Today companies have to rely on trust to convince those over which they have no real power to collaborate, and to do this they need a common goal or reason why.

An introduction by a respected third party might speed up the growth of confidence - whether this is

a reference for a new employee or an introduction to a supplier from a friend - but ultimately there must be trust and alignment with an organisation's brand and values if the relationship is to be a success.

Here at the Entrepreneurs' Forum we work with a number of different partners in what we see as mutually beneficial relationships. Each association begins with the common belief that by helping North East entrepreneurs and SMEs to grow their businesses, we can make the region a stronger and better place.

Our entrepreneurial members are those people leading ambitious SMEs who are willing to join us because we have a proven track record of altruistically supporting some of the most successful business owners our region has ever seen.

We share a common drive, as we believe if SMEs can grow bigger and quicker, this will boost our region's economy and create more quality jobs. Something the North East needs if we want to keep graduates in the region and bring unemployment levels down further.

To achieve this goal, we need help from a number of other partners.

Inspirational and successful people regularly give

up their time to travel to the North East and share their experience at our events because they believe in our cause.

Our Corporate Partners, who are experts in their own field, each share our faith that entrepreneurs are critical to driving the region's economic prosperity.

While there are obvious other reasons why a corporate company would want to support the region's most ambitious entrepreneurs, all of our partners genuinely believe they can help business owners grow more successfully and they match our passion for the prosperity of the area.

By being honest, open and transparent about what we do and hope to achieve, we try to demonstrate that we are not only good at what we do, but we're committed to helping entrepreneurs thrive.

The Entrepreneurs' Forum is living proof that if you focus on saying, doing and sharing the things you truly believe in, then people who hold the same values as you will gravitate towards you and want to support and work with you.

If you want to build a great business, partnerships based on trust will give you more success than those based purely on revenue growth. Collaborations built on similar ambitions and strategic outlooks can have the same effect, so when the two are combined, the sky really is the limit!

The Entrepreneurs' Forum support more than 300 aspirational North East business owners in all sectors, helping to expand their networks, improve leadership skills, share experience, create new opportunities and grow their business. For more information call 0191 500 7780 or visit www.entrepreneursforum.net



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REBECCA PHILLIPSON

UR-IN THE PAPER

Rebecca Phillipson founded inthepaper.co.uk aged 21, after suspending her English & Art History degree to pursue her lifetime ambition of managing her own company. Two years later, the company had become the UK's largest retailer of personalised newspapers, capable of producing more than 10,000 per month.

After noticing the significant demand for personalised football newspapers, PersonalisedFootballGifts.co.uk was born and since 2007 this business has driven change and innovation to become the leading supplier of personalised, licensed merchandise to the Premier League and beyond.

In 2016, the business merged with a personalisation software company and underwent a rebrand to Custom Gateway Ltd., adding another string to their bow as they now offer personalisation software to companies throughout the world.

Rebecca has achieved a number of entrepreneurship awards including North East Entrepreneur of the Year and Female Entrepreneur of the Year as well as appearing in BBC's *Beat the Boss* and on ITV's *This Morning*.

Tell me a bit about your background

My Dad is in business, so I suppose it's no surprise that I started my own company at a young age. I started UR-In The Paper Ltd in 2005, I'd just put my degree on hold at university; as much as I liked my studies I was looking for something more. I made a novelty newspaper as a birthday gift for my grandfather, making him the focus of the photos and stories, my dad suggested this was a good idea for a business and it all started from there.

In 2007, we saw an opportunity in producing football themed newspapers and set about acquiring a license to produce them. We started approaching different licensing boards and Premier League football clubs to produce personalised gifts for them; introducing a whole range of new products such as personalised dressing mugs, wallets, drinks bottles, wallets, engraved items etc. as well as our personalised newspapers – this really was ground breaking stuff as there wasn't much personalised merchandise around at the time and we continue to be leading innovators in our sector today. Our best-selling product is the personalised football dressing room mug, which shows the dressing room with all of the shirts hung up, so the recipient of the gift has their shirt with their name and chosen number next to those of footballers like Wayne Rooney.

What was your first business premises?

We're actually still in our first business premises, the Weardale Business Centre in Stanhope, a historic building that was built as a Co-op in 1908. When we started out, the company was just my Dad and me, in a small office. As we have grown we have expanded in the same building. We took on an apprentice early on and as the company kept growing we outgrew the office. We now have pretty much the entire first floor of the business centre.

How has the company grown?

We had grown organically to 20 people by the end of 2016 and now we have merged with a personalisation software company based in Macclesfield, there are more than 55 of us. We've retained both sites, rather than moving either part of the businesses as each section has its own specialism – we do the retailing, web, product design, approvals and fulfilment while Macclesfield office are software specialists working with large and well-known companies to offer mass customisation and print on demand

technology around the world. We recently had to open a new production facility as we had simply outgrown the space we had. In addition to these sites, we operate a personalisation experience at the Old Trafford Museum and at the Emirates Stadium.

Did the recession have an impact on your approach to business?

Our average order value was hit and we had to be careful with our marketing budget, but we did get through it. Things have obviously picked up since.

How has the market changed since you got into it?

Personalisation has grown year on year, so the number of companies producing personalised goods is higher than ever. This is good for us, our merger means that we facilitate personalisation through websites, so the more people that offer personalised goods, the more customers we have.

There has been a massive boom in the reseller platforms, which we've been using for a few years. Amazon has been really significant for us, as has eBay, and Etsy is up and coming too.

What would you say your Unique Selling Points are?

One of our main Unique Selling Points is that we are fully licensed all of our personalised gifts are only available through us. There are more and more people that can put your name on a mug, but we have the value of the brands we've partnered with, it's something different.

Manchester United was the first football club we partnered with and is one of our most popular. It took us a little while to get in front of the right person, but they are committed to finding new ways to enhance their fans' experience, so it all came from there.

Everything about us is unique really. Personalisation is still emerging and many retailers are just adding it to their website, whereas we have been doing it for years. Our merger keeps us ahead of the game here too, our software is unique to us.

How do you keep your team motivated?

The most important aspect of motivation to us is allowing everyone to contribute, and letting them know their ideas are valued and often put into practice. It is important that everybody feels involved and feels part of the bigger picture; that they share your goals and know how you want to achieve them. Everyone needs to know how you

want the company reach its objectives and what their role in it is. On top of this we reward people with things like staff nights out, employee of the week and we have team building activities.

How does your motivation now compare with that when you started the firm?

My motivation is higher than when we started the company, it's definitely grown. I've got children now, which changes your outlook, as you feel you're building something for more than just yourself. When I started out I just wanted to do something different, now I have ambition and drive to achieve specific goals; I'm more focussed than ever.

Your business structure, how did it come about?

It's always been my Dad and me, we've run it together. Obviously he has his areas of specialisation and I have mine, and since the merger this hasn't really changed. We have more directors now but we all stick to what we specialise in.

We have an Operations Manager, Design Manager and a Logistics Manager, but I'm in the office most days and I still take a front-line role in running things.

Has mentoring been a part of your entrepreneurial journey?

I've had a lot of support from my Dad. He started off in containers and property, and he has a wealth of business experience.

In terms of mentoring other people, I love apprenticeships. We have apprentices in the business and it is very rewarding to train them and see them grow professionally. Everyone pitches in to help their development.

What are your plans for the future?

The merger was very recent, so in the immediate term we're focussed on maximising the benefits of this. It has already started to bear fruit, which is a big positive for us.

We're looking to expand our licenses, especially outside of the sport sector, in entertainment for example and we have something significant in the pipeline there. We're also looking to expand our in-store personalisation experience. We currently have a floor of the Football Museum at Old Trafford where people can have their pictures taken on a green screen see it on the personalised merchandise available. We're looking to take this to more football clubs and other venues.



Rebecca Phillipson is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a unique group of like-minded people who come together through peer-to-peer mentoring and a series of inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and grow their business. For more information, visit www.entrepreneursforum.net



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MONEY DOESN'T ALWAYS MAKE THE WORLD GO ROUND



Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, talks about the importance of benefits and rewards to attract and retain the best people.

Despite a year of economic uncertainty, businesses across the UK have continued to invest in their workforce according to the UK's leading independent job website.

CV Library's latest market report shows that average salaries rose by 1.9% in February when compared year-on-year. The data also confirmed an increase of 7.6% in job vacancies for the same period.

With industries like automotive (9.1%), manufacturing (7.7%), legal (7.5%) and accounting (6.4%) seeing the largest pay rises - and cities like Brighton (+9.9%) and Edinburgh (+9.5%) leading the way - it's clear that skills shortages and high living costs mean a competitive salary is critical when recruiting the best people, but it's by no means the only factor.

Employers regularly use bonuses as a way to supplement wages and reward staff. They work well as a productivity incentive, keeping people engaged for the duration of a project. They also allow a company to maintain control of their long-term remuneration budget.

As long as the overall annual salary and role are broadly competitive, I find it's the company culture and benefits package that tends to tip the balance when someone is deciding on their next move.

From free food and drink to a day off for Christmas shopping, everyone prefers a company with

benefits. It shows they care and that can have a big bearing on how valued people feel.

The most popular benefits include holidays, life assurance, pensions, free parking, car allowances, salary sacrifice schemes (health or childcare vouchers), study support, private medical insurance and flexible working hours.

There has also been a move towards encouraging a healthy and productive workforce through well-being programmes, financial incentives for biking to work and discounts on gym and leisure club membership.

Onsite medical and GP care is something American company SAS make available. Negotiated discounts at local pubs, restaurants and health and beauty salons are something Skyscanner offer.

SC Johnson provide a private concierge service that improves staff focus by giving people an easy way to complete their life admin; which can be anything from picking up dry cleaning to taking your car to the garage and even shopping around for insurance quotes.

Global accountancy firm PwC offer a four week sabbatical to senior staff with over five years' service; encouraging them to recharge their batteries and come back in to the business rejuvenated and refreshed.

Going a step further, on top of a day off for their birthday, Visualsoft offer unlimited and

unmonitored holidays and flexi-time to all staff; trusting them to manage their home life alongside their work goals.

The Body Shop provides five volunteering days each year for staff to do with as they please. They can opt to explore something new that is of personal interest, or use the time to help a cause close to their heart.

Virgin is famous for the way it treats people, celebrating achievement by identifying star contributors and throwing parties to bring staff and their families together. This not only contextualises what they do and have achieved, but generates higher levels of employee engagement.

So does it work? Well you only have to look at the success and reputation of the businesses who believe supporting and trusting people both in and outside of work has remarkably positive results.

That 'clinking clanking sound' certainly isn't the only thing that 'makes the world go round' for their employees. So when it's time for your next staff appraisals or salary reviews, why not try to come up with something a little different?

Like some of these examples, it doesn't have to cost a lot, but by offering the chance for a better work-life balance, you'll not only make people happier, but you'll increase loyalty, improve your company brand and build a reputation as a great place to come and work; and who doesn't want that!

Contact Bryony for help finding the right tax & accountancy role or recruits on (0191) 375 9983. Alternatively, visit www.bryonygibson.com, connect on LinkedIn or follow @bryonygibson.

**BRYONY
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A SLIPPERY SLOPE

With the ever-increasing overseas business opportunities arising for North East enterprises the question to consider is "Are your company travel insurance & travel policies adequate"?



Official reports state that UK business travellers made 9.4% more visits abroad and spent £3.5 billion more in 2015 than 2014 (9.8%). Outside of current Brexit related inflation woes an increase in business related travel both domestic and abroad provides additional concerns for businesses and corporate organisations to be worried about.

The instability of international or home grown terrorism, political unrest, state sponsored espionage, the increasing risk of natural disasters and the ever-increasing potential of an economic market crash crisis, business insurance cannot be an option but should be viewed as a legal requirement. However, an alternative question that presents itself is "How are North East companies and insurers dealing with these threats to business travellers"?

Reduction of risk:

It has been noted that organisations throughout various market sectors are outsourcing elements of their duty of care onto some third-party providers to ensure that their policies, processes and crisis management systems are kept in line with current global shifts. The consensus amongst key decision makers for this strategy is that incorporating

external subject matter experts (SME's) allows them to gain clarity on the bigger picture within a fast-changing environment. North East companies are starting to understand that generic off the shelf insurance policies are inadequate as they potentially cause additional risks to their operations, reputation and more importantly their travelling employees.

The ever changing social, political, environmental and economic climates means reaching out to SME's is becoming a necessity despite the financial implications, this may be viewed as a negative to those who hold the purse strings but a positive to those within HR and operational control appointments. Rather than view external SME's as a threat to organisational finances, take a step back and look at the potential dangers that may arise if your internal policies, insurance and duty of care is compromised. Such an example would be 'several employee's attend a trade mission, during their visit they are caught up in a natural disaster, whereupon many have been injured', what are you going to do?

Having the ability and resources of SME's (insurance providers and risk management specialists) in their remit allows business executives to gain full control, accountability and deliver real time information

for their employees. Today's risk management & insurance tools are seen as realistic deliverables that are not a financial burden and favoured by insurance specialist providers. Many of these tools encompass, 24/7 tracking capabilities, real time information push notifications (transport delays, civil unrest, terrorism, natural disasters etc) through smartphone applications to specific training, policy guidance and implementation, all of which can be delivered in very short periods of time.

In summary:

Analysing today's overseas business opportunities decision makers must be mindful of their organisational duty of care levels, is having off the shelf insurance & generic policies adequate? Simply trawling online insurance policies for a quick fix can be a disaster waiting to happen, furthermore being ill-equipped with generic travel crisis management policies and having a lack of critical information streams is a poor excuse for complacency. At Athena Risk we rely on the phrase 'to be forewarned is to be forearmed', thankfully companies are realising this is a mantra to be adhered to by taking a more proactive approach towards seeking external guidance with regards to their internal policies which will provide dividends in protecting their operations and assets.





A SECLUDED SPOT

by Michael Grahamslaw

Our business lunching escapades this month once more led us to Low Fell where we enjoyed a very serene afternoon at Eslington Villa.

The Victorian mansion has been comprehensively refurbished and today boasts 18 gorgeously-appointed bedrooms and a fine in-house eatery to match. Tucked away in a nicely secluded spot, it brings a semblance of calm to a hectic working day which made it the perfect location for a recent business debrief.

Characterised by modern British/French cuisine, Eslington Villa's award-winning restaurant has amassed a large following thanks to Head Chef Jamie Walsh's simple approach to cooking. Jamie and his team are passionate about creating flavoursome, honest dishes yet aren't afraid to employ the odd innovative twist where appropriate. We were certainly itching to sample the wares yet there's a lovely, leisurely vibe underpinning the whole place so we thought it rude not to enjoy a quick aperitif in the lounge before repairing to their conservatory restaurant. The restaurant's playlist had seemingly been cherry-picked with us in mind with wall-to-wall "Golden Oldies" playing on repeat. You just can't whack it.

The dining area has a lovely bright and airy feel. On a glorious spring day we were chuffed to acquire a highly-

desirable window table which afforded great views over the Hotel's sun-dappled lawns and luscious gardens not to mention the rolling hillsides which make up the Team Valley. A sunshine-soaked afternoon crying out for a bottle of Sauvignon Blanc you might say, so this was exactly what we ordered whilst perusing their neat, 3-course lunch offering.

We kicked off with a brace of sumptuous starters both bursting with flavour. I went for the Indian spiced chicken salad which was delightfully fresh. I'm not usually a big fan of the "foliage" yet the lettuce was notably crisp and was paired well with shaved fennel and English radishes. My business friend's Ham knuckle press meanwhile was also the perfect lunchtime opener, lifted by a zingy piccalilli dressing which provided much colour and interest.

England's seasons may change the weather but one thing they don't alter is my fondness for a peppered steak. Just a 6oz "lunchtime" portion this time though but served with skinny fries was well deserving of the £2.00 supplement. Across the table, my colleague was wading into the confit lamb shoulder served on a broad smear of pureed

potato and embellished with chunks of glazed carrot. Inspired by French cooking, this was an immensely satisfying dish with the confit possessing a rich texture, nicely chaperoned by an onion gravy.

The service throughout had been slick and efficient so this is perfect for an express lunch, yet we were happy to sit for a while and kick the world around. (Really we'd earmarked a pairing of desserts which we just couldn't bear to leave without trying.) I rounded off with an epic Sticky toffee pudding with clotted cream whilst my friend walloped the White Chocolate "blondie" with Horlicks ice cream – a reworking of the traditional brownie dessert. Flavoured with brown sugar as opposed to white, this definitely evoked the "yeah, yeah, yeah, WOO" response from him.

We followed on from this with a couple of coffees and we both thought it a nice touch to be offered free refills at regular intervals. Indeed the whole luncheon had been marked by a touch of class. Tranquil surroundings combined with an outstanding array of dishes and an extensive fine wine selection, this was a business lunch which will live long in the memory.



PENDOWER HALL

A New Vision for Benwell

Local wealth management company Tier One Capital, led by Stephen Black and Ian McElroy, is hopeful of gaining planning consent shortly to begin the reparation work on the currently dilapidated Grade II listed building, Penderow Hall, on Newcastle's West Road.

The project is one of over a dozen being supported in the TOC Property Backed Lending Trust, an income focused investment trust recently listed on the main market of the London Stock Exchange.

The highly ambitious development is proposing to refurbish the building and grounds, which have sat empty and unused for approaching ten years now, into a landmark focal point of the local community. The current proposal is an £8.2m development which will bring significant permanent jobs, support a plethora of new businesses being based from the building, see the creation of a charitable trust and community trust for the local area and support Hadrian School in the provision of urgently needed new car parking for the school.

"We are both from the area and to have the opportunity to do something which is effectively looking to hit a London standard and bring it to the North East is fantastic." said Stephen Black. "We've got some great talent in

the local area, and there are numerous quality support schemes in place for new and small businesses, however as Ian and I continue to work extremely hard growing Tier One Capital we're fully aware as to how hard the path is to create a new business so we can always support local talent better.

"Back in the day, Penderow Hall was pretty magnificent and was truly at the heart of the local community. Times change however and the building has obviously seen better days. It would be great to reverse that trend and we've a clear plan to bring that magnificence and history back to life to provide something that can genuinely be said to compete against anything in the North East. To create such a setting in the heart of Benwell is a fantastic prospect which will benefit all people from the area.

The project's significant financial investment is based on the new Grand Hall being proposed as we're really trying to drive a fundamental change

in the wider perception of Benwell. A development of this quality, along with the superb wedding and conferencing facilities being brought through, is a real differentiator so close to the city centre. The size of the venue and classic internal design is different to what's provided for in the city and surrounding areas currently. Hopefully this will make the building a commercial success, allowing a permanent impact.

"We've worked extensively with Newcastle City Council's planning team to create something that can stand the test of time and which has a real shot of having an enduring appeal to both the local community and to people from further afar." explained Ian McElroy. "The project has a lot of stakeholders, with a particularly complex planning process for the building, but with the support of Newcastle City Council we can hopefully make this development happen in its current form. It would be a real landmark of a development and one which certainly breaks the mould."



Main Hall - after restoration



Main Reception - after restoration



Before restoration



Main Hall - before restoration



Outer view - before restoration



The Great Hall - after restoration

GLOBAL INSURANCE BROKER; LOCAL VALUES

There's something reassuring about dealing with a global, multinational company on a local basis. You have the advantage of speaking to someone who probably knows your area, knows your company and knows what sort of local pressures you may be under, whilst also having the backing of a company where you can just about guarantee that they've seen it all before and know exactly what you need.



Frank Firth

This is especially important when it comes to insurance. It's highly unlikely that there'll be an 'off-the-shelf' product to meet your requirements.

That's why Arthur J. Gallagher in Newcastle has been so successful.

Yes, they may have over 500 offices worldwide and be able to offer client service capabilities in almost every country around the globe; yes they have nearly 25,000 employees; yes they are ranked as the world's fourth biggest insurance broker and yes for the last 5 years they have been voted as one of the world's most ethical companies. However, they still retain a family atmosphere and family ethos. Arthur J. Gallagher was set up in 1927 by, you've guessed it, Arthur J. Gallagher. Fast forward ninety years and you will still find a Gallagher at the top of the company tree. J Patrick Gallagher Jr is the company's President and Chief Executive.

As soon as you wander into the Arthur J. Gallagher offices on Newcastle's quayside, you immediately sense the 'local' nature of the company. There's a friendly welcome and a feeling of calm efficiency.

If you'd dealt with the company, say, ten years ago, you'd immediately feel at home because the vast majority of the employees who were working there then, are still there looking after customer today. They currently have over 50 people working in their office and it's plainly the sort of place where employees and clients feel comfortable.

It's also obvious that Arthur J. Gallagher does a good job for those clients because some of the account directors have handled and looked after their insurance affairs for over thirty years. The quayside branch also has a 98 per cent client retention which is staggering and something of which the team is rightly very proud.

"It's that sort of place," said Frank Firth, the Branch Director for the Newcastle office of Arthur J. Gallagher. "We give a local touch to what is a global business arrangement. For example, we look after the insurance affairs of over 30 of the North East's top 200 companies including 5 FTSE 250 companies, because our global reach enables us to offer those firms a truly international approach. It also means that we can be totally flexible and deal with companies of any size or type whether they are a large conglomerate or a single person start-up. We can help and, in effect, become their insurance department."

Arthur J. Gallagher Newcastle represents over 300 businesses, some of which are the region's...and the UK's...biggest firms such as Bellway, Melrose, Marshalls, Virgin Money, Ringtons, Komatsu, Port of Tyne etc. They have clients in every sector but especially construction, manufacturing and logistics. With the recent addition of a small business team they now offer a complete spectrum of services to all types of commercial clients.

Arthur J. Gallagher takes a holistic approach, focused on helping businesses to reduce their

overall cost of risk. The team is on hand to advise clients and potential clients on the effective management of all the various risks they face, as well as transferring some of those risks off their balance sheets via appropriate insurance solutions. It is often said insurance is a people's industry and that's true. "We encourage our people to build relationships with clients and prospects," added Frank Firth. "For example, within our recently set up new business department, part of our developers' role is to engage with clients who may be unaware of what sort of insurance products are available. We can tailor a solution to their exact needs so they are confident they have the right protection in place. We then grow with their company and keep an eye on how things are developing, ensuring our advice keeps in step with their changes. We can also look after the personal insurance affairs of high net worth individuals."

In other words, Arthur J. Gallagher in Newcastle offers a local approach from a global business.

Too many people and companies don't understand insurance. That is where Arthur J. Gallagher can help.

The best idea is to speak to them. They'll find out what you're looking for and make a careful assessment of what your business really needs. After that, sit back in the knowledge that one of the world's biggest insurance brokers is looking over your shoulder. It's like being part of a family... the Arthur J. Gallagher family.

EMILY TEMPLE

CITROEN SERVICE APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR



Emily Temple of Wingrove Citroen dealership in Silverlink Newcastle, has been awarded the Citroen Service Apprentice of the Year award.

One of a number of candidates, from the entire United Kingdom, Emily was selected for the final stages of the award, and following her win, was presented with the coveted trophy at a sumptuous ceremony in Coombe Abbey. Wined and dined in style, the company ensured the night was outstanding for all of the award winners.

Having worked at the dealership for two years, she was placed on the apprentice programme by Citroen UK. An assessor mentored Emily throughout the time of the programme and the apprentice was told she had reached the last stages of the award before attending

a practical examination at Citroen's UK Headquarters in Coventry, where she was intensively examined and questioned as to her proficiency for the role.

The practical included identifying motor parts in general, role playing and other aspects of the service advisory job.

"I thoroughly enjoyed all aspects of the apprenticeship scheme and the run up to the award. It was certainly intensive and I have my colleagues at Wingrove to thank for helping me to this important prize," says Emily.

Her brother, Giles, works at Wingrove motors

West road dealership as a salesman. When the dealership had an open event, Emily was asked to be a meeter and greeter at the door. As a result of that, the Service Manager said they had a vacancy in their service department and would she like to start as a Service Apprentice? Such is the way of the world and that's how Emily started with the company.

Emily has now become a permanent Service advisor, which allows her to promote her skills in abundance.

This award marks the start of what will be an illustrious career with Wingrove Citroen.



GOING, GOING, GONE!

We chat to Julian Thomson about his role as Managing Director of Northern England's leading auctioneers, Anderson & Garland.

From an early age I was surrounded by Works of Art and antiques as my parents had a keen interest in the Art World. Just after sitting my 'O' Levels in 1984, I spotted an advert in a local newspaper for the position of trainee auctioneer at a small auction house in Whitley Bay. I applied, got the job and from the moment I started was hooked!

From there I went on to study Art and Antiques valuation at Southampton, then worked for a large London Auction House for five years as part of their Valuation Team in Knightsbridge. I returned from London in 1997 when I joined the team here at Anderson & Garland taking over the running of the silver and jewellery department. My other specialist areas include clocks, watches and furniture. I am also the principal contact for any insurance and probate work.

I am a Member of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Art Scholars and The City of London. I'm also an Associate of the Society of Fine Art Auctioneers.

In my spare time I can often be found messing around in boats at Tyne Amateur Rowing Club in Newburn. I also enjoy cycling and running around Tynedale, where I live.

Anderson and Garland is the leading Auction House covering Northern England and the Scottish Borders. Established since 1840 we are a company that balances traditional values of service and discretion with innovation and forward thinking. Our highly experienced team provide a full range of services to clients that are unrivalled in the region.

We are your point of access to the international art and antiques market. By choosing us you will be using a firm that prides itself on a personal and professional service to all clients, with a reputation for achieving the best results through our expertise, worldwide contacts and the extensive use of both conventional and internet promotion. Whilst the North East is our home, members of our team are often found much further afield.

We have Specialists in many different areas including pictures, furniture, rugs, silver, jewellery, watches, ceramics, glass, Asian art, clocks, books, coins, medals, stamps, militaria, toys and scientific instruments. We gather items from across the region and further afield, bringing them to the Saleroom. Once on the premises, items are researched, categorised and catalogued before being advertised across the world via collectors' websites, our extensive database and through our glossy colour catalogues. Potential buyers are then invited to come and bid at a traditional auction.

Our flagship events are the quarterly Fine Art Auctions, which comprise between 1,000 and 1,500 "Lots" of selected antique and traditional art, furnishings and collectables with an individual value over a few hundred pounds. These sales have recently produced our best ever individual results which attracted national press coverage, including a Chinese Imperial brush pot at £270,000, a Lalique vase at £280,000 (a world record for a Lalique vase), and a Rolex watch at £86,000 (a world record for that model). Other sales include our twice-yearly Modern and Contemporary Art and Design auctions: up to six Collectors' Auctions for items including coins,

stamps, toys, sporting items, woodworking tools, costume and textiles and our fortnightly "Town and County" general sales.

Since 2013 all of our sales have been marketed online, through our own website and other collectors' websites. Visitors can search and browse catalogues and place bids over the internet in real time with live audio and video feeds communicating the auction room atmosphere. We are dedicated to giving clients and buyers an efficient and friendly service. We have always maintained the highest standards, consequently, most of our new clients come to us via recommendation from professional advisers or existing clients.

Internet marketing now means we are achieving world record prices right here in Newcastle. This has been illustrated time and time again since we started down this path back in 2006 when we sold the Jacobson collection including works by L.S. Lowry, Henry Moore and David Bomberg. The sale created enormous worldwide interest and achieved a total of nearly £1m.

Our Saleroom is conveniently located, just off the A1 Western bypass in Newcastle with plenty of free private parking and good access to the A1 and A69. The airport is a short taxi ride and Newcastle Central Station is easily accessible. Anderson House is a new building and is comfortable and spacious and has all the modern facilities required in today's fast moving auction environment. We offer the widest range of services and expertise of any auction house in the region, these cover everything from selling the complete contents of homes to the valuation of Antiques and Works of Art for every purpose.

Auctioneers

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Established 1840

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DEVACADEMY TACKLES TECH SKILLS SHORTAGE



Graduates from the DevAcademy

The North East's burgeoning digital and tech sector is made up of around 1,600 businesses ranging from large, multinational powerhouses to agile, fast-growing SMEs. Its economic value defined by GVA contribution per head has grown by 14.9% in the space of a year according to latest official figures – double the UK average.

The pace of growth could be quickened further after the Government recently launched its plan to keep Britain at the forefront of the digital revolution. The aim is to provide millions of free tech-based training opportunities and create five international technology hubs in emerging markets to keep UK firms competitive.

This represents an opportunity for North East companies to expand further and win lucrative contracts but many are struggling to find suitably skilled staff to service existing workloads. However, a pioneering scheme is providing a work-ready pipeline of talent for firms to ensure they don't miss out.

IT training provider DevAcademy is working with Gateshead College to train young and adult candidates in the use of some of the latest software packages being used by digital and creative tech companies.

An intensive six-week accelerator course, jointly designed by DevAcademy and Gateshead College, covered the fundamentals required for entry-level posts as developers, testers, support analysts and other tech roles. Candidates aged from 18 into their mid-forties developed skills and knowledge

in Agile methodologies, project management and UX/UI design.

The first successful cohort of 23 people graduated from their course run by Gateshead College at the end of 2016 and around 40% of them have now been offered employment in various North East businesses. Advice and assistance is also being given to those still searching for suitable roles.

Rachel Peacock, managing director of the DevAcademy, said: "We're delighted with the results of this first cohort from Gateshead College. We found the teaching staff highly flexible and responsive to our requirements along with the needs of individual students.

"Once successfully trained we start matching candidates to our clients with live vacancies. Candidates are also given multiple interviews and chances to meet decision-makers in blue-chip companies or smaller businesses in the area.

"There is no cost to the candidate for the course; and employers enjoy the benefit of a 'try before you buy' status. If a company wishes to, they can offer a permanent role to a candidate after the initial period of working for DevAcademy."

John Deary, curriculum operations manager at Gateshead College, said: "Candidates on this accelerator programme are taught softer skills as well as the technical, making them better equipped for the workplace.

"This bespoke programme is a great example of how Gateshead College is tailoring courses for specific industry sectors and needs. Candidates learn a mixture of skills that are not necessarily curriculum-based or qualification-driven."

Following the success of the first phase of the scheme, DevAcademy intends to run other courses with Gateshead College and discussions are underway to bring on board a second and third cohort of students. Another goal is to roll out the concept in other parts of the UK – a move that would bring significant benefits to the national economy.

Workshops that introduce people to the world of computer coding are set to be held at Gateshead College in the summer, while attempts are being made to inspire more children to study STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects at school, college and university.

THE RISE OF THE NORTH EAST

BY JAMES BLACKWELL, CEO, RONALD JAMES



The North East was born in an industrial revolution; although our skyline may be framed by chimney stacks, the picture inside couldn't be more different.

The coastline... the countryside... the culture... just a few of the North East's regional offerings- however, these probably aren't the first things that come to mind when you hear the word 'Northern'.

Unfortunately, the region is tainted with a stigma of negativity, when in fact it has countless benefits that just aren't showcased.

So, here are just a few of the reasons why the North East is one of the best places to locate your digital business.

The growth of the region

Contrary to belief, the North East is one of the fastest growing regions in the UK. Not only that, but more recently the North East has been recognised

as one of the fastest growing tech scenes in England. It is already home to big conglomerates such as Bede gaming, Sage, Zerolight and many more – proof that the region has evolved to cater to the rising needs of the digital ecosystem. Operating in a growing environment such as the North East not only maximises growth potential, but simultaneously allows companies to operate ahead of trends.

Support within the region

Nurturing business growth and development is paramount to a company's success - something readily recognised in the North East. Individuals and companies across the region are passionate about retaining local talent, and developing the area to improve the overall profile of the North

East. 'Go Digital Newcastle' is just one example of the support provided to local businesses; ran by Newcastle City Council, the scheme exists to improve the performance of the local digital economy.

Surrounding area

The North East offers a phenomenal standard of living. Wherever the location, you're guaranteed to be just a stones-throw away from the nearest coastline or countryside, with the culture of a strong community prevalent across the region. Key landmarks within the area include the Angel of the North, Durham Cathedral, Hadrian's Wall, and many more alike. Despite the North East's digital advancements, it is still the home to many quintessentially Northern treasures.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

PAUL M^CELDON Chief Executive, North East BIC

Tell me a bit about your background and how the BIC was established.

You could say that I have taken a fairly traditional career path. A local North East boy, whose father started his own restaurant business in his 50s, I graduated from Newcastle University in 1987 with a degree in accountancy. Securing a position with KPMG, I spent the next six years gaining a good grounding across a range of sectors and projects in corporate finance, restructuring, audit and tax.

In 1992, I joined Sunderland City Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) as an Interim Finance Director. The TEC was one of 70 national government funded schemes responsible for the delivery of the new apprenticeship and skills programmes as well as some fledgling enterprise programmes.

The North East Business and Innovation Centre (BIC) Ltd was established in 1994 and following the demise of the TEC in 2001, as Chief Executive I oversaw the birth of a new business, a not-for-profit organisation that was tasked with driving entrepreneurial and regeneration activities from the former Austin and Pickersgill shipyard site in Sunderland. With the departure of the regions heavy industries, we needed new entrepreneurs with fresh ideas to kick start our regional economy.

Starting with one small building, we began to create a new business guided by a proven European model – the Business and Innovation Centre (BIC) accredited framework. The mission of all BICs is to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship through the delivery of a comprehensive range of professional support alongside the provision of high quality business premises.

At the outset in 1994, we offered 22 small incubator units for rent and now in 2017, at the BIC HQ in Sunderland we occupy a 14 acre site, and are home to 140 companies who have a collective workforce of over 1000 employees.

In the last 18 months we have expanded, and the BIC model is now established in 2 new business centres, Business Central Darlington and the Hub, in Washington.

What is the company's USP?

It is the unique mix of business support and accommodation for businesses at every stage of their evolution that makes the BIC more than just business space.

And as a not-for-profit organisation any surplus is reinvested in improving our facilities and expanding the provision of services not just for our tenants but to aspiring entrepreneurs and businesses across the North East.

Our business start-up team have helped over 4,000 individuals set up in business; the SME innovation programme is stimulating established businesses to develop new products and services and our programme of events provides ample opportunity for entrepreneurs to learn new skills and get advice on many different topics from raising cash to social media. Networking events at all our centres can inspire, inform and help connect you with other businesses.

However, like every other small business we cannot be complacent and continually need to review our services to ensure that they meet our customers changing needs.

How is your motivation compared to when you first started?

Like many businesses, we have battled through a number of economic downturns over the last 23 years and there have certainly been times when my motivation and spirit have been challenged.

But I have been very fortunate in having a great team of colleagues and trusted partners around me and together we have established a sustainable organisation built on a strong foundation. Protecting and enhancing what has been achieved is a powerful motivator as are the success stories that I hear from customers of how they overcame challenges, raised cash for new ventures, and won new contracts. And from individuals who transformed their lives by starting new businesses after redundancy or other life changing events.

The future?

Looking ahead, I am optimistic that we will continue to adapt to an ever changing economic climate. Working closely with our local, regional, private and public sector partners, we are exploring ways to expand the portfolio of relevant business support services, helping businesses with organisational change, ambitious growth strategies and cyber security.

Plans are currently underway to introduce a new programme of events and collaborations that will not only offer information, insight and opportunities to our business community, but will also broaden our support to those companies wanting to internationalise or that seek a 'soft landing' in the North East. So watch this space!



For further information contact 0191 516 6200 www.ne-bic.co.uk

WITHOUT A PLAN YOU CAN'T HAVE A GOAL. WITHOUT A GOAL YOU CANNOT SCORE.



Ammar Mirza
pic: Peter Walton 2014

The most successful people in the world have a clear vision of where they are going and a map on how they are going to get there.

Having worked now with hundreds of start-ups and even more existing businesses, the ones' that are the most successful have a business plan that they can share and have a singled minded focus on realising their goals and objectives from this plan.

I am pleased to say that being part of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP) - a public and private partnership body responsible for providing strategic economic leadership in Northumberland, Durham, and Tyne and Wear – we have a plan. The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) was first published in 2014 and since then the economy has changed, so over the past year a refresh of the plan has taken place and earlier this month the refreshed plan launched.

The SEP defines a clear vision that aims to help create 100,000 new and better jobs by 2024, an increase of 11% from 2014, and to ensure that 60% of these jobs are better jobs. A better skilled role is defined as one which offers higher skilled, more productive and better quality opportunities

to more people in our area.

Since 2014 over 53,700 new jobs have been created within our region of which 33,900 (63%) are better. These figures highlight the positive impact of having a plan and focusing doggedly on delivering the plan.

Recognising the challenges within a dynamic economy and the uncertainty that Brexit could bring are key. As such the revised plan focuses on creating an inclusive economy improving innovation, tackling skills shortages, enhancing business support through the likes of the Growth Hub, recognising the aging population, investing in digital alongside improving overall infrastructure.

Without partners and working in collaboration the LEP would not be able to deliver the plan. With limited resources the LEP is wholly dependent upon people coming together to help strengthen the economy and address weaknesses through a range of cohesive activities and programmes. In fact the growth of our region, reduction in unemployment and improvement in job opportunities has to

be attributed to everyone within the whole community.

Every single member of the community has a role to play, and I am really pleased to say that everyone I speak to is both interested in hearing about the plan, but even more importantly understanding how they can get involved. On my weekly radio show every Friday between 9-11am on Spice FM we have a mission to help better communicate, collaborate and celebrate within our region. Co-hosted by Jalf Ali, we regularly discuss the Strategic Economic Plan so that people from diverse communities get to understand our ambitious vision for the region.

The simple, yet challenging targets of creating "more and better jobs" enables everyone within the community to get behind a plan with a single focus of improving our economy, helping realise and raise ambitions and aspirations.

We have a plan and a clear goal, so let's get out there and score.

Ammar Mirza CBE is founder and chairman of Asian Business Connexions, North East LEP Board Member alongside holding various other positions across the public, private and third sectors. Email ammar@ammarm.com



“10.9 million people in the UK dream of starting a business and don't at a potential loss of £265bn to the UK economy (Barclays 2016).

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SPRING BUDGET PUT UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT BY RMT ACCOUNTANTS & BUSINESS ADVISORS

The measures announced in Chancellor Philip Hammond's first spring Budget speech have been put under the spotlight at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors' annual post-Budget breakfast briefing.

Around 200 North East business leaders gathered for the event, which was held at Newcastle's Assembly Rooms and led by RMT's director of tax Anthony Andreasen and healthcare group director Richard Humphreys.

The presentations covered the issues arising from the key announcements on corporate and personal taxation, business investment and tax planning, and discussed how individuals and companies should be acting in response to them.

Guest speaker Phil Nilson of HMRC gave an update on the progress of the ongoing Making Tax Digital initiative, while Eamonn Gallagher of independent financial advisors Gallagher Tarran also addressed the audience on the Budget measures relating to pensions and savings.





ARROW COMMS LTD AIMING HIGH WITH NATIONAL GROWTH PLANS



Left to right, Simon Ward and Paul Clark (Arrow) Michael McGee, Mike Pott (RMT) and Ben Parry (Arrow)

A North East telecoms start-up is aiming to hit its targets right across the country after making a fast start in its first few months.

Entrepreneurs Simon Ward and Paul Clark brought together 40 years of industry experience to set up Arrow Comms Ltd, a specialist telecommunications company that focuses solely on providing tailored telephone systems and applications to businesses of all sizes.

The Newcastle-based firm has already won contracts with clients in Scotland, the Midlands and Yorkshire, as well as in its native North East, with clients won so far including Sadler Brown Architects, Lumley Castle Hotel, Orange Bus and charities Barnardo's and The Concern Group.

Having also already won accreditation from industry giant Samsung, it is now looking to build on this early momentum by targeting new contracts right across the UK with companies of all sizes.

Arrow has already employed the services of Ben Parry as senior UC engineer to help meet client demand and is planning to make further additions to the workforce during the coming months as the business grows.

Simon and Paul had previously worked in the UK and overseas for a range of well-known communications companies, including Telewest Business, BT, ITPS and Ogilvie, and had been discussing setting up in business together for some time before deciding to do so towards the end of 2016.

Gosforth-based RMT Accountants & Business Advisors worked with the Arrow team on setting up the company, and is providing continuing support and advice around its financial and business operations.

Simon Ward says: "Paul and I had long talked about setting up our own business, and we felt there was an opportunity to use the expertise we had to specifically focus on telecommunications at a point where most other firms in our sector are diluting their offering across various different aspects of connectivity.

"Our aim is to organically build a sustainable business and work with clients of all sizes and in all

sectors anywhere in the UK where we can bring our expertise to bear and create telephony solutions that support their commercial objectives.

"The response we've had from clients so far has been very encouraging, and adding quality staff to the team to enable us to keep up with client demand will be a priority for the year to come.

"The RMT team's proactive advice made setting up the company a straightforward process, and the structures and arrangements we have in place will underpin our operations as the company grows."

Michael McGee, Client Services Manager at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, added: "The Arrow management team has a clear vision of how they want the business to grow, and the excellent progress they've made in such a short space of time would suggest their plans are already reaping rewards."

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AVOIDING A CAT-ASTROPHE



It's quite an easy life being an "AccountCat" here at CS Accounting. Days just pass by as I sit here observing the everyday activity of an accounting practice. Lots of clients pass me on their way in and out of the office and from the conversations I hear it seems that everyone in some way or another needs some sort of help.

Running your own business is not easy. Most people who set up their own business do it because they want to do what they love doing and what they do best. That doesn't usually include things like accounting, HR, Health and Safety, IT, legal - need I go on. Sometimes there are things that you simply can't do yourself but most of the time it's things that you don't want to do yourself or you don't feel confident to do.

Take payroll for instance. There are lots of payroll programmes out there that make payroll really simple. Four clicks and your employees are sorted for another month. But what about everything else that goes with it - contracts of employment, sick pay, pensions, tax codes, holiday entitlement or NLW/NMW. Getting any of those things wrong could land you in all sorts of trouble like tribunals, penalties and even an entry on the 'name and shame' list.

What you need is advice and support. People and organisations you can turn to when you're just not sure about what to do. So where to go for this help and advice? It doesn't have to be costly, there is loads of free advice out there. I often browse through this magazine (when no one is looking of course) and there are articles about many aspects of business. Social media is a good source too, I've discovered it's not only birds that tweet. If you follow sites relevant to what you do then there

will always be news about recent updates etc or even just a blog about how someone dealt with a particular problem.

You need to be careful about who you turn to for advice of course. Even I'm amazed at some of the 'man in the pub' stories I hear. "You don't pay tax on the first £70k profit if you're a limited company" - I wish! Or "I can have two businesses as a sole trader. One with just me doing the work and one where I employ the lads to do the same work. Then the turnover of each will be lower than the VAT threshold so I won't have to register". Don't think that one will work either.

All this advice is all well and good but it's the application of the advice to your particular business circumstances that is important. What you need is a network of trusted advisors. According to a recent survey by IFAC (International Federation of Accountants) accountants remain the most trusted advisors to SMEs. Those advisors need to know your business almost as well as you do. I know they're always asking questions here. I used to think they were just nosy but as I listen to the conversations I can see it's all about tailoring the advice to the business. It's no use talking about HR to someone with no employees!

The timing is quite critical too. I can remember one client, a few years ago, who left the office almost in

tears. He had finally bought his dream company car, second hand but a real bargain, he was so proud of it. It was a Range Rover with a 'price when new' of £45k and it landed him with a £7k tax bill. A quick phone call before he bought it could have warned him about how the car benefit was calculated and how much his 'bargain' would cost him.

Having taken some advice you need to understand what the impact will be on your business. If you are expanding, for instance, and you have some fantastic new contracts you need to know how that will impact on all the other areas of the business. They're good at that here, looking at forecasting, cash flows, staff levels and so many other things. It's not just about getting the numbers to add up!

So before deciding to just 'do it yourself' consider how confident you are and what your time is worth in other areas of both your business and personal life. Is it worth spending a lovely sunny day trying to get your accounting up to date when your accountant can do it in half the time and you can be playing with the kids. And ask questions. It's much easier to do things correctly than to try and correct the mistakes afterwards. As the boss always says, there are no silly questions, there are just questions. It doesn't cost you any extra either, not here anyway, the clock doesn't start ticking when you pick up the phone.

THE ROLE OF A NON-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Many people in business accept that non-executive directors (NED's) are a statutory obligation in public companies where the role of a NED is concentrated around monitoring the executive management team's activity, corporate governance matters and strategic advice. In the world of an SME business, against the recent backdrop of difficult trading conditions, they have often been seen as an expensive luxury

However recent soundings would indicate that that view is changing. Running your own business can be a lonely experience, especially if you have started the business from scratch and the business has grown 'around' you.

To be able to step away from the business and review progress, can be very difficult especially if review is an issue, but is crucial so the business can develop and meet it's shareholders growth aspirations

The phrase 'sounding board' is used a lot when discussing NED's and indeed, it can be as little as that, to allow the owner manager to bounce ideas off someone who knows the business but is not working in it

The role can provide so much more though and an effective NED should have responsibilities in the following areas:

- **Strategy** - Constructively challenge and contribute to the development of strategy. As an external member of an organisation, the NED may have a clearer or wider view of

possible factors affecting the company and its business environment, more so than executive directors.

- **Performance** - Scrutinise the performance of management in agreed goals and objectives, as well as analysis of the financial performance of the business
- **Risk** - Satisfy themselves that financial information is accurate and that financial controls and systems of risk management are robust and defensible.
- **People** - Benefit the company's effectiveness through outside contacts and opinions. Helping the business connect with networks of useful people and organisations become an important function for the NED to fulfill.

If you're considering appointing an NED it's important to get the right person, who will add value in the area you need strengthening i.e. finance, sales and marketing, production etc. That way you get the help where you need it



Peter Cromarty is Director of Corporate and Commercial Business Solutions, a business consultancy and commercial finance solutions company based in the North East. M: 07715 409386 E: peter@ccfundingsolutions.com W: www.ccbg.co.uk



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To see a selection of recently transacted deals in the North East please visit www.ccbg.co.uk



BLYTH RIVALS BATTLE IT OUT

A bit of history was made recently when the biggest derby match for a semi-final senior cup game took place between Blyth Town and Blyth Spartans. Over 1100 fans flocked to a thrilling game which went into extra time before Spartans won 5-1.

They now once again face North Shields in the final just twelve months after the two sides played out an epic final at St.James Park.



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“THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN”



Peter Rutherford



David Hughes



Paul McAtominey

Those of a certain age will recognise this as the title to a Thin Lizzy song from the 70s. However, the lyrics and music are timeless and still sound fresh today.

Well we have something else emanating from the same era but it is new.

Rutherford Hughes Limited is a new venture from two experienced hands in the world of financial services and, more particularly, independent financial advice and wealth management.

David Hughes and Peter Rutherford first met at the Norwich Union (now Aviva) back in 1979. Both have run large and successful IFA firms in the region. They are now under their own banner for the first time.

Ironically their new office is in the heart of Newcastle, in Collingwood Street, and not 100 yards from where they first met in Norwich Union House at the bottom of Westgate Road. That old building has long gone now.

They are joined by Paul McAtominey, another Norwich Union has been. Paul is a pension specialist and one of the Region's leading practitioners in this area.

So what makes this team different?

"Experienced, knowledgeable and common sense advice, for one," states Peter Rutherford.

David Hughes adds "We also have a state of the art investment proposition with an excellent proven track record. We have strong core beliefs in how money should be managed and it works. Further, we are not swayed by the silver tongues of fund salesmen. We apply a rigorous quantitative approach. It sorts the wheat from the chaff."

Another question is why they have set up together now? The answer is not really surprising.

Rutherford confides "We have both worked within larger organisations and have seen things that we have not entirely agreed with but have been obliged to follow."

"Now we set the standards without any outside influence or third party interests. We are only concerned with the welfare of our clients and enjoying what we do" smiles Hughes. "It is a liberating feeling."

So how is it going so far?

"Very well, I am pleased to say," Hughes continues, "All our clients have followed us from the previous company and we have generated a number of referrals in the short time we have been open."

Rutherford adds, "I believe that a number of our contacts feel reassured that it is us that are completely in charge and we are without the baggage associated with an older business. We are aiming to provide the highest levels of advice and service but utilising modern processes and technology to do so."

"We still have much to do, like building our website, but we are up and running and very much open for business. We always offer a free initial chat so that any prospective client can evaluate us and we them. We are here to take on clients only for whom we can add value."

Perhaps, the article should be entitled "The old boys are back in town!"

Anyone wishing to contact David, Peter or Paul can do so on 0191 229 9600 or admin@rutherfordhughes.com

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COMMERCE HOUSE APPOINTS INTERIOR DESIGNER AND SAVES HISTORIC FEATURES

An iconic Teesside building that aims to provide businesses with the perfect ambience and business community thanks to a £1.2million injection from a local investor, has appointed an interior design company from Sunderland.

Commerce House in Middlesbrough is having life breathed back into its Grade II Listed structure by Commerce Chambers Limited and Space I.D. is the chosen interior design company for the job.

Space I.D. is a company of professional interior designers, providing clients with a complete and wide ranging service, from designing layout and finishes to project managing the implementation from start to finish.

The building, which was originally built in 1872, is in the centre of the city's soon to be thriving commercial district and is right next to the train station, a stone's throw from the A66. And through careful planning and liaison with the local council Commerce Chambers can announce it will be preserving a number of the original features including the central lift and shaft.

Available is a choice of business rooms, of all sizes, split over three floors. Suitable for businesses of all size, the offices come complete with high-class facilities and high-speed broadband included.

Marc Hardy, director at Space I.D. said: "The luxury setting will boast a contemporary feel with traditional touches, all finished to the highest of standards. Fully furnished, the office space starts at exceptionally reasonable rates and will make a huge impact on any visiting client. We have gone for high-end luxury, contemporary looks and traditional finishes. All in all, the design speaks a powerful message to visiting clients and tenants alike."

There is also a 43 square metre boardroom available for use by tenants or to hire out, which comes complete with high spec technology and total luxury, ideal for presentations, brainstorming or entertaining.



Work has now started over the floors with the entire building set for completion in less than six months. Renovations include the penthouse apartment, to be known as The Commerce Suite, which will be a high-end two bedroom apartment ideal for rent on a long or short-term basis.

Christine Huntington, Facilities Manager at the building, which was purchased from the North East Chamber of Commerce, said: "It is great to have Space I.D. on board and for the much anticipated work to be underway. Space I.D. just understood our vision for this iconic building and their experience fit the ethics we want to apply, especially with there being lots of original features to factor in. We already have some tenants signed up and expressing interest, and it won't be long before we have a thriving business community!"

Information and appointments can be made by calling Christine on 01642 917116. Images are available to view on Facebook @CommerceHouse1872

THE COLOUR COMPANY WITH A GOLDEN PRINCIPLE

In one of the world's most advanced paint factories, how do employees keep safety as their top priority and not something to be glossed over?

"Be it our CEO or the person filling our photocopier, every single one of our 46,000 employees in AkzoNobel is empowered to stop any job for safety," explains Nick Turnbull, Safety Manager at AkzoNobel's Ashington site. "It's this golden principle which is vital to making sure we keep safety at the forefront of our minds."

Everything AkzoNobel does is underpinned by core principles of safety, integrity and sustainability and it's no different in the latest site to join the business, the £100 million flagship plant in Ashington, Northumberland.

Every employee and contractor in AkzoNobel follows eight lifesaving rules; covering every aspect of work. These eight rules are then reinforced by the company's golden principle which is to stop work if conditions or behaviour are unsafe. "Really this means all employees have to stop work and report back if they recognise any behaviours or safety issues on our sites that might pose a risk to themselves or their colleagues," explained Nick. "What's key to this is that everyone feels equally responsible for maintaining safety standards on site."

"However it's not just about protecting employees from accidents, we want to ensure that our employees' physical and mental health and wellbeing is nurtured as well," added Jeff Hope, Head of Manufacturing Unit.

The Ashington site's commitment to employees' wellbeing has seen its efforts recognised by the North East Better Health at Work initiative, which has awarded the site Silver level status. "We appointed a dedicated team of health advocates who were responsible for the completion of a health needs analysis of the workforce," explained Jeff. "This included implementing health-related policies, enabling and promoting healthy eating on-site, maintaining a safe and



engaging work environment and organising health campaigns focused on topics such as mental health awareness and alcohol and substance awareness." The award follows on from AkzoNobel's nearby Felling site which received the Gold level award in 2013.

"I'm really pleased to say that the care we show our employees is mirrored by their fantastic attitudes in protecting the health and wellbeing of their co-workers," added Jeff. "It's this level of employee engagement that makes AkzoNobel a truly unique place to work."

To find out more about AkzoNobel, visit: www.akzonobel.com

STAYING POWER...

Longevity in business is something to be admired. In a new series of features, we are celebrating some of the most accomplished professionals from across the North East business community. Aimed at major players with 20+ years' experience in their respective sectors, we provide a fascinating insight into what makes them tick and what we can learn from them.

This month we chat to...

DAVID HODGSON MBE

Read Milburn & Co.

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

I came to the accountancy practice of Read, Milburn & Co. straight from school at the age of 16 with an aptitude for maths but with little knowledge of what an Accountant's role would be – 50 years later I do not regret that move.

What is your favourite aspect of the job?

In General Practice, it is the variety of work and the variety of interaction with so many different clients in various walks of life and business.

What has been your career defining moment?

I guess it was the opportunity given by my then boss, Tom Read, when I qualified as a Chartered Accountant at the early age of 21, to be taken into a partnership with him at a time when he was looking to step back a little from his work load as he approached later life.

How do you measure success?

In a word "contentment", I enjoy my work and have many contented clients - I once, in an article for a magazine, suggested my role for my clients was that of a "sex therapist" – I suggested that I improved their sex lives by taking on much of their necessary business compliance work and thus reducing stress levels and also giving them more time which they could devote to their families rather than spending late nights writing up their books. Reduction in stress and extra time – essentials for good relationships!

What have been the biggest changes in the industry since you started?

Accountancy is now highly computerised and there is a greater expectation from government of working online with a fairly harsh penalty regime for those who fail to comply.

How has your skillset developed accordingly?

I no longer use an abacus – It is essential to engage in life-long learning and I very much see the value in keeping up to date with the latest legislation changes.

Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

Accountants are in general conservative by nature but calculated risks are an essential part of business.

To what would you attribute your success?

At an early date we invested heavily in computerised systems which has stood us in a good position to serve and support our client base.

What's your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

Sometimes it has been taking on extra work when I already had a heavy schedule – but I have never been shy of working a little harder or longer and ensuring the work was completed on time.

How do you remain motivated?

I enjoy working with our team in the Practice and with our clients and my skill set allows me to be involved with a lot of charity work which gives me a lot of satisfaction in helping others in the community.

Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

As a professional, it has been important to maintain a reputation. Some times in business you need to make unpopular decisions to maintain respect.

I'll retire when....

Not yet for a while, I still get a kick out of going to work and making things happen.



For more information contact David@readmilburn.co.uk



UNW BRIDGE GAP IN DURHAM CATHEDRAL VAT DISPUTE

A landmark VAT court ruling has led to Durham Cathedral, with assistance from UNW, being reimbursed to the tune of several thousand pounds.

The focal point of the city alongside the castle, Durham Cathedral attracts around three-quarters of a million visitors per year, and has shared a long successful working history with UNW. This collaboration took on extra precedence in October 2015 when UNW became aware of an interesting new EU tax ruling.

The case centred around the VAT regulations of the Cathedral itself, which are a rather complicated affair. While procedures such as acquiring accounting services, or restorations to the building itself, were deemed partially VAT recoverable, 'non-business' activities are excluded from any such deduction.

This arrangement was part of a long-standing agreement with HMRC, and had until recently remained largely uncontested.

However, this all changed when UNW reacted quickly to a relevant VAT case that had emerged from the European Court of Justice (ECJ). SVEDA, a commercial Lithuanian company, had commissioned the construction of a path, for which they provided free access. The path led past one of SVEDA's shops, where visitors could purchase gifts, souvenirs and food and drink.

After deducting the input VAT on the costs it incurred from the creation of the path, SVEDA were challenged by Lithuanian VAT inspectors, who

claimed that since the path had free access, and visitors had no direct obligation to purchase goods from the shop, the path was a part of SVEDA's non-business activities.

SVEDA took the case to court, where a judge subsequently decided the creation of the path was undertaken with the intention of attracting visitors, and potential customers, to the site. The VAT was deemed all recoverable.

This gave the tax team at UNW an idea. In 2011, Durham Cathedral carried out restoration to the neighbouring Prebends' Bridge, which was considered a non-business activity by HMRC, despite the startling similarities to the woodland path in the SVEDA case. The Cathedral recovered no VAT from the building costs.

Durham Cathedral, supported by UNW, took the example to HMRC, who rebuffed the claim, stating the restorations were all a part and parcel of their 'non-business' activities.

Mark Hetherington, partner at UNW, outlined UNW's role in the process: "We always keep our fingers on the pulse when it comes to tax cases that may be of interest to our clients, and we quickly highlighted how similar the case of SVEDA was to the Cathedral's predicament. We felt the decision to label restorations to the bridge as 'non-business' activities unjust.

"It was a huge shock when HMRC rejected the Cathedral's claim for input tax.

"Believing it to be an extremely strong case, we advised the Cathedral to take it to a first-tier tax tribunal, in which we would support them at every step.

Tax judge Richard Thomas decided in favour of the appeal, stating that the bridge had as much to do with Durham Cathedral's business as it did its religious activities. UNW's Mark Hetherington represented Durham Cathedral in court.

Jacqui Brown, Head of Finance at Durham Cathedral, said: "While we have always felt slightly disappointed by the earlier VAT ruling that surrounded Prebends' Bridge, it's something we had accepted.

"However, this all changed when UNW told us about SVEDA, and they really went beyond their call of duty in helping us win this landmark case. Without them, we would never have been aware of the opportunity to reclaim expenditure, or been in the position to successfully appeal HMRC's decision.

"While the amount we won was nominal (£7,000), the bridge will soon require a far larger restoration project. The ruling not only saves us money now, but will yield considerable financial benefits well into the future."

UNW is a leading independent firm of chartered accountants that delivers a wide range of accountancy and business advisory services to its clients.

www.unw.co.uk

IT'S NO APRIL FOOL... WHY DOES THE TAX YEAR START IN APRIL?



April fools means an abundance of whoopee cushions, fake spiders and so on. But among the constant looking over your shoulder for tricksters trying to make a fool of you before lunchtime, it probably hasn't gone unnoticed that the all-important 2017-18 tax year is upon us.

But have you ever wondered why the tax year starts on April 5th and not January 1st when the clocks ring in the New Year? We have here at KP Simpson,

and while we can't solve the mystery of life, the location of Atlantis or a Rubix cube, we can tell you all about the strange April tax year.

It might come to surprise you that it's not a recent thing brought in by the Government just to be awkward. It does in fact date back over 200 years and as far as the year 1800, and has a lot to do with calendars. Even before 1800, despite their being 365 days in a year – bar leap years of course – there were two calendars which had differing lengths of year. The Julian calendar, named after Caesar was almost 12 minutes shorter than the Gregorian calendar, proposed by Pope Gregory.

Europe adopted the Gregorian calendar, but Britain and the Empire did not take it on board until 1752, by which time the 10 minutes a year had added up to almost 11 days, meaning the Empire – and Britain, were behind Europe by nearly a fortnight.

The tax year before this ended in March, meaning a switch was coming. The government decided to go for the standard year of 365 days – resulting in a tax date of April 4th. Come 1800, which was not a leap year as of the Gregorian calendar, but was under the Julian calendar, meant a change again with April 5th being the last day. Luckily in the two centuries following, there's been no more changes to the date.

One thing that doesn't change however is that only two things in life are certain – death and taxes. And as it is the new tax year, you may need a little help or support. Allow KP Simpson to guide you through the choppy waters of tax and accountancy.

For help and information, contact us over the phone on 0191 420 0550, or drop us an email to info@kpsimpson.co.uk.

INCOME PROTECTION PAYS THE BILLS WHEN YOU CANNOT



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

Ok, so we know why people insure their car - it's the law, similarly if you have a mortgage it is compulsory to insure the property.

Every other insurance is in theory optional, with many people choosing cover for pets, mobile phone and their household appliances either by their own choice, thinking it was compulsory or worse not even knowing what they are paying for each month!

However, very few people insure the very thing without which a pet, mobile phone or many household appliances would become a luxury...I am talking about protecting your income, salary, wage, whatever you want to call it, this is what pays the bills for most of us.

- What would happen if due to long term illness, injury or accident your income stopped? Take a look at your monthly net pay and then ask how long you might survive without it?
- If you are really lucky your employer will pay you for a period, maybe even full pay for the first 6 months of illness but what happens after that?
- Possibly you have savings, but how long would these last even in just maintaining your "essential" monthly outgoings?
- "My family would help" is another common response, maybe, but how long could this be sustained before tensions arise?

Lastly, some people say that they could survive on a

partners' salary alone – either your partner loves his/her job and works for this reason alone, or you currently save all of their wages each month – are either of these scenarios realistic?

Income protection cover is a possible solution, which can be tailored to your individual circumstances:

- To begin after any employer's sick pay ceases.
- To end in line with a mortgage being fully repaid or children finishing education.
- To increase in line with inflation.
- To be underwritten by the insurer at the time of application so that you know exactly what is covered and any exclusions.
- Provide an income in line with current net salary for the lifetime of the policy.

Ah, I hear you say "but these policies don't pay out when you need them". This is a myth and recent statistics confirm that 97% of claims were paid out (Association of British Insurers), with those which weren't successful were usually due to existing illnesses not being declared when applying for the policy.

So taking things back to reality, pet insurance may well prove to be essential when your beloved cat, dog etc is ill, but who feeds him/her if you are too ill to afford to?

Paul Hardingham and Tony Ibson are Mortgage and Protection Advisers at Innovate Mortgages and Loans. Both have over 20 years of experience advising individuals and businesses across the North East of England. They can be contacted for bespoke advice at paul@innovatempl.co.uk or tony@innovatempl.co.uk or call 0191 223 3514.

Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. Your home or property is at risk of repossession if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it. Innovate Mortgages and Loans is a trading style of Innovation Financial Management Ltd.

MANUFACTURERS NEED FURTHER CLARITY TO RIDE OUT FUTURE TURBULENCE



Paul Dowell

There has been a lot of commentary about future turbulence for manufacturers following the Brexit decision and wider global political change. In a bid to provide some clarity, the Government has recently launched a Modern Industrial Strategy which seeks to deliver a high-skilled, competitive economy that benefits all, but what do North East manufacturers really need?

Funding could be a key challenge for North East manufacturers unless the Government acts quickly to replace EU funding streams, such as those used to assist plant relocations and improvements. Losing this financial resource will not only impact manufacturers' financial planning directly, but there may be additional costs involved using an alternative source, once one is found. Further guidance on replacement funding is needed, but in the meantime businesses need to be proactively looking into new sources to cover any gap if access to EU funding is withdrawn.

UK manufacturers will be exposed to more competition from emerging markets once we leave the EU. Countries such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam can now deliver very high quality products from modern, efficient manufacturing facilities at a low cost. Whilst in the EU, the UK was largely sheltered from the full extent of this and as we renegotiate multiple trade agreements, UK manufacturers will be faced with stiff competition that is not subject to EU rules.

Whilst we will also move beyond the formal reach of EU regulations, the Great Repeal Bill will hold us constant in terms of compliance with EU regulations. Manufacturers need clarity on whether the UK will decide to move away from EU terms, risking political and social resistance and the loss of "equivalency" which could risk access to EU markets, or maintain these standards and learn how to be super productive and operate in compliance with them. This is a problem the UK has struggled to resolve in spite of Nissan Motors at Sunderland's thirty-seven year exemplar in our midst.

The loss of skilled EU migrant labour will be keenly felt in manufacturing. The supply of young, economically active and trained people is already beginning to slow down as they make their own decisions about where to live now that the UK has signalled its intent to leave the EU. Manufacturers need to ensure that they offer training, remuneration and viable career options to attract and retain more young people in the sector, and to encourage older workers back to making things for a living. Any support from the Government to

ensure the UK skills gap doesn't increase further would be welcome news to the sector.

Whilst manufacturers will hope new trade agreements will be negotiated and implemented quickly, the reality is that there are bound to be delays in the transition. Alongside working with the Government to maintain pressure to execute the trade deals at pace, manufacturers must also be prepared for times when things slow to a crawl. This will put pressure on reserves if revenues are slowed and the cash to cash cycle is lengthened.

This is a time of great uncertainty, but with it also comes opportunity. Waiting for certainty is a high risk strategy, so manufacturers need to take control to ensure they are well-placed to navigate any unexpected challenges. A health check on how the business is structured financially is a good place to start. This will uncover how robust a business is and highlight any areas for concern. In addition, cash management and agile working capital management will be key to success in an increasingly volatile and energetic environment.

For further information on the impact of Brexit on the manufacturing sector, please contact Paul Dowell, manufacturing expert at RSM, on 0191 255 7000 or email paul.dowell@rsmuk.com.

TWO DECADES IN THE SUN

They say that time flies when you're having fun, but the same can also be said when you're building and growing a business. I can't quite believe it, but on 1 April 2017, I celebrated my 20th anniversary at Explore Wealth Management Ltd.

I have seen lots of changes in the course of running my own business, from changes in staff, advances in technology, a much-improved level of professionalism, to changes in the services that we provide; including a move towards charging fees for our advice and the introduction of our very popular annual review service. The biggest change however, has to be the way in which the business itself has adapted over the years.

Explore Wealth Management started out as a one-man band operating from a small room above a shop in Chester-le-Street, offering general financial advice to business owners and individuals.

From these humble beginnings, Explore Wealth Management is now recognised as one of the Top 250 IFAs in the UK by VouchedFor and has helped over 400 clients to manage their money and create a very happy and comfortable future.

Myself included, we now employ six people on a full-time basis and operate from a state-of-the-art office facility just outside Cramlington in Northumberland, offering a whole range of innovative services from cash flow forecasting, to retirement planning and everything in-between.

Although business has always been steady, in the last five years alone, Explore Wealth Management has grown from a £190k per annum turnover business to a £680k per annum turnover business, with further growth predicted for 2017.

I can honestly say that I have enjoyed every second of my time at Explore Wealth Management and I am looking forward to many more successful years ahead.



Stephen Sumner, Managing Director at Explore Wealth Management.

To find out more about the range of services that Explore Wealth Management provides, visit: www.explorewealth.co.uk

STAY AND PLAY - AT MATFEN HALL HOTEL



STAY AND PLAY IN 2017 *from* £99

Beautifully laid out on a classic parkland estate, Matfen Hall's 6700 yard course boasts challenging water features, unique obstacles and offers an enjoyable test for golfers of all abilities. Enjoy this mid-week break valid Sunday to Thursday only, from just **£99.00 per person**, includes up to two rounds of golf, dinner in the Keepers Lodge, soup & sandwich lunch, accommodation in a Matfen Hall classic bedroom as well as full use of all the spa and leisure facilities.

*Friday & Saturday supplement £25.00 per person, based on two adults sharing. Subject to availability, based on 2 people sharing a bedroom, until 30th April 2017 (excluding bank holidays) & may be subject to length of stay restrictions.



Matfen Hall, Matfen Village, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 0RH Tel: 01661 886 500



www.matfenhall.com

FLOODING BACK INTO DURHAM!

Michael Leather and Chris Smith of Leathers LLP discuss the close attachment of the business with Durham and the exciting opportunities that lie ahead following the re-opening of their Durham office.

We are now coming to the end of our 26th year in business and in some ways, it seems a long time since Michael started this business from the comfort of his home in Durham and with the support of an overdraft from the bank. The agreement Michael reached was that if the overdraft was fully used, it would be converted into a loan secured against his house. Given



that interest rates were 15% per annum at the time, that certainly concentrated the mind!

In time and with support from clients who are still with us 26 years later, we were able to grow the business so that we could move into our own

premises in Durham and in 2006 we moved into the office at Cale Cross House in Newcastle that we occupy today.

We continued to grow and we were also able to move back into Durham in order to support the Durham business community but that move was sadly relatively short-lived and our office on Old Elvet succumbed to flooding again in April last year. We are nothing if not a resilient bunch though and our commitment to Durham was such that we were determined to remain in the city.

We have now been able to secure new offices in Carter House on Pelaw Leazes Lane which was formerly occupied by the Diocese of Durham. The finishing touches were applied in March and we are now open for business. Whilst we can still see the river from the office window we are considerably higher up and whilst not wishing to tempt fate, we should be dry! Many of the accountants in the city have now moved out to surrounding business parks and it was important that our office combined ease of access for those coming from out of town with a central location. Carter House fits the bill perfectly.

Our Durham team led by Chris Smith will provide exactly the same services that our clients have come to expect from us over the years and which has led to so many of them staying with us. Our approach is founded on the ability to think creatively about all sort of financial problems and our ability to help clients make the most of the opportunities they identify and, sometimes, identifying next steps for them too. We then apply great care in ensuring that every detail is attended to and that our clients are kept fully involved as plans are implemented.

We are recognised by many as innovative thinkers particularly when looking at tax planning. We're delighted with that, but our ability to come up with a plan is only part of it. Without commercial nous and genuine care for the outcome our clients achieve, our planning ideas would come to nothing. Moreover, the implementation of an idea



which saves many thousands of pounds needs a whole combination of skills in accounting, business consultancy and financial reporting. We're pleased to say that we have those skills too!



We'll be launching our Durham office with a welcome event later in the year but should you wish to learn more about how we support business in Durham, across the Northeast and beyond, please do get in touch at canwehelp@LeathersLLP.co.uk or call 0191 224 6760.

NEXT PHASE UNDERWAY AT STEPHENSON QUARTER

The next phase of work at Newcastle's £200m Stephenson Quarter, which could create more than 800 jobs, is set to get underway following planning consent by the City Council.

Proposals to develop the North East Futures University Technical College (UTC) and Phoenix, a six-storey office development, have been given the green light by Newcastle City Council.

The scheme, developed by Clouston Group, aims to have the UTC and Phoenix buildings, representing a combined investment of £28.5m, complete and open by September 2018.

Stephenson Quarter is recognised as an ideal site for such an ambitious project. The new type of school, offering innovative ways of learning for 14-18 year olds, will be centred around the specialist subjects of IT and health sciences. The recruitment programme for the first intake of students at the UTC is already underway and interest is high across the region.

David Clouston, Managing Director of Clouston Group, said: "We're delighted to get the wholehearted support from the City Council for this exciting new phase of development at Stephenson Quarter. The two buildings are mutually beneficial and interlinked. Phoenix will accommodate dynamic, high-growth companies and offer the potential for cooperation with the UTC, providing students with work experience and mentoring opportunities."



SANDERSON YOUNG'S COLLECTION MAGAZINE TRAVELS WELL

The results of Sanderson Young's Autumn/Winter Collection magazine's Selfie Competition have been announced.

The winner is Chloe Betteridge who travelled to Dubai with her Collection magazine and is shown in front of the world's only 7 star hotel, The Burj al Arab.

In second place, and also taken in Dubai, is Mr Phil Harrison who treated his wife Janet and son Nick to a special night out in the Sky Bar where they read a copy of Collection. Phil is a banker from Lancashire and keeps an eye on the housing

market in Newcastle via Nick who is a student here.

Duncan Young, MD of Sanderson Young, commented: "I'm delighted to see our fabulous magazine is travelling so well and so far. It's a great read about regional property and we are delighted that it is so well appreciated."

If you are interested in advertising, or submitting a selfie with a copy of your magazine, please send images to Sanderson Young's Facebook site, Twitter or email: Sue.tomlin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

NORTH EAST LETTING FIRM BREAKS INTO BUOYANT MARKET

Cottages in Northumberland, which lets out more than 180 coastal, countryside and city properties in the region, has launched City Breaks in Newcastle, a one stop shop for self-catering accommodation in the Newcastle area.

The new website will aim to help those visiting the city, on business or for pleasure, find an alternative to hotel rooms.

City Breaks is a portfolio of 22 serviced apartments, cottages and houses in and around Newcastle, which can be rented by anyone planning to stay for two nights or more. The choice ranges from stylish Quayside apartments to elegant city townhouses and

even cottages on the outskirts of the city for those wishing to explore the wider area.

The new City Break website enables users to browse the portfolio of properties, check their availability and make a booking online. It also provides maps and a guide to the best activities, walks, restaurants and heritage sites in the area.

Director of Operations, Angela Mazingham, said: "There's a huge market for accommodation with the sort of home comforts and luxuries that you simply can't find at a hotel. Our properties are perfect for people who want to completely unwind at the end of a long day."





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“A true local family owned business”

PROPERTY AGENT EXPANDS SERVICES FOLLOWING IMPRESSIVE COMPANY GROWTH



L-R Richard Rafique Neil Hart Geoff Davis and Peter Bartley

Leading independent North East property agent Bradley Hall Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents is continuing in its rapid expansion and streamlining its commercial and residential operations across the North East.

The company, which operates under BH Group following the addition of new services and subsidiary businesses, now oversees separate commercial and residential property operations, BH Financial Services, BH Mortgages and new arm BH Planning and Design.

Experienced chartered planning and development surveyor Chris Whitehouse was recently appointed as Planning Director to lead the new services, including advising, designing and securing planning permissions on behalf of clients for both complex and large-scale land use development projects and more individually tailored projects.

Chartered surveyor Henry Scott also joins the team as Associate Director of building surveying within the commercial property operation. His expertise will add further services including; project management, design work, commercial refurbishment projects, contract administration, condition surveys, reinstatement cost assessments and dilapidations negotiations.

Thanks to recent growth, the company turnover has increased by an impressive 43% year on year. Neil Hart, Managing Director of BH Group, said: "It was a natural progression for BH Group to streamline its services following the rapid expansion of the business over the past couple of years.

"We now offer a wide range of property related services, offering clients across the North East unrivalled expertise from the very best industry

talent thanks to our newly strengthened team. Both Henry and Chris will be assets to the company, and we are looking forward to having them on board during this exciting time for the business.

"We have fast become the largest independent General practice chartered surveying firm within the North East.

"Bradley Hall has grown its resources and team to provide competitive commercial property advice and support to Top 200 companies in the region. We're consistently handling bigger instructions, for both commercial and residential projects."

The launch of the new services follows the establishment of the first two independent companies to launch directly under BH Group, BH Financial and BH Mortgages. Both companies have gone from strength to strength, with teams doubling in size and adding services along the way, including insurance and protection advice from BH Mortgages and BH Financial now providing support on sourcing and financing cars and vehicles.

The new appointments to the team follow the investment of around £150,000 and the relocation of the company from its Grey Street site to take 4,000 sq. ft. on the upper floor of 1 Hood Street, near Grey's Monument, Newcastle.

The move and relocation reflects an impressive year of growth and change but also further ambitions in the coming 12 months. BH Group intends to increase its team of staff from 35 to 50 within the

next couple of years and is currently recruiting for several posts.

This year saw the Bradley Hall commercial operation secure some of its biggest instructions to date. The company built its expertise in the leisure sector especially, and recently managed the sale of Newcastle's Union Rooms, a 19th Century five-storey building on Westgate Road, which was completed for an undisclosed fee.

Other leisure deals have included number 14 High Bridge, which was successfully let to Danieli Holdings Ltd. Following significant investment, the building is now set to become one of Newcastle's leading bars.

The company also oversaw the acquisition of the Grade II-listed Eldon Chambers, which has full planning permission to be converted into a boutique hotel and restaurant, and is now marketing this prime leisure accommodation for lease.

Bradley Hall continued its success in the industrial sector, marketing the £10m St Andrews Park, based on the Dragonville Retail Park, Dragon Lane, Durham.

The business currently employs staff over operations in its main head office and commercial base at Grey's Monument in Newcastle city centre, with residential offices in Gosforth, Durham, Alnwick and Morpeth.

For more information on Bradley Hall's commercial and residential services, please visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk or call the Hood Street office on 0191 232 8080.

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Stannington Park offers a traditional village setting coupled with new leisure amenities, such as a gastropub, cricket pitch and community centre.

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IMPRESSIVE NEW HOMES FROM BELLWAY AT WEST MOOR



Bellway's latest development, Moorfields in West Moor is within within 200 yards of Gosforth Park. Located west of the A189, Bellway is offering a range of four and five bedroom detached homes starting in price from £284,995.

Visitors to the development cannot fail to be impressed with the new Coniston show home which offers 2,144 sq ft of living space. The ground floor comprises a large dining kitchen with an adjacent living area. In addition there is a useful study room and utility room which also provides access to a very generous double garage with electric up and over doors, the garage also has a separate door leading to a large enclosed rear garden. The entrance area, kitchen and utility room are all stone floored with the ground floor benefitting from underfloor electric heating which offers more flexibility to furniture layouts.

The large mirrored entrance hall and feature staircase offers natural light provided by the double height window that frames the stairs and leads to the first floor and large landing area from which there is a family TV room. The master bedroom features a dressing area with fitted wardrobes as well as a large ensuite with double width shower enclosure. Three further bedrooms, two double, one with ensuite facilities and a single bedroom plus family bathroom complete this floor.

All the homes enjoy a comprehensive specification

which include a stylish range of kitchens from the Laura Ashley Kitchen Collection and include a top of the range AEG double oven, induction hob, cooker hood, dishwasher and wine cooler. The beautifully designed cabinets, up-stands and work surfaces are available in a range of colours and can reflect either a classic design theme or contemporary theme, the choice is yours.

"The kitchen is a place where you can really make a design statement and lasting impression, which is why we have chosen kitchens from the Laura Ashley Kitchen Collection as they embody craftsmanship and design excellence with outstanding quality," confirmed Rob Armstrong, Bellway's Sales Director.

Additionally, within the specification at Moorfields, Bellway is including turfed front and rear gardens, block paved driveways and electronically controlled garage doors, there is also an external tap and weather proof socket, ideal for gardeners.

Buyers at Moorfields can take advantage of the Government's Help to Buy scheme which means that only a five percent deposit is required to secure a new home. They will then be able to take advantage of a five year twenty percent interest free loan which will reduce mortgage repayments

during the first five years of ownership.

West Moor is an excellent location from which to commute and residents will benefit from the developments proximity to a range of shopping outlets at Silverlink, Killingworth and Gosforth.

For families, the development is close to a number of well regarded schools including Westmoor Primary School and George Stephenson High School. Tyne Metropolitan College offers a range of A levels, apprenticeships and higher education courses, while the nearest universities are Newcastle University and Northumbria University, both in the city centre and within easy travel times of Moorfields.

For commuters, the development offers easy access to the A1 for Newcastle, Gateshead, Durham and the South, and the A19 for Sunderland, Middlesbrough, York and Doncaster. The A1058 Coast Road, which connects Tynemouth with Newcastle, can be reached within 10 minutes. The nearest Metro stations are at Four Lane Ends and Palmersville, both seven minutes drive away from the development. For domestic and international flights Newcastle Airport is around 15 minutes drive away via the A1.

For more information about Moorfields, visit www.bellway.co.uk or call 07837 517137
Our sales office is open daily: 11:00am – 5:00pm Monday and 10:00am – 5:00pm Tuesday to Sunday.

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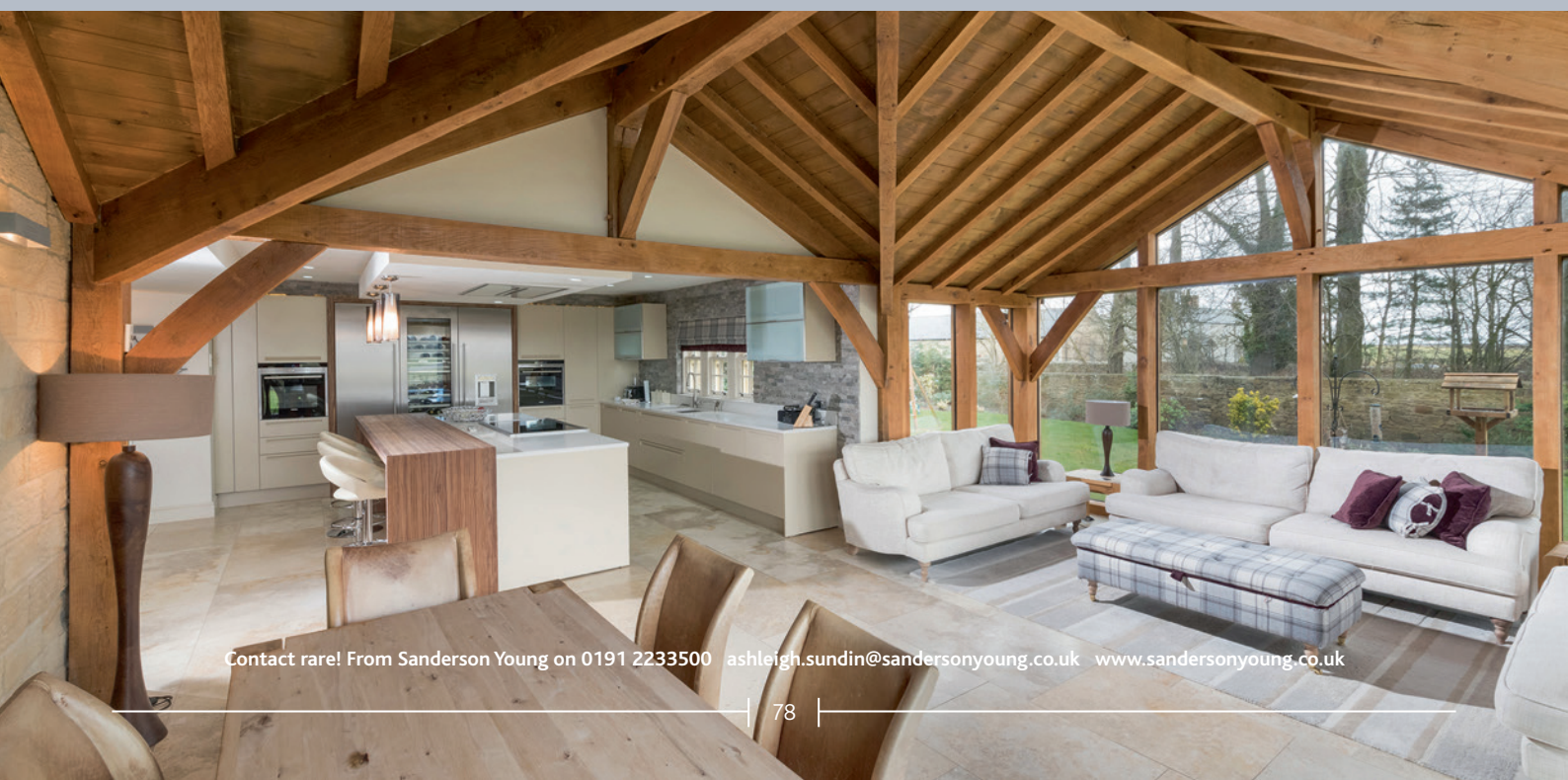


ULGHAM PARK FARMHOUSE, ULGHAM, MORPETH



PRICE GUIDE: £1.5 MILLION

Ulgham Park Farmhouse dates back to the 1800s and has been significantly improved and extended to provide this stunning country house, beautifully presented to the highest of standards. It was originally converted as part of its steading in 2010 and represents the largest of the properties with a new two storey wing added in 2015. This exceptional home is located in a beautiful area and has impeccable accommodation which includes six double bedrooms with en suites, a stunning kitchen/breakfast room, a family room and dining room, a garden room, formal sitting room, a games room with cocktail bar, an office/study and a professional cinema room. The property is set in 16 acres and has its own grazing paddock as well as formal lawned gardens with well stocked borders, a patio terrace, lovely walkways, a small kitchen garden, double plus garage and a maturing small copse of trees providing good screening.



Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 2233500 ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk www.sandersonyoung.co.uk



Michael Grahamslaw meets

DUNCAN YOUNG

Managing Director, Sanderson Young Estate Agents

Did you always envisage a career in property?

No I originally planned to be a Deck Officer in the Merchant Navy and was recruited by P&O Shipping Line before realising that I was too extrovert to be stuck on an oil tanker for months on end.

Tell me about your current role?

I'm the owner and Managing Director of Sanderson Young and I specialise in the higher value residential properties throughout the region as well as our expanding New Homes department where I work with two chartered surveyors to support our developer clients in the acquisition of sites and the development of luxury apartments and houses. I oversee all day to day aspects of our estate agency and the sale and lettings offices from Alnwick in the north to our Regional branch in Gosforth.

How has the housing market changed since you started your career?

My first 17 years in estate agency was with a large Corporate company who now trade as Your Move but were General Accident Property Services and locally they were previously Dudley Charlton. I led 66 offices in the North of England for the Town and Country brand and enjoyed the challenge of having hundreds of colleagues to work with and direct. I set up Sanderson Young in 1999 and it quickly grew from one branch and 6 staff to 5 offices and nearly 70 staff. The market has seen a roller coaster of activity with peaks and troughs of demand and supply. The last ten years has been

particularly challenging since the market crash in 2007 but we are slowly rising up and confidence is returning once again.

How would you advise people looking to buy property?

It's a particularly good time at the moment to move up the ladder with very low interest rates which you should fix for five years or more at the moment and stretch yourself as much as possible as the higher value properties are subdued in value and will rise again soon as the confidence returns.

What is the most exciting thing you're working on?

The regeneration of the former Smiths Dock in North Shields is very exciting. In May we see the launch of 34 houses which have been developed in partnership between Urban Splash and Places for People who are great clients. This site will provide ten years work for us as we see a fabulous mix of houses and beautiful homes coming out of the ground.

What is your fondest career memory?

There are many beautiful homes I remember selling, in particular The Old Mill in Darras Hall and some beautiful one off houses on the coastline of Northumberland and into Scotland with The Pavilion at Coldingham Bay. However my fondest memories are all about the tremendous people I have been privileged to work with including Hazel Ross and my original mentor Peter Bell.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

To see the company move into a new era of marketing and sales which is very much more interactive as we live in this modern world of instant data and virtual reality tours. It really is very exciting and the pace of change quite dramatic. I'm looking forward to working with new colleagues who are helping me see the future of estate agency including my eldest son Charlie who has recently started in the company.

What are your favourite places to live in the North East?

I was born and bred in Amble and Warkworth so have fond memories of that area and all the coastline up to Holy Island but I thank my wife Alison for keeping me in Gosforth which is definitely my "home".

Tell me about your team?

We are a great family and working team of colleagues and friends, everyone pulls together and supports each other. The firm is run on a day to day basis by my right hand lady and Operations Director Janet Hopkinson who has been a tower of strength to me over the years and we often split into groups to plan the next way forward using the years of maturity and skills we have to ensure our clients gain the very best advice and guidance that they expect.

How do you like to relax?

With Alison and our boys as well as so many great friends and, of course, often with a glass in my hand!!



Springfield House Spoutwell Lane, Corbridge

6 4 7 D

Springfield House, constructed circa 1874, is a highly impressive detached Victorian residence with fabulous Tyne Valley views. The property has been extensively refurbished retaining period styling and is set in 2.9 acres of beautiful grounds with a twin tree house and four car garage.



Price Guide: Price on Application

rare! From Sanderson Young

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rare! Office: 0191 223 3500
 www.sandersonyoung.co.uk





Graham Park Road Gosforth

6 3 3 D

35 Graham Park Road provides one of the most splendid, three storey, semi-detached period houses, in one of Newcastle's most sought after addresses. The property has been extensively renovated to a very high and luxurious standard and has fabulous, recently landscaped, rear gardens.



Price Guide: £1.8 Million

rare! From Sanderson Young

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SELF-BUILD YOUR BASE - EASY AS ABC

Jan Dale talks to Alan Mayhew of Base Architecture

Architectural Base Consultancy, or BASE for short, offer a comprehensive range of Architectural Services for clients throughout the North East. Their ethos is to be the best Architecture Company our region has to offer, whilst providing a fast, friendly and competitive yet highly professional service. Having had first hand experience of their services, Jan supports the benefits of using a friendly team of experts for your extension or grand design.

"We formed the company in 2000" says Alan Mayhew, "and now known as Architectural Base Consultancy Ltd we have been involved in all types of projects from private individuals, companies, registered social landlords, local authorities, private landlords and developers across a wide range of project types from small scale residential work through to larger scale private and social housing, industrial units, office buildings and large production factories."

Having a solid reputation that creates repeat work from happy clients is what Base continue to build on for producing high quality design solutions to meet and exceed clients' needs and brief. They deliver a fast and professional service, respond to tight deadlines, pride themselves on the quality and detailed technical content of drawings and information produced, and all within a competitive price.

"At Base we are conversant in all current construction legislation and practices and endeavour to keep aware of and embrace new legislation and techniques as they appear." The team have particular knowledge and expertise in energy efficient buildings and building techniques especially in housing and the increasing value of sustainable design, with an excellent record in securing Planning Approval and Building Regulations Approvals due to a close working relationship with the Local Authorities/Building Control Companies.

The experienced and approachable workforce includes some of the most creative designers Durham and Newcastle has to offer. So whether you're a seasoned developer or new to the experience of appointing a design team for a very special project or extension, their client centred approach makes the whole process as simple as...well ABC.

Services include:

- Concept design
- Detailed design
- Viability assessments
- Planning services
- Building Regulations
- Tender and on-site Project Management

For a free consultation please contact: Alan Mayhew
mail@abcarch.co.uk or Jan Dale on 0845 643 1186.



Jan Dale



Land & New Homes

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Tim Jennett, Procurement and IT Manager at NE Procurement

SOLUTIONS AREN'T JUST FOUND IN THE LAB

Tim Jennett, Procurement and IT manager at NE Procurement, one of the North East's leading procurement organisations, has spent more than a decade working in the procurement sector. But he started out his career in a very different setting...

Everything in life is an experiment. If you don't experiment, how will you find a solution to a problem? There's never just one way of doing anything.

An interest in chemical science often means you like to experiment to find different ways of doing things. That's why my experience of working as a research scientist at Imperial Chemical Industries is so useful to me now, more than 30 years later, in my current role at NE Procurement.

The first time I was exposed to the procurement industry was when I was working as part of a research team on a UV protection project which required a lot more than just the research I specialised in. After circumstances changed mid-way through the project, I had to become a lot more involved in the technical development of the product than I had been before. The resulting product range was a great success, but it was this wearing of 'multiple hats', and my exposure to the procurement side of things, that led to me taking an interest in procurement so much so that, not long after, I became the procurement manager within the company.

After working on projects alongside the corporate teams in the business, the time to move from private to public procurement seemed right- I wanted to move into a different environment, a challenging one at that, but an environment that meant I could work on projects I wouldn't have otherwise had the chance to. I worked with various local authorities across the region, before I became part of the NE Procurement team back in 2015.

I originally joined NE Procurement with the aim of supporting and developing the IT systems that were in place. However, since then I've found myself working alongside the procurement team supporting them with the development of bespoke procurement solutions, whilst implementing and developing the IT and tendering systems we have.

I'm always looking for new ways of working and as a team, we like to continuously develop the way we do things to ensure we always achieve the most efficient outcome for our members. My scientific background has taught me to never just stick to the tried and tested ways of doing things and that there's not always just one end result. Yes, some may say 'if it's not broke, don't fix it', but I don't

believe that doing things how they've always been done, just because it feels safe or because it's easier is the most efficient way of working. It's amazing to see how just changing a few small things in a process can have such an impact on the end result.

Most of our members at NE Procurement are North East housing organisations and the word 'procurement' is something that's been thrown around a lot in the housing industry over the past few years. People tend to associate the word with a team of people who look at how much money can be saved on a particular project or purchase. Actually, effective procurement is about so much more than that. It's about finding a solution which is cost-effective in the long-term, not just the here and now; involving procurement in everyday operational activities can have positive impacts on the business far beyond saving money in the short-term.

To find out more about NE Procurement or how they can help you and your business, visit neprocurement.org.uk

HIGH DEMAND EXPECTED ON FINAL HOMES AT FIRST PHASE OF LUXURY NUNTHORPE DEVELOPMENT

David Wilson Homes North East's Grey Towers Village development in Nunthorpe provides homebuyers with a unique, traditional village setting effortlessly combined with the conveniences of modern living. The five star housebuilder has recently announced that the final homes on phase one of this popular development have now been released and are expected to be in high demand.

With up to £20,000 of savings available on selected properties at Grey Towers Village, buyers are encouraged to visit the site to discuss their options with the sales team, as interest from those looking to secure their new home ready for summer is expected to be high.

Homes at Grey Towers Village are available to buy using David Wilson Homes' innovative Part Exchange scheme. The scheme offers buyers the opportunity to sell their existing home to the housebuilder, in order to move with no estate agents fees or chains, meaning buyers could easily be settled in their new home for summer. Buyers can also make use of the Government's Help to Buy scheme, which allows homebuyers to purchase a brand new home up to the value of £600,000 with a 5% deposit, thanks to a 20% loan from the government.

Steven Ball, Sales Manager at Grey Towers Village, commented: "The fantastic location of Grey Towers Village has proved very popular so far and we're anticipating this high demand will continue on these final homes that have been released. There are currently a range of schemes and offers available for purchasers to take advantage of, so I would strongly recommend that anyone interested should visit the development and speak with our sales team."



To find out more about Grey Towers Village, or to book an appointment, please visit: www.dwh.co.uk/greytowersvillage

RATES – HOW BAD IS IT, AND WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

Philip Bowe, Managing Director of BIV Bowes looks at the implications of the 2017 Rating Valuation.

Well it is here. The much – heralded, and much – criticised, Rating Valuation 2017. So what does this mean for you?

The words you can't failed to have noticed are "Check, Challenge, Appeal" – and no doubt you will be aware that appealing now costs money, whereas before, the only charges made taking an appeal right up to Tribunal were those levied by any agent acting for you. Most agents, and all reputable ones, including BIV Bowes, would only charge a success based commission. As before, my first advice is never pay any fees or charges until your adviser can prove your Rateable Value is dropping. Some of the disreputable outfits disguise these so beware. Now, there is a charge from HMRC if it ends up an "Appeal stage" – which is equivalent to the old "Tribunal stage" in effect. What this charge will be has not been published yet, but £150 - £300 has been mooted.

However, in the meantime, there is another change to the system, which will effect you far more quickly. In the "old days", a rate payer or adviser could lodge the appeal with the simple reason "the present assessment is incorrect" – which is also how the cowboys mentioned

above could show they had lodged appeals and charging people for them. Now an appellant has to give a reasoned argument. This is where the professionals come in.

So if you're considering an appeal, and wondering where to turn, ask for recommendations as you usually would. Interview any prospective adviser and ask them to demonstrate success in the past. Check they will only charge if they are successful, and what they will charge – will it be based on one year's savings or several? Lastly of course do you feel comfortable with them?

I have had comment on my profile that appeared in February's issue of Northern Insight. You may recall that I said "I wasn't bright enough" to become an architect. Somebody said (and he wasn't even an architect!) that I had implied I was a bit dim. I think it's fair enough to admit one's failings in certain regards – my physics wasn't up to scratch for architecture. I will also admit that I have submitted some Rating Appeals and the reductions have only been minimal. However, I have achieved a 29.8% reduction in RV on Osborne Road, Jesmond and a 51.1% reduction in RV in Seaburn. Most of the time it works out...



Philip Bowe

SPRING AND TAXES



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

Now that it is officially Spring I would love to write a column full of fluffy bunnies and dancing daffodils but sadly, the outlook for the private rental sector currently looks like the bleak midwinter for both landlords and tenants. This is largely the result of well-meaning legislation plotting a torturous and ill advised path to its lofty ideals.

Abolishing fees for letting agents seems on the face of it, a good idea. Certainly tenants phoning in to a national radio program I listened to recently were full of glee at the idea. Not one of them stopped to ask "Where will the money come from to pay for tenants background checks, agents training courses and our emergency helpline?"

The answer is blindingly obvious. It will come from increased rents. It is a bit like seeing a car advertised as 'zero percent finance'. Does anyone honestly believe a car finance company is in business to make zero profit? Profit for the finance company is in the package somewhere.

Landlords are in no position to take the hit on letting agent fees. The Section 24 Finance Act will be introduced in stages from this month. This will reduce landlords' ability to claim tax relief on mortgage interest and is in effect, a turnover tax. Some will see a doubling of their current tax bill.

The private rental sector has overtaken social housing yet at every turn it seems legislation is out to hammer the small private landlord.

There is much speculation regarding the ultimate objective, a favourite supposition being that the Government wishes to squeeze out the private landlord to free up housing stock for first time buyers. Although this idea is firmly in the realms of conspiracy theory might it just play into legislators' agenda?

If this is the case it is ill thought through. If a small landlord has a portfolio of three, four and five bedroom properties and declares "Enough", those properties are not going to be snapped up by first time buyers. Lenders are not going to loosen their mortgage criteria to accommodate buyers of ex rental properties.

So, an interesting Spring for the private rental sector and one we shall watch with interest. Next month I promise fluffy bunnies and dancing daffodils.

www.heatonproperty.com

LITTLE BRITAIN

With summer fast approaching and the prospect of warm evenings ahead, you'd be forgiven for dreaming of the upcoming heatwave that inevitably lasts a couple of hours before normal wet and rainy service is resumed.

But don't forget about the inevitable cold snap arriving. This is Britain after all and winter is never far away. Planning for the cold can be the difference between keeping your family warm cost efficiently and paying above the odds on expensive heating bills. While a full renovation may not be the most cost effective option, little by little you can prepare your home for the barrage of snow, rain, hail and whatever else the British weather can throw at it.

Double Glazed Sash & Casement Windows

Keeping the cold out as well as bringing the light in is something of a balancing act as many of our customers have told us. Being able to enjoy the winter sun through your home or conservatory is ideal for cutting costs on electricity to constantly power the home and keep rooms lit. Investing in double glazed sash and casement windows for the home not only keep your home warm but can also keep noise out aswell.

Composite Doors

One of the biggest reasons for lost heat is the same reason you get in – the doors.

Energy efficient doors in your home are important to ensure your home is as warm as it can be all year around.

A composite door can not only help your home feeling great but can also help your home to look as stylish as you could ever want with a range of styles and designs available with almost any combination to suit your home.



House Roofing

Heat rises. So obviously you'll want to keep that heat from rising a little too far.

If you're worried about the cold winds entering your home via the roof then Tyneside Home Improvements have you – and the top of your home – covered.

The first part of the house to suffer the brunt of the weather both good and bad is a house roof so it must be as good at dealing with the heat as it is at keeping out the cold and rain.

If you are looking to save money on your bills and keep your house warm or if you're just looking to improve your home, visit tynesidehomeimprovements.co.uk to see our full range of products, and for more information on us, call us on 0191 489 5063 or drop us an email to admin@thi.com

CONSTRUCTION PARTNERSHIP BUILT FOR SUCCESS

The first properties have been reserved on the site of a construction partnership between three North-East firms which offers affordable housing on the outskirts of Durham.

Show homes at the Prince Bishops Homes Swallowtail Meadows site in New Brancepeth opened to the public in February. Since then, reservations have been taken on five homes at the development, which features 33 three and four bedroom houses available either to buy or on a rent-to-buy scheme.

The residential development, which is situated in rural County Durham and offers stunning views over open countryside, has been designed and built to reflect the existing architecture of the village.

Construction on the site has been managed by Swale Valley Construction, a Catterick-based building contractor which has partnered with Gateshead-based brick merchants W McGovern & Co on the project.

Charles Smith, from Swale Valley Construction, said: "I am delighted to see that the first properties on this fantastic development are in such high demand. We have worked carefully to ensure that the architecture of the site fits its surroundings, working with our suppliers to source materials such as bricks to match existing nearby properties and I think this attention to detail is evident in the final product. I am looking forward to completing the final stages of the site and seeing the first residents move into their new properties."

Rob Hughes, Managing Director of W McGovern & Co, said: "This development marks the beginning of a partnership between McGoverns and Swale Valley Construction and I am looking forward to what the future holds for both companies as we work together on exciting new building projects across the North of England.

"McGoverns has over seven decades of experience in the trade, which means we really are the experts when it comes to sourcing bricks to meet any design.



L-R: Rob Hughes, Charles Smith

It's great to see the results of our hard work come to fruition when building projects are completed."

Properties on the site start from £127,000. Alternatively, £580 rent per calendar month and 20% discount is provided against this rent cost, to enable first time buyers the ability to save for a mortgage deposit.

Details can be found at www.princebishopshomes.co.uk

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Or email info@wmcgovern.com



W. McGovern & Co. have over seven decades of experience in the construction trade making us the experts when it comes to sourcing bricks for anything from large-scale commercial building projects to home extensions. Based in Gateshead, we are stockists of the largest range of bricks in the North East, which means we can find an affordable match whatever the design.

AMBITIOUS AND VISIONARY, OR DELAYED BY AN UNWILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE?



Regardless of how big or small the site, how complex the development proposal, and how willing (or not) the community is to accept the planned works, it's rarely the 'big picture' that causes problems. More often than not, argues Ruth Shepherd of Results Communications, the devil is always in the detail...

The last month has been an interesting one in terms of engagement. We've seen one of our projects refused at planning committee (not unexpected, although not for the reasons anticipated to be the stumbling block), heard a year-old project is still bogged down in discussions about brick colour so is stalled, and a third – not one of ours but one likely to be recommended for approval - hitting the buffers. Each of the projects are very different but share two common themes. The first is that they are all responding to a demand within the communities in which they are being proposed. The second is that they all require a high level of detail to get from 'vision' to completion.

Working within project teams of seasoned developers, planners and contractors, it would be easy to become complacent with dealing what, over time, become familiar concerns and recurring issues, and ultimately to adopt a 'same problem, different site' mentality. Thankfully the detailing required to ensure that a scheme is viable, that the transport solutions are considered, sensible and responsive, and that any ecology issues are

mitigated ensures complacency is not an option.

Then you factor in the engagement required with stakeholders - and find the problems with doing so lie - generally - with those of the civic variety. So what if a Transport Strategy has been sitting on a planning officer's desk for two months? There's nothing to stop the planning committee kicking the application back for 'lack of detail'. Is it relevant that the document with the detail they are looking for has not even been glanced at?

What about that extra bit of developable land needed to make the scheme viable, and the offer to potential buyers that much more interesting because the internal space standards are better as a results? Nope. Not enough detail.

The Localism Act and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) placed communities at the heart of planning. With local plans and the simplified planning legislation it was meant to be easier to engage, and for that engagement to be meaningful and therefore more effective. But is engagement as we see it now a little one-sided?

Are we as project teams expected to jump through

numerous hoops to prove there is no negative impact, that where there is potential for harm it is limited and mitigated, that development will not cause accidents or house prices to fall and people to suddenly suffer from air quality deficiencies to the point where projects get bogged down in the minutiae, and stumble once in the planning process. What happens when the client is clearly trying to engage with the local authority and the authority – for reasons known or subject to speculation – resists for dialogue then back-heels responsibility knowing it will inevitably be appealed following non-determination or a flat-out refusal.

Results Communications has been developing stakeholder and community engagement strategies for clients for years, advising them on how best to consult, engage and communicate with the various parties to ensure the best possible outcome is achieved for the site, community, business and the environment. But how long will it be before the system is truly collaborative, and councils, landowners, developers and communities can really engage with one another?

Results Communications provides independent community and stakeholder engagement services to public and private sector clients. If you need help smoothing your path through planning, you can reach us on 01434 603205 or via hello@resultscommunications.co.uk

O CULTIVATES GROWTH OF CONSUMER CLIENT ROSTER



Newcastle creative communications agency O PR has added to its growing portfolio of clients in the homes and gardens sector with national household names Flymo and McCulloch.

Lawnmower and outdoor power product manufacturer Husqvarna UK Ltd has appointed O to handle its integrated PR, digital and social media strategy across both its Flymo and McCulloch brands in the UK.

O is building its reputation as one of the most exciting consumer PR agencies, boasting a prolific client roster including the likes of Goldsmiths retail chain and the UK's largest holiday park operator Parkdean Resorts. O also work with a number of homes and interiors products, such as Rust-Oleum paints and Nottingham-based Firemizer, an eco-friendly product for open fires, wood-burning stoves, firepits and barbecues.

Managing Director at O, Kari Owers, said: "We are looking forward to working with the Husqvarna Group to integrate its digital content, social and PR strategies on these two reputable, revolutionary brands. Both Flymo and McCulloch fit perfectly into our consumer portfolio, meaning we now represent everything from interior paints through to outdoor garden equipment. This gives us a real advantage when speaking to journalists and digital influencers."

SHOUT EXPAND OPERATIONS IN US AND UK

A North East headquartered digital agency is to widen its remit in both the UK and the United States.

Shout Digital, which already operates its business development functions from offices in London, says it is in the advanced stages of adding day-to-day client delivery capabilities to the team there. At the same time, the firm is adding business development and client-fronting staff to a new office in Philadelphia on the East coast of the United States.

CEO Gary Boon, who established the agency in 2009, explained: "This is a natural progression for

us. Until now, it has made sound business sense to service the clients from here in Newcastle, but the workload and opportunities, both in London and in the States, means we're expanding our physical and visible presence in both."

"We're improving the digital efficiency and profitability and, in many cases, raising the bar for our clients' industry standards. We are also delivering projects across Europe and Asia."

Shout, which has more than 30 staff, has worked on major digital platform builds for the likes of Great Run Training, St. Ermin's Hotel in central London and global financial security experts, CPP.



UNWRITTEN CREATIVE CHAMPIONS NORTH EAST SUBSEA SECTOR



Unwritten Creative, the North East-based digital and branding agency, is supporting the region's subsea sector with a project for a new research and testing facility.

The agency has been retained by Tyne Subsea, a joint initiative between BEL Valves and Newcastle University, to support the facility's ambitions to become the primary resource for companies developing technologies to operate in deep subsea environments.

Utilising its expertise in the engineering and offshore sectors, Unwritten is providing a range of branding and digital services including the creation of a new website and the development of targeted messaging to highlight the benefits of the facility to the subsea industry.

The facility is based across two sites and delivers hyperbaric research, test and certification. It features two distinct services, which cater to commercial, research and skills requirements. Working in collaboration, BEL Valves and Newcastle University have developed a multi-chamber hyperbaric testing operation to increase the availability of deep water and environmental testing to the subsea sector. Currently five chambers are in operation across the two sites.

Unwritten Creative is developing a growing practice in engineering-based industry sectors having secured assignments from a number of companies including British Engines, BEL Valves and Phusion IM.



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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

BENJAMIN KERRY

Founder, JAK HQ

What were your career ambitions growing up?

Realising I wasn't going to be a footballer was a tough pill to swallow, as I felt I had the ability to do so. On reflection, it was a kick up the backside as I had the ability but perhaps low confidence from a young age held me back. Confidence is a character trait I want to instil in my son, Charlie - it can make a huge difference to your life and I want Charlie to realise this from a young age. I was always interested in writing, and with an auntie that worked for The Daily Telegraph, I was exposed to that world from a young age. Alongside my studies at college and university, I was also very interested in business - I'd buy and sell almost anything. The combination of loving to write and my business interests is what probably helped the transition from freelance writer to business owner when I set up Precise English Limited in early 2009.

Can you tell us about the inception of JAK HQ?

After years of being asked by clients to help with their website, marketing and print, I decided that changing Precise English Limited, a company known for its copywriting services, to a creative agency was not the best move. I took over JAK in July 2016 and quickly expanded on the brand's reputation for print and design to where we are now; a full-service creative agency that can help with everything related to growing a business both online and offline. We absolutely love working with local, north east businesses - and our goal for 2017 is to work with more local companies that we can grow alongside.

What services do you provide?

Our core services are web design, graphic design, print, online and offline marketing (SEO, PPC, social media, email marketing and print marketing).

What are the company's greatest achievements to date?

I'm very proud of the team for a whole host of projects that they've completed over the last year. However, the websites we've designed and built recently are incredible - and the value we provide as a local company that's willing to go the extra mile is really starting to pay dividends in terms of referrals. To win work through referrals is a definitive sign that we're doing something right!

What challenges have you encountered so far?

Sometimes our quotes have been extremely competitive, so much so that we've lost work on the perception that a pricier competitor quote

must equate to a higher standard of work. I'm learning how to combat this in our proposals and our new website's portfolio section will make it clear just how amazing my team are.

What are your short and long term plans for the firm?

First and foremost, I want to continue to grow the brand in the north. It's important to me that local businesses support each other and I hope to be known not only for providing high-quality design, marketing and print at affordable prices, but also for championing and supporting local businesses. In the long-term, it's only natural that we'll expand further in the UK and Europe. Although we do work with companies all over the UK at present, our main focus is on the north east.

Is there a mantra you always aspire to do business by?

To always be honest! Whether it's honesty with my



employees or honesty with a client; we're nothing if we're not honest with each other. I've (really!) lost projects with clients because I've told them it's probably not worth their time investing in a particular service at present - even to the detriment (short-term) of my business. For example, when selling SEO, I'm honest with clients about how hard it is to rank highly in Google's search engine results pages. I don't offer guarantees - sometimes I lose work to others that are promising first page results (nobody can guarantee this) but in the long-term, on average, I'd say the number of clients coming back to me outnumber those that have gone elsewhere and received a genuine service that has brought them success.

Who are your heroes in and out of business?

My Dad! He is a self-employed domestic appliance repair man in Eaglescliffe and has been for many, many years. I've never seen him without work and I've never heard him complain about the graft he has to put in, like carrying washing machines up and down stairs. He's from Shildon and, similar to a lot of places in the north east, there's a real hard-working mentality ingrained into the people of Shildon - the hard work he's put into his career has hopefully rubbed off on me. I think seeing my Dad work for himself has had a big impact on my decision to enter the world of business, but I wouldn't have it any other way! For example, if my son Charlie has something on at pre-school I'm able to be there, and nothing means more to me than seeing my son!

How do you maintain a healthy work/life balance?

Sticking to my mantra (I'm being optimistic that you've read my other answers), up until recently I've struggled. My life consisted of work and my son Charlie - that's it. I'd rush home to spend time with Charlie before he went to bed, then I'd work some more. However, I've slowly but surely managed to change this, as I realised I needed to spend more time with my partner, Laura. It's still a work in progress, I've probably annoyed a few friends over the past year but hopefully that'll continue to improve in 2017.

How would you like to be remembered?

I try not to react with anger. I try to imagine why someone has done something before I act. Everyone has their own troubles and battles, and we all make mistakes. I'd hope to be remembered as an honest, fair person that loved nothing more than spending time with his family.

IS YOUR ADVERTISING STRATEGY MOBILE-FIRST?



Ian Stewart is an experienced media buyer for full-service marketing, advertising and digital agency The Works. Having planned advertising campaigns for a range of clients and managed budgets of up to £2million, here he talks about the biggest shift he has seen in recent years; the rise of mobile advertising channels.

According to leading cross-platform measurement company ComScore, mobile usage has now officially overtaken desktop and nearly 50% of the time we spend on social networking, gaming and news sites happens via a smartphone - no surprise there then! So, you would think that the majority of UK digital advertising spend would be on mobile channels then, wouldn't you? Well, unfortunately not.

Last year, despite mobile advertising bookings increasing 56% in the first half of 2016 (something which is only set to continue increasing this year), only 18% of UK organisations' budgets went towards mobile advertising. Yet, mobile advertising offers organisations creative, strategic opportunities that have simply not been possible before. For instance, three quarters of adults used their mobile to buy something last year and, of those adults, 36% of their total spend was via mobile, nearly equalling their in-store purchases of 41%. The opportunities as an advertiser to engage with such a captive audience are endless and something an organisation may have struggled to do as effectively in previous years.

These days your mobile knows more about you than you think. It tracks everything you do – where you go, what you're interested in and what websites you visit. Your mobile DNA then allows advertisers to target their adverts to the right person in the right place and at the right time - the epitome of targeted advertising.

Location or 'ring-fenced' targeting, in particular, is a very effective way of doing this. This clever method identifies phones that enter a given target radius and displays adverts to them once the user starts browsing websites. Add to that the fact that the advertiser only pays for click throughs, not impressions, and you've got a very sophisticated and efficient method of mobile advertising.

Last year, careful ring-fencing of one of our client's competitors' sites delivered our advert in front of a potential customer – intrigued and amazed by the timing of the advert, the customer visited our client to find out more. If that's not effective targeting for you I don't know what is! But the focus shouldn't just be on competitors. Your own footfall is just as important, if not more so, if you have a physical presence for sales. Strategic mobile advertising

enables you to target visitors whilst they are on site or in its vicinity, increasing the opportunities to sell or upsell at the best possible time to convert.

If that all sounds a bit Big Brother-esque to you then look away now as it's only going to get worse! There are increasing reports that the likes of Facebook and Google are listening to your conversations and delivering adverts to you based on what they hear! Last year, American news outlet nbc4i ran an experiment to test whether Facebook was listening to them so they recruited Kelli Burns, professor of mass communications at the University of South Florida. Burns enabled the microphone feature in her Facebook app and said aloud to the phone: "I'm really interested in going on an African safari. I think it'd be wonderful to ride in one of those jeeps." A minute later a safari story appeared in her Facebook feed!

As an advertiser, this would be a brilliant service to offer our clients but, as a consumer, I was sort of pleased when my discussions about holidays failed to show me any adverts about luxury 5* villas in Bora Bora!

To find out more about what The Works do and how they can help you, visit wearetheworks.com or follow @wearetheworks



MEDIAWORKS WINS NORTH EAST BUSINESS AWARD

North East digital marketing agency has added yet another award to their trophy cabinet.

Here, we find out about the agency's success at the regional heats of the North East Business Awards:

March got off to a brilliant start for Mediaworks, as we took home the Digital & Social Media Award at the Tyneside & Northumberland heat of the 2017 North East Business Awards.

Now in their 15th year, the North East Business Awards were established to recognise our region's companies that are paving the way across all areas of business, from growth to innovation. The Digital & Social Media Award specifically looked for digital excellence and innovation. It was awarded

to Mediaworks as a result of our continued commitment to digital, harnessing its potential to benefit both our own business and our clients'.

Our commitment to digital has enabled us to work on some fantastic projects and deliver exceptional results. One of our most notable projects of the past 12 months was creating the app for the Great North Snowdogs Trail.

In support of the mass-participation art event that united the region back in 2016, our app received over one million unique interactions and launched at number three in the app store - higher than Microsoft's Minecraft.

All of the winners from the Northumberland and Tyneside heat will go through to the grand final at Hardwick Hall Hotel in Sedgefield, where they'll be joined by the winners of the Teesside and Durham, Sunderland and South Tyneside heats.

Speaking of their award success, Mediaworks' Managing Director Brett Jacobson said: "The awards recognise some of the region's most forward-thinking, innovative companies, so winning the Digital & Social Media Award is a fantastic achievement. We're looking forward to the final and wish other finalists the very best of luck."

Want to work with an award-winning digital innovator?
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LONDONERS FIND A LOT TO LOVE ABOUT THE NORTH



The regular reader (yes, deliberately not plural) of this column will know I rarely talk about exactly what I'm doing with my clients.

Moreover, it's about stuff that I think, as an experienced communications and PR professional, is relevant to you. The impact of fake news on how we communicate the good stuff about our business, Facebook's changes and the politicizing of our daily media sources have all been subjects tackled recently.

It's what I generally advise my clients when it comes to producing worthwhile content. Avoid the temptation to sell hard and instead offer something useful for your audiences instead. They'll come back for more.

On this occasion, I hope you'll indulge me just for a second. I have some big news. Having operated Glue PR for just over two years, it has now been acquired by London agency, W Communications. I'm the new head of W North, which is now operating from here in Newcastle.

Their founder, Warren Johnson, is a guy I last worked with when I left London for the North East 15 years ago. He set W up in 2009 and his ambitions to increase his agency's footprint beyond London has seen him open up operations in Amsterdam and Singapore.

Then late last year he cast his eyes across the UK.

Clients' ever-changing communications challenges, and his understanding that London isn't the be-all-and-end-all, meant he saw an exciting future to get beyond the M25.

For so many of us, the natural next business step is to expand from our North East bases and delve into the London market. Here's someone doing it in reverse. And that's a great story for this region.

Glue PRs clients have been wholly supportive. We're already exploring the new opportunities the national and international set up of W can offer them. One wants to meet with my new colleagues in Amsterdam; my news drops at a crucial time for their own plan to expand in that part of Europe. Another wants to know how the London team can help with their specific challenges of enjoying real cut through in the capital.

At the same time, W's clients in London, many

of whom are household brand names, will now have the benefit of a dedicated pulse-checker in the North. It's no secret that many London-based businesses were exposed by the simmering feeling of this nation and the manifesting Brexit vote. It's easy to be trapped in the London bubble. The brave ones sharpen their nails when they press against it.

For W Communications, named by PR Week in 2015/16 as agency of the year, to land in Newcastle is a great coup for this region. It could easily have been any of the other major Northern cities. W picked Newcastle because of its vibrancy, its burgeoning digital culture and its geographical relevance to the rest of what is becoming an increasingly fractured UK map.

For clients, for the communications industry and its professionals in this region and for the region itself, W North's birth in this great city is one to be celebrated.

Christian Cerisola is head of W North. Follow him on Twitter @ChristianCeriso www.wcommunications.co.uk

FAKE NEWS AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

Fake news is a catch-all phrase used to describe news based on lies or half truths that are designed to deceive.



Also known as alternative facts, fake news is one of the biggest issues facing the public relations profession today.

Its spread is on the increase following the European Referendum and US Election last year.

Fake news creates a serious ethical dilemma for anyone working in the media. In practical terms there is the issue of how to prevent the publication and broadcast of information that misleads the general public.

There is also the question of how to maintain trust in the media at a time of declining print revenues, when quality journalism is needed more than ever to hold power to account.

Digital media, by enabling fake news to be shared quickly and widely, exacerbates the problem and creates social media bubbles far removed from reality.

It allows those with the biggest budgets to amplify their messages and extend reach, giving them the loudest voice among the general public without any regulation over whether whatever they are saying is factual or not.

Analysis by BuzzFeed News found that the top fake election news stories generated more total engagement on Facebook than the top election stories from 19 major news outlets combined.

An issue as old as time

While fake news appears to be a new trend, it's actually as old as the industry itself.

As Stephen Waddington says in his draft framework to tackle fake news: "You can trace the history of fake news in the public relations business from Edward Bernays in the 1900s to Max Clifford in the 1980s. More recently from the Iraq War dodgy dossier in the early noughties, to campaigning



during last year's UK Referendum and US Election." Campaigning around both Brexit here and the US election has finally brought the issue to widespread attention.

The leave campaign's big red bus promising £350m for the NHS might have won the vote, but soon turned out to be a falsehood.

Donald Trump's presidency has been characterised by fake news from the very first press briefing.

White House press secretary Sean Spicer directly challenged the media on the large number of people attending Trump's inauguration, despite widespread proof to the contrary.

Trump himself eschews traditional media, often refusing questions at press briefings in favour of engaging with the general public directly through social media. This is propaganda, not public relations.

So where next?

The question of what can be done is a pressing one and a work in progress.

Following criticism that it was responsible for widely spreading fake news during the US election, Facebook is using readers and third party fact checkers to verify its content and try and address the problem.

Newspaper teams across geographies are working together to research topics and share expertise.

The UK parliament has launched an investigation into the rise of fake news, with Matt Hancock, the minister of state for digital and culture policy, asking UK newspaper representatives to join round-table discussions about the issue.

A role for one and all

We all have a personal responsibility for slowing the growth of fake news.

Those in public relations and the media can help by educating members of the public how to verify the accuracy of news and interrogating each other's work.

In whatever they are writing and sharing, practicing public relations professionals need to ensure validity of information, substantiate all claims and clearly attribute sources.

Accountability is very much part of the Code of Conduct for members of both the CIPR and PRCA.

To prevent further erosion of trust, the reputation of the public relations industry must be protected through ethical practice and a united movement against the perpetrators spreading lies and deceit.

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SIX DAYS OF STYLE

Fashion City York is an exciting initiative in York, celebrating local designers, fashion stores and creative minds with a huge annual event, that usually takes up an entire weekend.

This year though, FCY has been given a fantastic boost from The York BID, which has seen them launch not just a weekend, but Six Days of Style. Six days of events, offers and collaboration across the City, from the 4th-9th April. Businesses getting involved in the 2017 event include Fenwick, Bettys, Browns, Space NK, and Oasis, so prepare yourself for a six days of current trends, gorgeous patisserie and cosmetics galore.

It's proving to be a big year for Fashion City York, which this year also extended it's steering group to include Nicky Hayer, from luxury marketing agency, NIMA. Based in York, but supporting businesses across the UK, NIMA offers marketing support to the luxury, retail and hospitality sector.

Like a top concierge, NIMA managed and delivered the entire marketing strategy for Six Days of Style, which included social media campaign, national and local PR, brand redevelopment and website redesign. Angela Horner, Associate Director of Browns and Chairperson of FCY said, "Nicky has a great "can do" attitude and really got under the skin of the project. Fashion City York has benefited enormously from the relationship with NIMA and we look forward to working with them next year on York Fashion Week!"

The new feel Fashion City York is sleek, stylish, and reminiscent of a high end glossy; in short, the perfect showcase for fashion brands across York.

There is still time to get involved in this huge event, or even get booked in for some of the week's stylish offerings. See more of Fashion City York at.



Twitter: @FashionCityYork Facebook: /FashionCityYork Website: www.fashioncityyork.org



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ASK SILVER BULLET



John Dias

“Does the growth of digital marketing mean direct mail is dead?”

While Mark Twain was in London in 1897, a rumour began in America that he was gravely ill with one American newspaper actually printing his obituary. On being informed of this, he quipped, “Reports of my death have been greatly exaggerated” and I think this is also true of Direct Mail – we may live in an increasingly digital age but this does not mean that other forms of marketing are finished, but rather that marketers now have even more choice over their means of delivery and the very best results come when different channels are used in multi-media campaigns.

Direct Mail is one of the earliest forms of marketing – in the British Museum there’s possibly the earliest known example from around 1000BC in the form of a papyrus-based flier from an Egyptian landowner offering payment for the return of a runaway slave. Printing technology developed over the years allowing the mass production of mailers, catalogues and leaflets and a new form of marketing evolved, reaching home and business owners in their own premises.

Today’s direct mail has taken this even further by being able to target carefully chosen audiences with specific offers and the statistics show that it continues to work – 82% of Direct Mail is opened with 48% of the UK population responding to a Direct Mail they received in the last 12 months and 18% of Direct Mail kept for use at a later date. Over 17 million people still shop by mail order, with over

70% of people appreciating receiving mail that rewards them for loyalty.

But, and it’s a hugely important point, 96% of direct mail now offers an online response mechanism, an indication of how direct mail is moving with the times and becoming part of multi media campaigns that can produce fantastic results, given a good offer, addressed creatively to a receptive audience.

These points apply equally to digital marketing and while there is no doubt that social media and email marketing campaigns will continue to grow, there is evidence that a huge proportion of digital marketing is blocked by filters, never read or simply deleted by recipients.

Direct mail, on the other hand, with a well presented address in a quality envelope will inevitably be opened with an engaging offer inspiring the desired call to action, even if this via the Internet, again introducing multi media campaigns, which can also include outdoor media, traditional printed advertising and media coverage.

Direct mail is also very flexible in the content can range from coupons and other incentives designed to rapidly generate revenue to collateral such as information, newsletters, questionnaires and suggestion forms which engage customers in the longer term.

The form of the mail can also vary enormously dependent on the creativity employed – ranging from the huge home shopping catalogues issued

by national chains to the pop-ups and other masterpieces of paper engineering increasingly used to demonstrate quality and innovation in brands.

Demography is also important here – remember, there’s a huge number of young people, especially Millennials, for whom receiving posted mail is a novelty and welcomed whilst many catalogue shoppers, some at the other end of the age scale, prefer to flick through physical pages rather than swipe left or right – it’s a personal choice where some people prefer their messages communicated in a tactile form.

Of course, the argument used for digital marketing is it avoids the cost of printing by being able to reach huge numbers of existing and potential customers at a fraction of the cost of print and postage and this is a very valid point, but for either channel to be successful, they require design and a data base. Marketing decisions then have to be taken as to whether the investment in print and delivery justifies the additional cost but, to my mind, I’d want anything sent out or emailed to reflect the quality of the company – poorly designed and cheaply printed mailers are not the image wanted.

So never underestimate the power of quality design and quality print, be completely sure of your database, integrate your direct mail with other marketing channels and you’ll find Direct Mail to be far from dead.

Do you need some assistance with your marketing? Do you need to review your strategy or do you have another marketing question we can help with? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.

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MY WEEKEND

We find out what
WAYNE HALTON
Director at MHW PR
gets up to on a typical weekend.

Do you ever have to work weekends?

Sadly, too often; but is this unusual for owner-managers? It's a price you accept and usually it's not a biggie or something I resent. It's fair to say, I don't manage my own time very well, so it's often my fault if I end up working on a weekend. I'm fairly lucky because most of the time I enjoy my work.

Are most weekends the same?

Recently yes – lots of work; but usually, not really. My wife and I try and do something different when we can – that might be a meal out, a decent country walk, the cinema or theatre; ideally it's a weekend dash to our bolt hole in Berwick. Every few months we take a weekend break in Derbyshire to catch up with our son in Sheffield.

Do you find it hard to switch off?

As an owner manager of a small business you rarely switch off. Equally, I can still find places and moments to 'vanish'. I love being a 'stranger' in a familiar place, whether that's Berwick, Majorca or Crete – my favourite places. It's always easier to switch off overseas.

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

Drive to my caravan at Berwick; walk along the beaches. Behave like a tramp! Walk to nowhere in particular. Talk to nobody!

Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I struggle to lie in beyond 9am, even on holiday. I almost always have an early, daily dog walk – which can be 7am or a little earlier – which I usually enjoy; I guess you could call that exercise.

Big night out or a night in the house?

Nice meal – cooked in or take-away – in the house; it's an age thing. The big night out is largely a thing of the past.

Do you watch or play sport at a weekend?

I follow football, F1 and perhaps tennis on a weekend. I play my sport – real tennis – through the week at the quirky, fabulous Jesmond Dene Real Tennis Club.

Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I love to treat the family to The Broad Chare, on Newcastle's Quayside on a Sunday. If I'm staying in Berwick, I love the Maltings Kitchen, within the theatre. I always enjoy visiting new restaurants.

How important is the weekend to you?

Weekends are a period of sanity; when I'm not working it's the crash out; time to re-charge. Escaping to Berwick or occasionally Derbyshire is the great escape; Majorca, better still.

What's the best thing about weekends?

Time and space to find yourself again; recover with people and animals close to you. Read.

Of a weekend, you'll usually find me...

Hiding at home, walking in the hills, busy with my wife and terrier around Berwick!



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SYNERGI RAISING THE BAR



Synergi has welcomed another new member to its expanding team. Emma Hall will be taking the lead as Operations and Client Project Coordinator where she will take a pivotal role to facilitate, resource and coordinate inflight projects.

Emma has over 10 years' experience in project management, having previously worked for Northumbria University, as well as Head of Conferences and Events at Sage Gateshead where she developed the business, lead the conference team and managed large events for up to 3,000 people.

On joining the company, Emma said: "I am very

excited about joining Synergi, particularly at such a busy time in their growth as a company. Although technology is a relatively new sector for me, my project management skills are completely transferable."

Justin Short, Director at Synergi, commented: "Emma will enable Synergi to further improve project coordination and utilisation planning, ensuring our clients are even more engaged in the planning and project delivery stages. She will also be key to our Synergi Service Excellent challenge that we've set for 2017. I'm sure Emma will add huge value and drive the team on as we grow."

TRIO OF INVESTORS BACK NORTH EAST-BASED TECH FIRM

A Newcastle-based CRM technology specialist is accelerating its growth, thanks to support from three of the North East's most prominent business figures.

ION has secured major private investment from Neil Stephenson, Chairman of Redu Group, Alistair Waite, CEO of Altec Engineering, and Fiona Cruickshank OBE, founder of The Specials Laboratory and Gabriel Investors.

Launched in August 2016 by Rob Mathieson, ION works with management teams at a strategic level to provide full implementation of Salesforce cloud solutions, staff training and technical support. Headquartered in Gosforth, the firm's key markets include the manufacturing, engineering and pharmaceutical sectors.

The new investment will help ION expand its team of developers and Salesforce specialists, extending its reach into new markets.

Neil said: "I'm delighted to be supporting ION. ION is a visionary company that helps to drive business success in the North East and demonstrates the wealth of talent we have within the region's technology sector. I look forward to seeing it develop further in the coming years."



GATESHEAD IT FIRM SHINES ON THE BACK OF A NEW LIGHTING CONTROL CONTRACT



Gateshead IT firm Advantex is galloping ahead after winning a five-figure contract to supply an intelligent new control system for Newcastle Racecourse's floodlights.

This latest success for the £6m turnover Follingsby Park-based firm sees it using the latest building management technology and software to enable the floodlights to be remotely switched on/off via a new web-based command and control system.

The Paxton10 technology can be easily integrated with existing building infrastructure systems to control critical functions such as lighting, heating, air conditioning, intruder and fire alarms.

The new installation is part of a multi-million pound

investment programme by the owners to improve facilities at Gosforth Park for trainers and customers.

An all-weather track has been laid alongside the installation of a system of new floodlights to enable twilight race meets.

Owners Arena Racing Company's decision to opt for the Advantex system is expected to improve the management of the floodlights, delivering energy cost savings and operator benefits.

Paul Elliott, Operations Manager at Newcastle Racecourse, said: "We were impressed with Advantex's cost effective solution, which will not only deliver cost saving benefits but can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the business."

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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

Northern Insight meets

MARK MASON

Sales Director at technology solutions and support company ITPS

Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?

I was born and raised in the mining town of Dudley, and come from generations of mining stock with a proud North East heritage. We are a close knit family and I had a very happy upbringing.

What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

I think we are lucky in that our business community here has a strong sense of responsibility to the region and is committed to its prosperity in terms of increasing employment prospects and making sure we have the right skills sets to take advantage of opportunities.

What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

There are too many factors to list here, but in essence I think it's the friendliness of the people, combined with a rich industrial and cultural heritage and an unrivalled natural environment that make this such a great region to live and work in.

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

Close House Golf Club is a popular venue for meeting clients, particularly if it includes enough time to get a bit of practice in on the course too. Business is not just about boardrooms, many a deal has been done in a relaxed and more informal setting where good relationships can be forged.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Spanish restaurant El Coto, Panis Italian and beachside restaurant The View at Tynemouth Longsands are firm favourites. The View has just extended its opening hours for the summer months, so I foresee many enjoyable evenings there stretching ahead, having a few beers in the evening sunshine.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

Coastal walks with my wife and children and our two dogs is a great way to unwind. I also like to spend time working on my golf handicap, and I'm a junior football coach so life is busy. I'm a bit of a history buff so we get full value from our National Trust membership, visiting Craggside, Allenbanks, Wallington and many of the region's other historic castles and sites.

Are the people really friendlier?

I think they are. I find Northerners more open and keen to get to know you, in general they're more approachable and easier to talk to than people who live further south.

What do you think is the best view in the North East?

That's a really tricky question, blessed as we are in this region. You would go a long way to find better sights than those of our spectacular Northumberland coastline, particularly the view from the 13th hole at Dunstanburgh Castle Golf Club. I spend a lot of time on the road so spotting the Angel of the North always lifts my spirits as I head back home.

Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

It depends on the role and the skillsets needed. While the digital age has helped to narrow the North-South divide, there is still a long way to go. I read a report recently that said for every 12 jobs created in the South, one is lost in the North and we need to continue to push for a fair slice of the economic cake so our region does not become left behind.

Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

Early in my career I worked in Watford, and while I enjoyed my time there the pace was 100 miles an hour, with little time to appreciate life. It was very much a commuter society, in contrast to the North East where we enjoy a good quality of life and a healthy balance between work and leisure time. For me there is no comparison, life in the North East wins hands down every time.





MANAGED IT SERVICES – WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOUR BUSINESS?

Mark Langdown, Head of Support and Managed Services at technology solutions and support company ITPS, takes a look at a more efficient approach to managing your IT.

The days are long gone when IT was a box that sat on your desk and IT support was simply a case of providing a helpdesk service for users having difficulties. Today's IT staff need to be highly skilled, multi-disciplinary teams up to speed with technology developments and capable of working at director level to create and implement long term IT strategies that line up with business goals, as well as handling day to day issues and troubleshooting problems.

As IT becomes ever more complex and businesses continue to digitise their operations, an increasing number are choosing to work with expert managed services IT providers in their quest for flexibility, access to high levels of expertise, and the ability to achieve more from their budget.

Managed services does not have to be an 'all or nothing' scenario, or involve you handing over control. It simply means working with a partner who handles some, or all, of your IT needs, with you in control of the model and the service level.

As well as benefitting from your IT partner's continuous investment in secure, resilient networks and data centres, managed services gives you access to a pool of people highly experienced across a range of disciplines, with backgrounds in managing complex IT environments in a variety of sectors.

We have seen steady growth in the number of

clients seeking a managed services IT provider on the back of the trend for IT - whether it be software, infrastructure or support - to be delivered as a business service.

A good example is our recent win of an outsourced IS department contract with Newcastle-based Home Group, which is a £350m social enterprise and charity, and one of the UK's largest providers of high quality housing and integrated housing, health and social care.

We have partnered with Home Group for several years on a number of projects including working with the business to carry out an IT infrastructure refresh as part of a wider change management project that will deliver significant efficiencies, reduce risk, enable high availability, and support a robust business continuity and disaster recovery strategy.

Home Group's long term aim to migrate to a more agile cloud-based strategy rather than continuing its investment in infrastructure meant that a move to a full managed services framework was the next logical step in the development of its IS strategy.

We were awarded a managed services contract to provide operational support for Home Group's IS infrastructure and applications, as well as further extending our long term hosting, managed backup and fourth-line support agreements with the business.

Part of the contract involves transferring Home Group's in-house IT team into the ITPS staff base, which means we gain extra skilled colleagues, and Home Group delivers good value for money while also ensuring its staff are supported and given good career progression opportunities.

It is not just multi-million pound operations that benefit from managed services, it is fast becoming a no-brainer for SMEs who, faced by constantly shifting trends such as cloud and 'everything as a service' find it difficult to decide on the best option without expert advice, and see the value in a relationship where their partner acts as their IT conscience, having strategic input into the business as well as looking after day to day support and infrastructure.

Without a business-focussed IT strategy in place you are just keeping the lights on, rather than looking at where you are going and deciding what the underpinning IT will need to look like when you get there. Clients often come to us after deciding that managing their own IT can at best be a drain on resources and at worst can actually be holding their business back. In scenarios like this managed services presents itself as the perfect option.

An expert IT partner is a valuable ally in the battle to maintain a secure, high availability ICT framework which does what it says on the tin, so you can get on with growing your business.



SYNERGI AT THE RACES

Synergi customers and staff enjoyed a pleasant afternoon racing at a recent event at Newcastle Racecourse, despite the overcast weather spirits were high and some sound investments returned. A great day had by all, but bring on the summer!



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25 GLORIOUS YEARS FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

John Burns, Managing Director of The Diamond Group, talks to Jackie Marston about their success from humble beginnings.

Can you imagine? You decide to set up in an industry that you know a lot about, you buy a second-hand photocopier, fix it up and sell it for a profit and get such an amazing buzz from the achievement that you realise you've found your vocation in life?

Well, that's just what happened to John Burns, MD of The Diamond Group based in Team Valley, Gateshead. He told us from humble beginnings how The Diamond Group went from that one photocopier to a company now hiring 20 staff, with huge offices in the Team Valley, a turnover of £1.6M and four arms to their business; Copiers, Asset Finance, IT and Telecoms.

Well that was an amazing 25 years ago and a whole lot has changed since then.

"I've always been ambitious, but that first sell gave me a real buzz and I knew then that is what I wanted to do." He told us.

From then, the company has grown steadily from its Boldon offices where it was housed for 23 years and the place was bulging at the seams!

John continued: "It was starting to get a bit cramped there – especially with the expansion of the company and the increase of staff. Staff were hot-desking and there was a definite claustrophobic feel to the place, however it was a great building for us for 23 years, so I have no complaints.

"Since we set up 25 years ago we've acquired several other businesses and incorporated them into the Diamond Group



to offer our clients an all-round company that's both cost-effective as well as reliable - the things that have seen us prosper when others have failed."

As the company has grown and taken on other divisions under the umbrella of Diamond, then so has the directorships and John is proud to work with Gary Rodgers (Telecoms), Colin Grant (IT) and Hazel Burns, who happens to be John's wife, in the Finance Department.

"It works well because we each have our own goals and objectives for our different departments, but also we work as a good team for the greater good of the Diamond Group as a whole," John explained.

As their aim is, and always will be, to offer fantastic customer service at a competitive price, John is proud that many of their clients have been with them since day one. "It's a testament to the dedication of The Diamond Group team that we have an amazing reputation for delivering on our promises and that's probably why many of

our staff have been with us for many years too, as their work ethos is the same as the management team, and as they say, you're only as good as your workforce!"

Preparations are in progress for The Diamond Group to celebrate 25 years in business and invitations are being sent out now – so what is next in store for the guy with extremely itchy feet to move onto the next project?

"Well, we do have a few offers on the table that the directors and I need to look at – but for the time being, as we are expanding on a weekly basis with clients realising that we have a lot more to offer other than just photocopiers. We just have to make sure that we maintain our excellent customer service standards by ensuring that we employ the right people to join our team, after all, it's this that keeps us at the forefront of the industry we're proud to represent.

"As technology is moving at such a fast pace, we know that in order to keep our impeccable record of customer service then we have to make sure we not only move with the times, but be ahead of them and this is something that we do well and will continue to do in the future."

Well if the first 25 years is anything to go by, the determination of John and The Diamond Group's team, then I am sure that it'll only be a matter of time before the next expansion story emerges...as he says at the end of our interview: "Watch this space!"

SYNERGI SET TO SPRING IN TO ACTION

Building on the success of 2016, Gateshead-based Synergi have hit the ground running, in preparation for what is shaping up to be their most successful year to date. With Microsoft preparing for the UK launch of their cloud-based accountancy platform, Dynamics365 Financials, Synergi's managing director, Peter Joynson, aims to continue building their team of experts to ensure they are well placed, and ready for client implementations when the platform goes live in the Spring.

"For many companies, cloud migration strategies have already begun," says Peter. "In the last three years, the industry has seen a quantum shift in appetite to move services to the cloud, and begin to harness the agility and cost benefits that Microsoft Cloud solutions deliver."

The company have seen a huge increase in new clients, which Peter puts down to the company's unwavering focus. Microsoft recently referred to the company as a 'born in the cloud partner'; an apt name for a company whose approach to reselling is anything but traditional.

"We understand the importance of a cloud first technology strategy, and have been helping businesses across the region, and beyond, to introduce migration plans that are correctly timed, efficient and truly transformational."

In the last three years, Synergi have helped hundreds of businesses focus on the migration of legacy services, to Microsoft Office 365. Hosting free educational events, the company have been hugely successful in helping business owners and departmental leads to better understand the real functionality that is available with Microsoft Office 365. The release of Dynamics365 allows the company to extend their offering, with what is becoming known as a true game changer in the accounting software marketplace. Peter continues, "it's a



natural product progression in a cloud first strategy, and one that will deliver businesses greater efficiency, agility and process improvements."

Since their inception, Synergi have successfully established themselves as a leading digital transformation partner, with an increasingly large client base throughout the UK. They are quickly becoming renowned as one of the UK's leading Nintex and Microsoft Cloud partners, with four major acquisitions towards the end of 2016, confirming their ongoing success.

The company's success rate is largely down to the team's steadfast dedication and expertise when it comes to digitally transforming company processes. With the release of Dynamics365 Financials, it is looking increasingly likely that Synergi will continue their upward trajectory and excellent service in providing clients with platforms that bring data to life and drive efficiency.

www.synergi.it



BONBAR LAUNCH NEW MENU

Newcastle's finest flocked to luxury cocktail bar and late night lounge Bonbar, for the launch of their exciting new restaurant and cocktail menu.

Guests were treated to complimentary dinner and drinks, featuring the chefs favourites from the new menu. The selection offered included prime Northumbrian aged sirloin steak, chargrilled large fresh water prawns, flattened and griddled roast chicken and slow cooked belly pork.

The idea of the new menu centres around a sharing concept. Bonbar proudly gathers locally sourced and global ingredients to compose its menu and to best enjoy this new dining experience, you are encouraged to order together and explore various dishes, which are presented and meant to be shared. Make courses whatever you want and however you want – there are no rules, just enjoy your experience!





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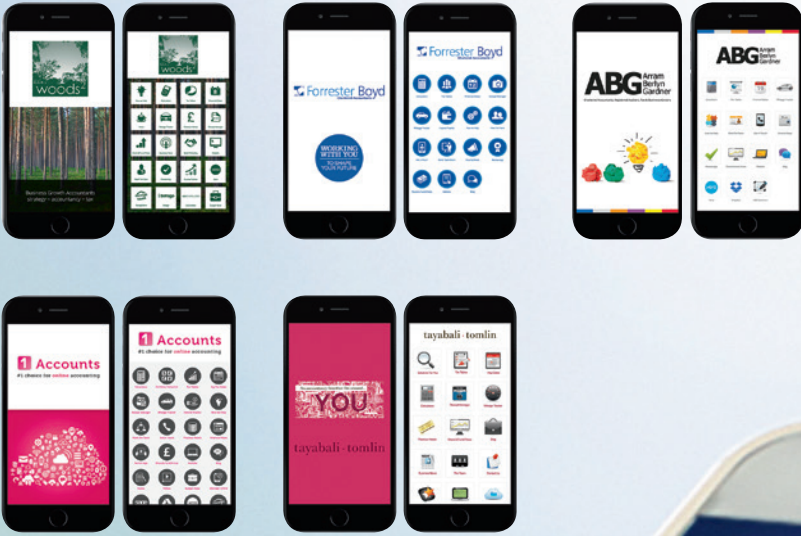
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MOBILE WEBSITES ARE DEAD, LONG LIVE THE APP

One North East Fintech firm is quietly taking the accountancy world by storm. Increased mobile adoption, cloud computing and HMRC's 'Making Tax Digital for Business' (MTDfB) are all helping Darlington based MyFirmsApp capitalise on the digital revolution – it's accountancy 4.0. We explore what has driven this success, how the firm has flourished and how they are helping both accountancy practices and their clients do better business.

It's a mobile world

Let's face it, the world is increasingly digital and mobile. Ask yourself how many times a day you interact with your mobile device? The trends are plain to see. The world has adopted smart phones and tablets 10 times faster than it embraced personal computers in the 80's. That's twice as fast as it logged into the Internet boom of the '90s and 3 times faster than it joined social networks in the new millennium¹. A whopping 87% of internet users now own a smartphone².

It's not just about mobile ownership, but how much and the way we use them. According to Ofcom, "Mobiles are now the first screen – overtaking laptops to become the most important device". How we spend our time on our smartphones and tablets is also changing; instead of browsing mobile websites, we are using Apps. In fact, Apps account for 89% of mobile media time, with just 11% spent on websites³. This is reflected in the sheer number of Apps downloaded - 253 billion in 2016, to be precise. This isn't just about social media or games; these are business related Apps too. Whatever business you work in, your 'App Stack' is likely to be getting better, bigger and an integral part of your day.

HMRC 'Making Tax Digital for Business'

When the government set out its plans to transform tax returns for businesses, it set

quivers through the business and accountancy world. The benefits of MTDfB are plain, but just how will the profession adapt and prepare, not just themselves, but their clients. The timetable for those under the VAT threshold may have been delayed in the Spring Budget, but for others, quarterly digital tax submissions arrive next year and that's arriving rapidly. The challenge is not just about capturing data easily without the need for complex systems but how to ensure accountancy firms continue to be that trusted conduit before submissions are made, ensuring their clients don't lose out.

Enter the Innovators

Joel Oliver previously ran a company helping accountancy firms market themselves. As part of his work he kept a keen eye on digital innovations and saw how important Apps would become. Taking the leap, he founded MyFirmsApp in 2013 and launched an App platform which would allow accountancy and bookkeeping firms to easily and painlessly secure themselves in this mobile world with their own, customised and branded App. The App provides accountancy firms and their clients with valuable calculators, information and tools all within one simple icon on their phone. Tools like a GPS mileage tracker,

receipt capture and income logs all make life for client and accountant so much easier, even on the move. Communication becomes effortless and more effective too. Thanks to mobile 'push notifications', important deadlines and information can be beamed directly to a client's phone – avoiding being lost in the email overload. The App also simplifies the increasingly busy and messy digital world, bringing together other software portals and Apps so clients can access them all in one place. The firm has integrated with the likes of Sage, Quickbooks, Reckon and Receipt Bank plus many more.

MyFirmsApp has enjoyed impressive success, with 400% growth last year and a repeat performance predicted this year. It is the perfect storm of a great idea, a tenacious young team and a genuine market need. The recent external influence of MTDfB has been a bonus and is accelerating adoption. This innovative App is currently used by over 1,000 firms with over 200,000 end users. Recognition for the firm has also come with recent accolades from professional magazine Accounting Today singling out the App as their 'Top Mobile Product for 2017'. So, it seems spring has sprung for this local firm and with global domination on the horizon, summer is just around the corner.

Watch out websites, mobile Apps are the new king of digital and it would appear MyFirmsApp are one of the kingmakers.

I LOVED SCHOOL!

By Ken James, Headmaster, Red House School

I cannot remember a day when I did not wish to attend and I struggle to recall a lesson which did not interest me. I'm sure there were some; I just struggle to recall them. I attended a Catholic school in Huddersfield, with an excellent reputation and high standards. It instilled in me the need to dress appropriately and this is something I impress upon my pupils.

Growing up, the other school in my life was slightly less real and had standards which were ever so slightly lower than my own school: it was Grange Hill. The exploits of Tucker and Zammo were part of my childhood and perhaps put my idyll of an education into perspective. I remember, even as a child, trying to work out why the children dressed so scruffily. Why the ties were never done properly and why shirts seemed to be constantly untucked.

My obsession with this continues to this day. I am a stickler for uniform being worn correctly and believe children should be challenged if they are not doing so. Teenagers often see it as their job to rebel but it's our job, as the significant adults in their lives, to allow them to think they are rebelling whilst gently guiding them along the path of compliance.

I hope the children at Red House do not read this article because I have a confession to make: my world would continue to revolve even if their



top buttons were all undone, all the time. It is not essential to my existence that their shirt is tucked in, but it is essential that I challenge them should their uniform not always be impeccable.

www.redhouseschool.co.uk

You see, I believe top buttons allow good children to rebel. By undoing their top button, and being reprimanded for doing so, children can gain a little kudos from their peers. Children don't always want to be seen as conformists and giving them the ability to rebel over small matters means they never have to seek bigger challenges to authority.

We are also instilling in the children the need to conform in certain circumstances which remains important throughout their working life. Whether it be the wearing of a suit in the office or safety clothing on site, children must learn to wear what is deemed appropriate. They may not always think the rules should apply to them but this doesn't mean we should agree with them. And if we give way to the desires of children on this matter, what's next?

How many times have we seen in the national press children standing with their parents giving reasons why their brand of trainers should be accepted as school shoes? I haven't had to face this yet but it's important that we challenge it. We are the adults and our job is to guide. Top buttons are there to be done up and by enforcing this we are gently reminding the children that society has rules and we will enforce them. Tackle these little instances of rebellion and the revolution will not follow.

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THE HEART OF EDUCATION - LEARNING

We all want a good education for our children. But what do we actually mean by the phrase?

At the heart of a good education is learning, in both senses of the word. This means not only a cultural education in the classical sense – a somewhat Arnoldian “best which has been thought and said in the world” – but also the inculcation of the ability, skills and desire to learn. From a school’s point of view, this means providing a robust, challenging yet flexible curriculum for its pupils; a curriculum which provides not only a solid grounding in the traditional academic subjects but also is responsive to the demands of the 21st century. This comprises an ability to analyse, evaluate and criticise an argument; to develop tenacity, self-discipline and self-motivation in approaching challenges; to listen to, understand and empathise with others and their different points of view. Success in public examinations is clearly very important, but equally so is the guidance given to young

people to become happy and fulfilled citizens to accompany their glittering qualifications. Whilst scholarliness is central to a good education, there is clearly a wider dimension too. Schools provide a preparation for life – not just the workplace – and the experiences pupils have at school are crucially important in their development as individuals. Schools have a responsibility – a moral duty, in fact – to provide a supportive environment where their pupils can take risks, make mistakes and grow to understand themselves. This not only includes the myriad extra-curricular activities they offer but also pastoral care which guides pupils through the long dark tunnel of adolescence without too many bumps along the way. For me, the joy in education comes when we watch our pupils leave as capable and qualified young men and women, ready to make their way in the world.



Kieran McLaughlin

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 386 4783, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk

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Alan Bailes, General Commercial Sales Manager at the Middlesbrough-based Jennings Ford Transit Centre, with the new Ford Transit.

NEW TRANSIT VAN SALES SHOW POPULARITY NEVER GROWS OLD AT JENNINGS FORD

It's an icon recognised the world over and, with strong sales across the range in March, its popularity shows no sign of wavering. We are, of course, talking about the Ford Transit, available from the team at Jennings Ford Commercials, part of the multi-award winning Jennings Motor Group.

Sales from the group's Cargo Fleet Lane dealership in Middlesbrough and the Eslington Park branch in Gateshead have been strong in the first months of 2017, helped by competitive lease prices and vans that are brimming with additional extras.

One of the most popular models in the Ford commercial vehicle line-up is the new Ford Transit 290 Trend L2 H2 2.0 TDi, starting from just £170+VAT per month with Ford Lease Balloon (business users only).

The new Transit is built to carry the heaviest loads and packed with the latest technology, including Ford SYNC 2 with Bluetooth, USB connectivity and steering wheel controls, to ensure drivers are fully compliant with safety laws, which now carry tougher punishments for using mobile devices whilst driving.

As well as audio technology, the transit's new six-speed SelectShift automatic transmission delivers a smooth, relaxing driving experience, especially in busy stop-start traffic. The transmission allows you to change gear manually if you prefer, using the facia-mounted gearshift, and provides the ability to lockout gears in more challenging driving conditions such as slippery surfaces or steep gradients.

Alan Bailes, General Commercial Sales Manager at the Middlesbrough-based Jennings Ford Transit Centre, said: "It's no coincidence that the Transit van has been synonymous with hard-working tradesman and businesses for over 40 years. The range is second to none and is constantly being updated to match the needs of business owners on the road.

"With substantial customer savings available across the range alongside advanced improvements to fuel-efficiency and power, reduced emissions and low running costs, its popularity is sure to continue."

The Jennings Ford Transit Centres in Middlesbrough and Gateshead are responsible for selling the award-winning Ford Commercial vehicle range to both local and national companies, from multi-national blue chip companies to one-man operations.

Models available in the Ford commercial vehicle range include the Fiesta Van, Transit Connect, Transit Courier, Tourneo Connect, Transit Van, Transit Custom, Transit mini-bus Transit Tipper, Transit chassis cab and Ranger.

For more information about the range of products and services available at Jennings Ford Transit Centres, contact Middlesbrough on 01642 209100, Gateshead on 0191 4607464, or visit www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk

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NEWCASTLE THEATRE ROYAL ANNOUNCES AUTUMN 2017 SEASON!



There's something to suit every taste amongst the world-class productions announced by Newcastle Theatre Royal for the Autumn 2017 season.

Hollywood legends Ali MacGraw and Ryan O'Neal will star in *Love Letters* (19 – 23 Sep). Following a critically-acclaimed Broadway run and sell-out US Tour, this stunning production explores first loves and second chances.

It's time to dust off your leather jackets and pull on your bobby socks as Danny and Sandy fall in love all over again in *Grease* (16 –21 Oct). Featuring

unforgettable songs from the hit movie, you'll be ready to hand jive the night away!

Andrew Lloyd Webber's Tony Award-winning masterpiece *Sunset Boulevard* will also come to Newcastle Theatre Royal (9 –14 Oct). Starring internationally acclaimed musical theatre star Ria Jones, *Sunset Boulevard* promises to be a spectacular treat for all musical fans.

Northern Ballet meanwhile will present *The Little Mermaid* (31 Oct – 4 Nov). This stunning original ballet will transport you into a world beneath the waves.

Autumn will also be the season of short operas. *The Little Greats* (8 – 11 Nov) will feature three emotionally charged double bills including *Pagliacci*, *Trouble in Tahiti* and *Trial by Jury*.

There are also plenty of great shows on offer in the current season. Dance fans can look forward to the magic of Ballroom and Latin dance in *Keep Dancing* (18 – 22 Apr). There will also be a jam-packed line up of top-class musicals including the feel-good spectacular *Mamma Mia!* (28 Mar –15 Apr) and the critically acclaimed *Sister Act* (19 – 24 Jun).

BIG NEWS FOR SUNDAY FOR SAMMY FANS

Sunday for Sammy will return to Tyneside on Sunday 18th February 2018 but this time at a new venue.

The show, first held as a tribute to Geordie actor Sammy Johnson in 2000, has been presented at Newcastle City Hall for nearly every performance. However, in recent years the demand for tickets has far out-stripped the supply.

In 2018, *Sunday for Sammy* will relocate to Newcastle's Metro Radio Arena for two theatre style performances. 5,000 tickets will be available for each show, more than double previous years.

Sunday for Sammy is a celebration of North East culture. Many of the region's most popular and successful performers have taken part in the extravaganza, staged to raise funds to support the next generation of North Eastern performers with training, expenses and equipment.

Tim Healy, Denise Welch, Mark Knopfler and many more have previously given up their time to take part in the show. The cast list is never revealed beforehand so every show is sure to be packed with surprises.



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LINDISFARNE CHRISTMAS SHOWS ARE BACK!

Don't miss the Fog on the Tyne hit-makers on their home turf as they present an evening packed with legendary songs and a few surprises!

North East folk-rock legends Lindisfarne will return to the City Hall this Christmas to entertain us with their legendary festive Christmas show. With well over 100 wonderful nights at the City Hall under their belt, the Lindisfarne Christmas Show has

become a must see seasonal celebration and a North East tradition.

Lindisfarne are set to play Newcastle City Hall on Friday 22 and Saturday 23 December 2017. Tickets from £24.50 can be purchased at www.theatreroyal.co.uk or from the Theatre Royal Box office on 08448 11 21 21.

RECORD OF THE MONTH - TAKE THAT 'WONDERLAND'

Now just a tripartite, Take That return with their 8th studio album Wonderland. 2017 marks the 25th anniversary of the boy band and to celebrate it they're embarking on a nationwide tour around the UK in May and June. Perhaps in light of this, Wonderland is laden with big, slick pop numbers, heavy on killer hooks and anthemic choruses. This is encapsulated by lead single Giants which promises to make for a swirling singalong in live performance. Wonderland isn't simply formulaic arena-pop though, with a clutch of the tracks produced by Stuart Price being genuinely great. Note the Mark Owen vocal on Superstar or the disco undercarriage of Lucky Stars. Indeed, the production is highly ambitious in scope with other respected producers Mike Crossey, Tony Hoffer and Mark Ralph also along for the ride. Bolstered by this batch of fun, new material Take That are set to play Newcastle's Metro Radio Arena on May 8th and 9th.



WHAT'S ON THIS APRIL?

Mamma Mia!

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www.theatreroyal.co.uk

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April 4-8

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040
www.atgtickets.com

Snake in the Grass

April 4-8

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020
www.peopletheatre.co.uk

Billy Ocean

April 7

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

The Harlem Globetrotters

April 9

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradioarena.co.uk

The Chris & Pui Show

April 10

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234
www.customshouse.co.uk

Amy Macdonald

April 11

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Chris De Burgh

April 18

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Keep Dancing

April 18-22

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

All or Nothing

April 18-22

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040
www.atgtickets.com

The Woman in Black

April 24-29

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Offside

April 27-29

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151
www.northernstage.co.uk

A Vision of Elvis

April 28

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THE WOMAN IN BLACK SET TO TERRIFY ONCE AGAIN



The world's most terrifying live theatre experience is returning to Newcastle Theatre Royal this month – The Woman in Black is back 24 – 29 April, so prepare for a springtime spine tingling...

Stephen Mallatratt's adaptation of Susan Hill's best-selling novel is a stage thriller full of illusion and controlled horror which has terrified over 7 million theatregoers since it first opened. Widely regarded as the world's most frightening live theatre experience, it has become a global phenomenon translated into at least 12 languages and performed in at least 42 countries.

This will be the show's sixth visit to Newcastle Theatre Royal following overwhelming popular demand. It is also the first visit since Hill's The

Woman in Black was released as a major motion picture starring Daniel Radcliffe in 2012, Britain's highest grossing horror film in 20 years.

The show tells the story of a lawyer obsessed with a curse that he believes has been cast over him and his family by the spectre of a 'Woman in Black'. He engages a young actor to help him tell his story and exorcise the fear that grips his soul. It begins innocently enough, but as they delve further into his darkest memories, they find themselves caught up in a world of eerie marshes and moaning winds. The borders between make believe and reality

begin to blur and the flesh begins to creep.

David Acton will play the role of Mr Kipps and The Actor will be played Matthew Spencer.


The production is directed by Robin Herford, with designs by Michael Holt, lighting by Kevin Sleep and sound by Gareth Owen. The UK tour runs concurrently with the West End production and marks 27 years of the show in the West End.

The Woman in Black is at Newcastle Theatre Royal from Monday 24th until Saturday 29th April 2017, playing evenings at 7.30pm, matinees Tue & Thu 2pm and Sat 2.30pm. Tickets from £14.50.

Tickets can be purchased from the Theatre Royal Box Office on 08448 11 21 21 (Calls cost 7ppm plus your phone company's access charge) or book online at www.theatreroyal.co.uk



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BIM-MANIA TAKES OVER NEWCASTLE AS BIM SHOW LIVE BUILDS BIG AUDIENCE

Industry-leading BIM Show Live landed in Newcastle with a bang recently as 400 delegates from across the world converged on the city.

Digital construction enthusiasts travelled to the North East for the innovation in technology-led show held in the Stephenson Quarter.

Hosted by Newcastle-based Space Group, the two day event saw handpicked experts deliver a programme of content to delegates, including architects, engineers and construction professionals who gathered in the new-look Boiler Shop venue.



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A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN ART CONSULTANT



This month we thought we would give you an insight into what it's really like to work at Commission an Artist. We love what we do and we love helping our customer's art aspirations come to fruition!

We asked our Project Manager, Helen, to give us a run down of what her day looks like:

7am – The alarm goes off and I usually have a good few alerts on my phone from clients and other artists in other countries and time zones so I have an idea of what's been happening during the night. On a work day I usually go for a run before I start in the office as I think a fit and healthy body feeds a fit and healthy mind.

I usually sit down at my desk anywhere between 8am and 9am, the role is very flexible and so long as customers are happy then I am happy! I have often had a skype discussion on a Saturday evening, and we actively promote that service. It can be a great time to talk when customers are not rushing around in the daily rush!

I am usually busy most of the day helping clients and artists with queries and moving commissions on. I usually finish my working day around 6pm. However usually twice per week I cover the American desk for my counterpart over there as he has family commitments at those times. So on those occasions I am around with my laptop at home until I go to bed. We have a chat facility which can get quite busy on an evening!

What is your favourite part of your role?

I hasten to say I love all of it, but I do! I can't draw for toffee so seeing the stages of the



artwork produced always puts a huge smile on my face. I also love getting to know my customers and finding common ground. We produced a commission involving music a few months ago and the customer and I found we had the same taste in music. To this day he sends me occasional youtube links and I send him ones if I come across them. We have some wonderful clients and we are selling something which is super special and it's a privilege to be able to help them.

What is the best commission you have ever worked on?

Wow that's a difficult question as they are all wonderful in their own way. One of the most amazing commissions, and I really am picking one out of the air here, is one recently created where a lady wanted a copy of the famous photograph: Lunch Atop A Skyscraper, but she wanted her husband and his friends as the men sitting on the beam. It didn't cost that much either. The above image is the result. The giant sculpture we created last year was pretty stunning too, where Cambridge University wanted him for their summer ball.

What else do you like to do?

I love going on holiday! (Who doesn't!) I love going to explore the world and I always read up first and check out the artwork from that country. I also have 2 wonderful children and a little West Highland Terrier called Max. So we often go and splodge in the river on a weekend, which can get VERY messy!

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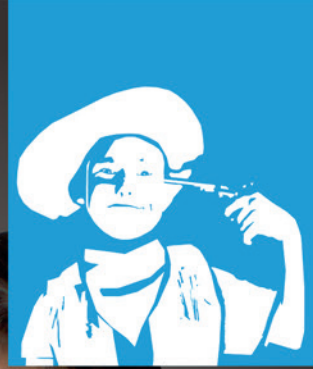
Commission an Artist are professional and experienced project managers, so to get them involved visit www.commissionanartist.co.uk
www.twitter.com/uk_artists www.facebook.com/commissionanartist

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FANCY PANTS OR FOLKSY – IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WINE

By Iain Bell – Personal Travel Expert, Travel Bureau

Californian wine is a serious business. So serious that it's now the Golden State's second biggest reason to visit after everyone's favourite mouse. Plenty of us will still head for its iconic cities, vast national parks and stunning coastline but with California now one of the world's largest wine producers, Chardonnay and Pinot Noir are also firmly on the tourist map.

The vine-clad rolling hills of Sonoma and Napa, just north of San Francisco, have earned their reputation as America's premier wine region. Each have their own distinct personality that can be sampled individually or blended together to offer a wine lover's paradise.

Just an hour's drive across The Golden Gate Bridge, folksy Sonoma stands at the foot of its valley and has a more laid back vibe than its fancy pants neighbour Napa. It's a good place to start your wine exploration and if you've hired a car you can head out to its many vineyards unannounced without fear of being turned away.

There are wine tasting opportunities aplenty but look out for wine blending, a fun way to get to know what your palette truly desires. The Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma is the oldest winery in California and offers fantastic blending courses. You'll get to taste up to four different wines and decide which you'll blend together to find your perfect tippie to take home.

Head on to Sonoma County's lesser known Russian River Valley, formally famous for its apple farms it's now a hot bed of superb Pinot Noirs. One of which is produced by the fifth generation Bartolomei

family vineyard - Lost & Found Winery. This wine-estate produces just one Pinot Noir sold only at selected restaurants across the US. Don't worry this includes the Michelin starred restaurant at its own boutique hotel The Farmhouse Inn. Originally a hops farm, the farmhouse and original workers' cottages date from 1873 and its 25 stylish rooms come in earthy, natural tones with comfy furnishings and fireplaces. An outdoor pool, spa and tranquil grounds finish off this idyllic hideaway to perfection.

Now it's time to puff out your chest and take the hour's drive east into sophisticated Napa Valley. Cabernet Sauvignon is king here but be ready to open your wallet wide and take things seriously. The valley's popularity comes at a price. Unlike Sonoma you'll have to make tasting appointments in advance as drop-ins are rarely received and avoid weekends and holidays when the valley's 30-mile highway gets ridiculously congested. Hotel prices also rise at weekends so if you're planning a trip, stay in San Francisco over the weekend (as hotels are cheaper then) and head into Wine Country on Monday.

Where good wine flows, fine food inevitably

follows, so it's not surprising that Napa is a city full of culinary delights with a buzzing arts scene. Copia: The American Centre for Wine, Food & Arts is a must see, as is Oxbow Public Market full of lifestyle stores and stalls brimming with all things edible. Neighbouring Yountville is another culinary delight and its picture postcard main street is lined with galleries, wine-tasting rooms and excellent restaurants. Either would make a good base for exploring the valley and staying in town means you can ditch the car as everything is on your doorstep. Individual vineyards can organise transport as part of your visit so you can sample to your hearts content without worrying about the drive home.

If you're looking to retreat from the crowds, Calistoga Ranch is a true gem in the heart of the valley. With its exceptional Lakehouse Restaurant, this luxury resort is nestled between rolling hillsides and oak trees and dotted with 50 private lodges. Call for a buggy to transport you to the pool, spa or down to dinner, where you may well brush shoulders with Hollywood's finest. Retire to your private terrace, snuggle up in front of the fire pit and savour your favourite red from the day's tastings.

Iain travelled to California with luxury holiday company Carrier. For more information on visiting California's wine country call Travel Bureau on 0191 285 9321 or email holidays@travelb.co.uk. Visit www.travelb.co.uk

Farmhouse Inn, Sonoma.



Calistoga Ranch, Napa Valley.

OUT & ABOUT - LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY



A recent episode of “Call the Midwife”, the popular East End of London gynaecological drama saw one of the characters go out for the day to the Spirella corset factory in Letchworth, Hertfordshire.



Letchworth is a Garden City, indeed the first one, dating from 1903, and the Spirella Company began building a large factory in 1912, close to the middle of town. Completed in 1920, it blends in through being disguised as a large country house, complete with towers and a ballroom. During the Second World War, the factory was also involved in producing parachutes and decoding machinery. Because corsets fell out of fashion, the factory closed in the 1980s, and was eventually refurbished and converted into offices. Other industries included early computers, dustcarts and fire engines.

Letchworth has 33,600 inhabitants, up from just 96 in 1901. From the North East it is reached by Virgin train to Stevenage, doubling back on the line to Cambridge via Hitchin, but such is the importance of the town that in the morning peak there are direct trains to King’s Cross from Letchworth, which do not stop at Hitchin or Stevenage at all.

The town was laid out by Raymond Unwin as a demonstration of the principles established by Ebenezer Howard. It is also home to the United Kingdom’s first roundabout, Sollershott Circus, which was built in 1909, probably inspired by the traffic arrangements around the Arc de Triomphe which Unwin would have known well. Letchworth influenced not only Welwyn Garden City and the whole new town movement, but also abroad such

as Canberra, the capital territory of Australia. Even Lenin visited Letchworth.

Howard’s depicted a choice of town design as a contest between three magnets: town, country and the fusion of the two as town-country. The Wetherspoons pub in the town is the Three Magnets, which would have horrified Howard who insisted that there would initially be no pubs in the town, although several pre-existing pubs beyond the boundary did well! The first licensed premises in the town was the Broadway Hotel, close to the station, and is an ideal place to stay. It opened in 1961, the year of my birth, and the double and twins on the front are attractive rooms, some of the singles at the back less so, but it’s still a great place to stay with the opportunity of a day trip to London and a side trip to Cambridge too if you have time.

Leave time, though, to explore Letchworth itself. There’s a lovely art deco cinema within walking distance of the Broadway Hotel, and the town centre has plenty of interest, even though some parts of the town have an unfinished feel with spaces for buildings that never came. The term “Garden City” derived from the image of a city being situated within a belt of open countryside, and not, as is commonly cited, to a principle that every house in the city should have a garden.

Only one tree was felled during the entire initial construction phase of the town, and an area devoted to agriculture surrounding the town was included in the plan – the first “Green Belt”. It’s instructive to wander around enjoying the architecture of the original Garden City, and see the “cheap cottages” that the people from the crowded cities were delighted to move into. I enjoyed the museum dedicated to the Garden Cities movement in house containing Unwin’s studio. It’s a great place in its own right, and also as a cheaper alternative to London hotels for a trip into the capital.

Alex Nelson, Chester-le-Track trades at Chester-le-Street station (0191 387 1387) and Eaglescliffe (01642 200140). To contact Alex, phone/text 07860 953981 any reasonable time. www.nationalrail.com. For National Rail Enquiries call 24hr 08457 484950. www.broadwayhotel.co.uk



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NEW BAR AND EATERY TO SHAKE UP NEWCASTLE'S DINING SCENE



Leisure operator Danieli Holdings is set to invest £1m to bring its popular 'yolo' concept to Newcastle city centre within an impressive vacant property on High Bridge.

Following a successful 18 months with its first venture in Ponteland, yolo has announced that the brand will take the form of 'yolo Townhouse', a three-storey bar and restaurant located in the former Capology retail unit.

Creating almost 100 jobs, each level will offer something different. There will be a ground floor

drinking and dining social space, a first floor function area, a second floor open-air terrace bar and a third and final floor utilised for catering.

The significant investment will see the building fully refurbished from the inside out. Award-winning Simon McIlwraith of Collective Design will act as the lead designer and the style will reflect yolo Ponteland's contemporary interior.

Extended opening hours mean yolo Townhouse will serve everything from breakfast, brunch, lunch and dinner through to late night drinks. Based on the

European menu which is currently available at yolo Ponteland, dishes will be home-made and will pair well with a wine and cocktail selection to suit all tastes.

Neill Winch, Danieli Holdings' Chief Executive, said: "We've been looking for potential locations for a second yolo venue for some time and High Bridge quarter provides the perfect opportunity. As a brand, yolo is one we're keen to continue to roll-out but for now, we are incredibly excited for the impending plans in Newcastle city centre."

COPTHORNE HOTEL RAISES £3,000 FOR LOCAL CHILDREN'S CHARITY

Over the last three years, Copthorne Hotel Newcastle has been working to raise money for Henry Dancer Days through a whole host of fundraising activities including guest raffles, staff baking days and car washes.

As a result of these efforts, the team were delighted to present the charity with a cheque of £3,000 that was raised by the hotel throughout 2016.

Henry Dancer Days is a local children's charity that helps families who have children with Primary Bone Cancer in the North East. The charity provides grants and support to families and offers additional support to those who find themselves in palliative care.

Henry Dancer Days is close to the hearts of everyone at Copthorne Hotel Newcastle who have worked to raise over £10,000 for the charity in the past three years. A schedule of fundraising events is already planned for the year ahead.



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CHEFS COOK UP A CELEBRATORY DINNER TO RAISE SOMETHING FOR SYRIA

Some of the top chefs in the North East of England recently came together for a unique, celebratory dinner to raise money to support aid work in war torn Syria.

The idea for the Something for Syria event was cooked up by friends Sarah Melling, who works at Newcastle tea company Ringtons, and local chef and owner of award-winning eatery Cook House, Anna Hedworth.

More than £33,000 has been raised for the British Red Cross from the Syrian inspired banquet where

200 people packed into the Wylam Brewery, Newcastle, with a dream-team of senior chefs and rising culinary talent.

An art auction featuring original work by internationally renowned artists such as HUSH and Prefab77 were amongst the highlights of the evening.

The organisers decided to use Just Giving as the portal for guests to pay for tickets and donate to the cause. Donations are still welcome and being accepted via www.justgiving.com/fundraising/somethingforsyria.



DURHAM COUNTY CRICKET CLUB ANNOUNCES TRAVEL PARTNER



Durham County Cricket Club has confirmed a partnership with the internationally acclaimed cruise holiday company Royal Caribbean.

Royal Caribbean will be the club's official travel partner for the next two years. The company will gain TV-visible branding around the Emirates Riverside and its logo will feature on Durham's Specsavers County Championship shirt and its own beautifully furnished lounge at the stadium.

Royal Caribbean is an award-winning global cruise brand that sails 25 of the world's most innovative cruise ships to over 250 destinations around the world.

Ben Bouldin, Associate VP and Managing Director for UK&I Royal Caribbean, said: "We are proud to be partnering with Durham CCC as one of the best cricket clubs in the country. We are delighted to be able to offer our North of England travel agent partners a training space at Durham CCC's world-class facilities by way of our new hospitality lounge."

THE BOTANIST SHOWS ITS FUNDRAISING SPIRIT

Local children's charity Cash for Kids has benefitted from a £5,695 boost thanks to The Botanist.

After rounding off a busy fundraising spell, the donation will see disabled and disadvantaged children in the North East receive support to give them a better quality of life.

Cash for Kids was the bar's chosen charity for the whole of 2016, with fundraising also continuing into early 2017. Activity included 25p from each children's meal sold last year, as well as a discretionary £1 donation on diners' bills throughout December, raising £4,950.

In addition, Newcastle team members Rob West and Beth Cole committed to running the Great North Run in aid of the charity, collecting over £700 between them.

Amy Dickinson, Charity Executive at Cash for Kids, said: "Cash for Kids have loved working with the team at The Botanist over the last year. They have offered incredible support on a number of projects and have raised a fantastic amount. We'd like to thank the staff for their commitment and generosity."



MATFEN HALL RECORDS BEST FIGURES IN A DECADE



Matfen Hall Hotel Golf and Spa, Hexham, has reported its most successful year to date, following a £1m investment into the hotel.

The hotel has welcomed a 12% increase in revenues across all areas of the business as well as in the number and frequency of return bookings made by guests.

Hotel bosses attribute the success to a number of factors, including an upsurge of interest in the county and the venue's clutch of tourism awards. Guests have commented on the independent, family owned factor, which they see as an added benefit.

In the past 18 months, various areas of the hotel have undergone refurbishment, including the bathrooms, the reception area and the Aqua Vitae spa, which now boasts a state-of-the-art fitness suite, professional therapists and an aerobic studio.

Managing Director, Bernard Bloodworth, explained: "This recognition has drawn in visitors from the North East as well as around the country and abroad. Feedback from guests almost always refers to how welcoming the hotel and its staff are."



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RE-OPENING OF THE TIM LAMB CHILDREN CENTRE

Guests gathered recently for the opening of the newly-refurbished Tim Lamb Children Centre, at the Rising Sun Country Park in Benton. The facility is run by local charity Pathways 4 All which strives to address the lack of social opportunities for children with disabilities and additional needs.

Denise Welch, actress and patron of the charity, was present at the event which marked the unveiling of a new centre featuring soft play areas, IT suite, music room, outdoor playground and a café.

The venue is named in honour of Tim Lamb, a former chairman of the group, who tragically died aged 50 whilst playing football in 2012.



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THE REAL TASTE OF INDIA

by Michael Grahamslaw



My love affair with Indian food is much documented within these pages and after a recent visit to Taste of India in Forest Hall, I think it has deepened even further!

Now never has the phrase "Hidden Gem" been more appropriate. Nestled within the heart of Forest Hall shops, Taste of India occupies a somewhat unassuming location. Despite the modest exterior though, the restaurant has been carving out a fine local reputation for itself during the past decade, and now under the astute management of new owner, Shahin Rahman, warrants even further acclaim.

The interior exudes a warm allure largely owing to the trendy mock brick wallpaper, oak panelling and intimate red-neon lighting whilst the snug bar and waiting area further creates the feel of a "local favourite." There's also the steady stream of takeaway punters present throughout proceedings which is always a telling barometer. The perfect backdrop then for enjoying some authentic Indian tucker.

The extensive menu is primarily shaped around more traditional fayre like dupiazas, bhunas, biryanis and vindaloos yet we were also pleased to note a winning combination of chefs specialities

too, most notably the "Nawabi Khana" which the menu states is the most complex of all curries to make. Variety then, is very much the spice of life at Taste of India.

We were soon tucking into starters of Bhuna Prawn on Puree and Chicken Padina Kebab with real gusto and the quality of the food quickly grew apparent. 4 plump king prawns sat atop a soft and spongy pancake whilst my son Jack's chicken was singing with freshly-tempered herbs and spices.

In between a few long pulls on our Cobras, our main courses arrived and there was much to enthuse about here too. Being too self-professed chilli fiends, we opted for dishes on the more malevolent end of the spectrum yet milder alternatives are of course available. Alas, Taste of India's most accommodating chefs are always happy to make a dish to the customer's desired taste and specification.

Jack's Chicken Jalfrezi, served up in a sizzling iron korai, was a thrilling assembly of ingredients and

consisted of green chillies, onions, garlic and capsicum. These lent a wondrous depth of flavour with great precision clearly taken over the spicing of the dish.

My chicken madras meanwhile possessed the perfect consistency, delightfully thick in texture yet also plentiful enough to submerge the vegetable pilau and supplementary onion bhaji. Needless to say, all of this was mopped up by an incendiary chilli naan bread.

The service had been flawless throughout and over coffees we grabbed the chance to chat to the aforementioned Shahin about his progress thus far. The former "bring your own alcohol" policy has been rescinded and Shaheen is now fully intent on establishing the place fully on the map. Removed from the city centre, the restaurant is situated in an unexpected corner of town yet if it's uncomplicated, high-quality Indian fayre you're after look no further than Taste of India. A local crowd pleaser deserving wider consideration from the curry-eating community.



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Photography: Jonathan Stockton Photography & Sabina Rudnicka Photography

WINES FROM THE OLD COUNTRY

Although its wine industry has had something of a chequered history, today Italy is producing some of the world's favourite and many of its finest wines.

With very few areas of Italy that couldn't ripen grapes suitable for wine, there are consequently a myriad of classified regions producing a diverse array of wines.

Wine making in Italy has a long history dating back to, and before, Roman times; indeed it was thanks to the conquests of the Roman Empire that wine making was established in France, Spain & Germany.

Today, modern day Italy is a huge source of wine and, depending on the vintage, is the world's largest or second largest wine producer. In 2016 it was No. 1 (ahead of France and Spain) with an estimated production of 48 million hectolitres, some 19% of the global total of ~ 260 million hl - that's more than 34 billion bottles!!!

Several geographical characteristics make Italy well suited to wine production including:

- an extensive latitudinal range from north to south that permits wine growing from the Alps in the north to Sicily in the south.
- Italy is a long peninsula with an extensive shoreline giving a moderating climate to coastal wine regions.
- the extensive mountains and foothills of Italy provide many varied altitudes for grape growing and a variety of climatic and soil conditions.
- a Mediterranean climate affects much of the country providing excellent conditions for successful viticulture.

Italy has a wine classification system based on four classes, two of which fall under the "Table Wine" category and two under the "Quality Wine Produced in a Specific Region" - QWPSR - category.

Table Wine

- **Vino da Tavola (VDT)** - Denotes simply that the wine is made in Italy. The label usually indicates a basic wine, made for local consumption with limited amounts exported.
- **Indicazione Geografica Tipica/Protetta** - IGT/IGP - Wine from a more specific region and considered of a higher quality than simple table wines. Today many top wines fall into this category because they do not conform to the strict rules governing the QWPSR wines.

QWPSR:

- **Denominazione do Origine Controllata (D.O.C.)**
- **Denominazione do Origine Controllata e Garantita (D.O.C.G.)**

Both D.O.C. and D.O.C.G. wines refer to zones which are more specific than an IGT, and the permitted grapes are also more specifically defined.

D.O.C.G. wines must pass a "blind" taste test to attain this, Italy's highest wine quality standard.

Wine Regions

With so much variation it is hard to single out

individual wines, but here are a few suggestions from the main regions.

North west Italy is dominated by the wines of Piedmont with heady reds and elegant dry whites. Barolo, Barbaresco, and Gavi are top of the list but also look out for delicious light and sweet wines from the Moscato grape - perfect for warmer weather.

North eastern Italy is the home of the hugely popular Prosecco but also lightish reds from Valpolicella & Bardolino. The region's top wine is definitely the powerfully flavoured Amarone - certainly not for the faint hearted.

Central Italy equals Tuscany, home to Chianti and Brunello whilst on the Adriatic side of the country the Marche and Abruzzi make excellent, affordable whites and reds - look out for Verdicchio and Montepulciano d'Abruzzo, both excellent value white and red wines respectively.

In the hot south the wines of Puglia (Italy's "heel") have become fashionable in recent times. Choose red wines from the Primitivo or Negroamaro grapes - rich and rustic with real warmth.

Finally Sicily, renowned for Marsala, is now producing lovely, spicy reds from the Nero d'Avola as well as whites from Grillo.

Further information about the aforementioned wine can be found at www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk or in store at Richard Granger Fine Wine Merchants, West Jesmond Station, Lyndhurst Avenue, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 3HH





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CHELTENHAM GOLD CUP, ST PATRICKS DAY CELEBRATIONS

at Newcastle Racecourse

On Friday 17th March, Exclusive Business once again brought the excitement of Cheltenham Gold Cup to Newcastle Racecourse with a lively St Patricks Day event.

Guests were welcomed by Irish piper Alex, Brennan, MC for the day was the diminutive Doddie Weir, top tips were delivered by Paul Clarkson and very lively entertainment from Twangling Jack and the Rascal Fiddlers kept everyone in fine fettle, after the racing the Newcastle University Irish Dance Society gave a very impressive performance that closed the day perfectly.

We were honoured to have Falklands veteran Simon Weston with us to show his support for our nominated charity, Marie Curie North East. Simon spoke with great passion and empathy about his own relationship with Marie Curie and delivered a few lively tales too, this helped to raise in excess of £4000 for Marie Curie NE.

SAVE THE DATE FOR 2018 - FRIDAY MARCH 16TH

For more details contact Linda Hitman linda@exclusive.co.com

EXCLUSIVE WOULD LIKE TO THANK ALL OUR SUPPORT PARTNERS



MONEY MAYWEATHER - A SUCCESS ON TYNESIDE



Both at the Lancastrian Suite in Dunston, and at the after-party in Livello's in the heart of Newcastle, the arrival of Floyd 'Money' Mayweather proved a great success for fight fans around the North East.



Alongside Spencer Brown, Tyneside promoters Steve Wraith (Newcastle Legends) and Daniel Cox (Relentless Promotions) pulled out all the stops to bring the pound-for-pound greatest to the region. Some thought it couldn't be done, that it may be one name too high up the ladder – job done!!

The region's press provided excellent coverage and Sky Sports' Pete Graves was just as good with the mic on stage as he is in the studio, cracking jokes and getting the best out of the man who retired undefeated.

Personally the line of the night surrounded Mercedes and Mars Bars. When asked about buying one of his children a Mercedes Floyd responded that if he buys one child a Mercedes they all get a Mercedes. The riposte from Pete was a classic when saying that he's the same, if he buys one child a

Mars Bar then the other child gets a Mars Bar – only on the banks of the Tyne.

Livello's afterwards was just as good as the main event with The Money Team, or TMT, partying the night away in a way only they know how, ensuring that not only Floyd, but also the ladies in attendance, had a good time.

Reporter Craig Johns was afforded exclusive access and didn't disappoint. Through blogging about the event, he gave an insight into the meeting with Newcastle United stars (Karl Darlow, Jamaal Lascelles, Ciaran Clark and Daryl Murphy), eating Nandos and so much more which can all be read online.

As for Newcastle Legends, it's on to Sunday Lunch with Tony 'The Bomber' Bellew on Sunday May 14th at The Lancastrian Suite with tickets available now from the venue.



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MACDONALD HOTELS & RESORTS INVESTS IN THE FUTURE OF THEIR GOLF OFFERING

£550,000 in Golf Course Upgrades in 2016

Golfers visiting Linden Hall Golf & Country Club & Cardrona Hotel, Golf & Spa, which are two of the five UK Golf venues owned by the Macdonald hotel group, will benefit from a series of course upgrades, following a £550,000 investment, designed to further enhance playing conditions and the customer experience.

These improvements highlight the group's on-going commitment to ensuring the courses remain in prime condition throughout the year, a number of enhancements, including bunker renovation, greens project works and pathway redevelopment, were completed in 2016, while each venue also has a new fleet of course maintenance vehicles.

Keith Pickard, Group Director of Golf and Health & Fitness at Macdonald Hotels & Resorts, said: "We are confident our course upgrades will help us showcase all

of the Macdonald Hotels & Resorts courses in their best condition for the 2017 season and beyond, ensuring they are must-play courses for visiting golfers."

INTRODUCTION OF FLEXIBLE MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

Macdonald Hotels & Resorts has partnered with PlayMoreGolf, the UK's first online points-based flexible membership programme, to further enhance its customer experience by providing golfers with additional choice and flexibility with their club memberships.

Golfers will have the opportunity to become a member at one of five Macdonald Hotels & Resorts across the UK and, for a fee of £325 per year, will be given a minimum of 100 points. 80 of these points are to be utilised at the designated 'home' club and 20 reserved for rounds at other participating 'away' clubs throughout the PlayMoreGolf network.



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GET DOWN TO BUSINESS AT CRATHORNE HALL

Michael Gramshaw outlines the various meetings and events packages available at the elegant country house hotel in North Yorkshire.



Situated just 1 mile from the A19, Crathorne Hall, near Yarm is a hotel with great transport links which makes it the perfect setting for a number of different occasions. Renowned for its high levels of customer service, there's a certain brand of excellence which pervades everything they do and this is especially true of their meeting and events hospitality.

The hotel boasts a capacity of up to 120 delegates with several versatile meeting spaces available. Conscious of the modern business executive, each is equipped with the latest visual and audio technology alongside comfortable seating and complimentary wifi access. Their offering is defined by three inclusive packages; the classic, the essential and the executive with each possessing their own unique virtues.

The most basic is the "Essential Package" which is designed for those business meetings requiring only the core essentials. For instance, room hire, tea & coffee refreshments, stationery and whiteboards. For those times when you need to power right through, an express lunch is also provided. This might include celeriac apple soup, lemon & garlic chicken wraps and prawn & chilli pitta pockets. There's an emphasis on lighter bites which can be consumed whilst working which increases productivity and encourages networking and other interactivity.

The "Classic Package", available from £40, includes meeting room hire, LCD projector and screen, flip chart with conference stationery and also a full

electronic support pack comprising colour printer, wireless mouse, USB and plug charging sockets and surround sound system. On my recent visit I was bowled over by the facilities on offer and noticed that this could be a great breeding ground for discussion and creativity.

This wasn't the only thing that left me deeply impressed. Within the Classic package there's a wide selection of conference menus to choose from which can be sampled at scheduled interludes throughout the day. I landed the chance to try the hot and cold "finger buffet" which consisted of mini cajun chicken baguettes, lemon hummus, pepper and spinach wraps, cheese and cranberry turnovers, potato wedges with dipping pots and even mini fish & chips with tartare sauce. This was just one of the menu options available however classic package guests can instead elect for the "networking lunch" depending on their preferences. This is more of a substantial affair which includes dishes such as chicken Caesar salad, sweet chilli chicken with egg noodles and a mushroom and tarragon risotto. Freshly prepared by Crathorne's team of master chefs, these lunch options are entirely flexible

and can be served in either the meeting rooms or the restaurant. Both alternatives also come with a choice of desserts featuring items such as fresh fruit kebabs with greek yoghurt and lemon posset with a spiced rhubarb compote.

The executive package encompasses all the benefits of the classic yet also includes the option of a two course plated lunch or a hot and cold deli meal. This is a sage choice for larger parties with group dining available in the restaurant and also private dining suites. Again chefs draw upon only the freshest local ingredients with the hot and cold deli offering meat, fish, vegetables and also a variety of breads, salads and other fillings. A real sense of drama is created with the chef carving and serving the food before the delegates which often provides a fun lunchtime talking point.

Naturally, all packages can be tailored to fit any individual needs or requirements and the sumptuous surroundings at Crathorne Hall might just inspire a new spark of creative thinking. If you're looking to host a meeting or event in the North Yorkshire/Teesside region, then this classy venue must be of prime consideration.



PREFERRED PARTNER ACCOMMODATION RATES

We are pleased to offer specially discounted hotel rates and preferential booking terms to local businesses and corporate clients.

If you would like further information about our corporate rates, our sales teams will be happy to assist you.

Contact our team on 01642 700398

Why Crathorne Hall?

- 37 bedrooms including feature rooms and suites
- Recent £4m refurbishment of the Hall's East Wing including 17 bedrooms
- Easily accessible from the A19 (less than 1 mile)
- 6 miles from Durham Tees Valley Airport and 15 miles from Darlington railway station
- 45 miles south of Newcastle and 40 miles north of York
- Complimentary Parking
- Free Wi-Fi throughout the hotel and bedrooms
- 4 Red Stars and 2 Rosettes
- Fine dining restaurant
- Friendly and welcoming team
- Lounge, Room and Restaurant Service dining options



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Crathorne Hall Hotel Crathorne, Yarm, North Yorkshire TS15 0AR

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MAN ABOUT TOWN

Michael Gramslaw checks into the Townhouse Hotel



Having reviewed a host of the region's hotspots over the years I'm definitely an adherent to the view that you needn't travel far to have a good time.

Gosforth remains very much a heartland for the magazine and having worked there in a previous life, it's somewhat surprising that I'd never spent a night at Gosforth's only boutique hotel; The Townhouse. Until recently! Owing to the kind hospitality of owner Sheila Armstrong, I finally landed the chance to set the story straight.

Occupying an enviable spot on Gosforth's West Avenue – a residential tree-lined street - The Townhouse Hotel is a real urban idyll just 60 seconds from the bustling high street. A very imposing building, the exterior is indicative of its Victorian heritage whilst inside it exudes all the sophistication of the present day. We were warmly received on arrival and soon issued with a parking permit and a free arrival drink. A lovely touch which really demonstrates the level of service at this place with the team aiming to establish very much a home-from-home vibe. Complimentary beer and a weekend free from minor traffic offences? Some early brownie points accrued!

The Townhouse boasts 10 individually decorated bedrooms which possess all the style and panache you'd expect from such a revered boutique property. Each bedroom has its own unique quirks yet ours was particularly opulent. Think shades of rich blue, velvety greys, glam chandeliers and

plush bedding. There was even a hi-spec limestone bathroom with marbled sink, heated towel rail and a swish rain shower. "That's like something you'd find at Augusta" we joked whilst freshening up.

Mindful of the modern business traveller, our room also included a versatile work space comprising writing desk, reading lamp and free wifi access. Tea & coffee making facilities come as standard as does a hairdryer, telephone and LCD TV. We were even lucky enough to blag a much-desired room at the front of the property with great views over the handsome and upmarket setting.

The townhouse's in-house eatery "The Blue Room Café" is forming quite a reputation for itself with its offering of premier café fayre which champions local produce wherever possible. Much like our bedrooms, the dining area is gorgeously appointed with chunky chesterfield sofas and "proper" armchairs bringing a real sense of homely charm. Frequented by guests and non-guests alike, the café offers home cooked options such as lamb hot pot, thai green curry, beer battered fish & chips, beef burger and also a broad selection of soups and sandwiches. Lighter & healthier options are also available which include eggs benedict, craster kippers and smoked mackerel pate as are a decadent array of cakes and pastries. A menu

then well devised with the Blue Room's swanky suburbanite clientele in mind. New for 2017, The Townhouse have also added Sunday Lunch to their menu with 2 courses available for £13.95. Sadly my son Jack and I just missed out on this so we instead ordered from the suitably-hearty room service menu. Rest assured though I'll be trying to wangle a review of this in the weeks and months ahead!

I can also personally vouch for the cooked breakfast which followed a heavier night than planned. Chatting and drinking away in the company of The Townhouse's very affable night porter Sam, we awoke feeling more tender than expected yet this was soon remedied by a quick blast in "Amen Corner" and 2 rounds of the Scottish smoked salmon with scrambled eggs and buttered toast.

Suffice to say then the Townhouse Hotel has an awful lot going for it. A multi-faceted venue which lends itself nicely as a venue for a quick coffee, afternoon tea, lunchtime repast or overnight stay and all within the heart of downtown Gosforth. Being an independently owned venue the team pride themselves on exceptional customer service and I must say that they delivered this in spades. Beware of that complimentary drink though – it can quite easily turn into a gallon!

Savour our Sunday Lunch

Starter

Homemade Soup of the Day
Beer Battered Mushrooms with Garlic Mayonnaise
Homemade Mackerel Pate on Toasted Sourdough Bread

Main Course

Roast Topside of Beef
Half Roast Chicken
Roast Fillet of Cod in a Parsley Sauce
All served with Yorkshire puddings, roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables

Veggie Main Course

Vegetable Pasta with Garlic bread

Dessert

Homemade Fruit Crumble with Custard
Eton Mess
Fruit Mousse

1 Course **£8.95** | 2 Course **£13.95** | 3 Course **£16.95**



Blue Room Café
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SEVEN WAYS TO SERVICED APARTMENT HEAVEN FROM WEEK2WEEK

There was a time when a weekend away meant only fun and excitement! Whether it was a mini break with friends, or a romantic trip with someone special, checking into a hotel or apartment always gives you butterflies.

Now that you're working in a role that sometimes requires you to travel for work, spending a few nights away can be more of a chore than a relaxing evening.

With a fully serviced Week2Week apartment, spending time away from home doesn't have to be boring. In fact there are a number of ways to get the most from your stay with us and who knows, you might want to stay a little longer. Although saying that, who wouldn't want to spend more time in Newcastle? Luckily for you, our fully serviced apartments can accommodate you for as long as you want or need to stay – be it weeks, months or years.

So here they are, seven ways to serviced apartment heaven from Week2Week:

1. Enjoy the maid service

Whilst you're staying with us you have access to our maid service. You'll be staying in a clean and tidy space – all thanks to our lovely staff. A member of our trained staff will visit your serviced apartment weekly ensuring all bed linen is changed, towels are stocked up as well as fully cleaning the apartment, so you don't have to lift a finger.

2. We'll get the shopping in

Did you know you can give us your shopping list

before you arrive? That means your food will be ready in the kitchen and fridge upon your arrival. Even if you are an international traveller, we will ensure we go the extra mile to match your cultural food and drink needs. You will also be greeted by our standard welcome pack when arriving to a Week2Week serviced apartment. Filled with tea, coffee, biscuits, fresh milk, some cleaning products including dishwasher and washing machine tablets as well as the perfect sleeping kit containing an eye mask and ear plugs – you'll not be short of your home essentials.

3. Enjoy the surroundings

All of our apartments are in prime locations, so you can guarantee that wherever you are there is something nearby for you to enjoy! Depending on your location, you could have a stroll down Newcastle's iconic Quayside or a walk in the beautiful grounds of Jesmond Dene, just give our Week2Week team a call and we can advise the perfect spots.

4. Surf the web

Some hotels will charge you daily or even hourly for Wi-Fi. But not Week2Week, every one of our serviced apartments comes with free Wi-Fi, so you can finish your presentation without worrying

about cost or just stream Netflix all night long.

5. Have some S-P-A-C-E

Did you know that on average, an apartment has up to 30% more space than a hotel guest room? There's plenty of room for you to place your luggage, crack on with some work or simply enjoy the space.

6. Have a relaxing soak

So after you've settled in, we think you deserve a nice relaxing soak. Whether you're back from a day of hard work, travelling round the city or just wanting to chill, run yourself a bubble bath and unwind in a spacious bathroom that will have you feeling right at home. Don't forget, we will replace your used towels with clean ones, so use as many as you need.

7. Relax at the end of the day with a movie

Time to relax with your sleeping kit at the ready, but first it's time to grab the remote. We offer FreeView, along with a DVD player in many of our serviced apartments with a wide selection of viewing for all tastes. But if you have your favourites, you are welcome to bring along your favourite film, grab a beverage and take a break from the day with a good movie.

Sound good? Contact the Week2Week team today on 0191 2813129 or see www.week2week.co.uk to find out more about our apartments and their locations.

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QHOTELS APPOINTS NEW REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER

QHotels has appointed renowned hotelier, Andrew Fox, as Regional General Manager for the group's northern hotels, including Slaley Hall, the Northumberland-based luxury hotel and leisure resort.

After previously holding the position of QHotels Regional General Manager for The Midlands, Andrew returns to the group from InterContinental Hotels, where he led the successful opening of the Crowne Plaza in Newcastle.

Bringing 20 years' experience, he has worked as General Manager for some of the UK's most well-known hotel brands, including Marriott.

He will take on the role as on-site General Manager for Slaley Hall, as well as overseeing operations at QHotels' Aldwark Manor near York and The Westerwood Hotel near Glasgow.

His expertise will be used to grow Slaley Hall's leisure offering, including its spa, health club and two on-site restaurants, as well as the hotel's meeting spaces and championship-standard golf facilities. The hotel was recently named 'The Best Golf Hotel/Resort in the North of England' for the third successive year

in the Today's Golfer Travel Awards.

Commenting on his appointment, Andrew said: "It's great to make the move back to QHotels and to maintain an active role in the leisure business in the North East, a region that has become very important to me.

"I'm keen to reinstate Slaley Hall's reputation as a luxury resort, set in 1,000 acres of Northumberland countryside, the hotel has something for everyone, from taking a luxury spa or activity break, to using its meeting or corporate golf facilities."

Michael Purtil, Managing Director of QHotels, said: "Not only does Andrew have significant experience of managing prestigious hotels and resorts across the UK, he also has a great track record and deep understanding of business in the North East region. It's fantastic to welcome him back to the QHotels management team."



To learn more about Slaley Hall, visit www.qhotels.co.uk/slaleyhall

TWILIGHT SPA EXPERIENCE AT SLALEY HALL



SLALEY HALL IN HEXHAM, NORTHUMBERLAND WILL BE LAUNCHING A NEW TWILIGHT SPA EXPERIENCE, OFFERING GUESTS THE CHANCE TO ESCAPE TO THE FOUR STAR HOTEL'S SPA FOR AN EVENING OF INDULGENCE.

THE TWILIGHT SPA PACKAGE, AVAILABLE BETWEEN 6PM-10PM SUNDAYS TO THURSDAYS, WILL ALLOW GUESTS TO EASE AWAY THE ACHE OF THE DAY AND UNWIND IN THE TRANQUIL SETTING OF THE EDWARDIAN MANSION'S SPA.

FOR JUST £35 PER PERSON, THE TWILIGHT SPA EXPERIENCE

INCLUDES A TWO COURSE MEAL AT HADRIAN'S BRASSERIE, AS WELL AS ROBES AND SLIPPERS AND FULL USE OF THE LEISURE FACILITIES.

GUESTS CAN RELEASE THE TENSIONS OF THE DAY IN THE HEALTH CLUB'S SWIMMING POOL, USE THE SAUNA, WHIRLPOOL AND STEAM ROOM FOR THE ULTIMATE RELAXING EXPERIENCE.

THE SPA AT SLALEY HALL OFFERS AN EXTENSIVE RANGE OF ESPA BODY & FACE TREATMENTS, TAILORED TO EACH GUEST'S INDIVIDUAL NEEDS.

TO BOOK YOUR SPA EXPERIENCE, CALL SPA RECEPTION ON 01434 673193 OR EMAIL SLALEYSPA@QHOTELS.CO.UK



NEW COMMUNITY BANK EXPANDS

Tynedale Community Bank has branched out into Prudhoe. The community-focused alternative to big banks and payday lenders held an event to mark its expansion in the town in March, sponsored by leading North East law firm Muckle LLP. Many local businesses, community organisations and officials attended, along with MP Guy Opperman.

The bank, which launched in Hexham in 2015, now offers secure savings and affordable loans from the Spetchells Centre, Prudhoe, every Tuesday between 12 and 3pm. Anyone living or working in Northumberland is welcome to use their services.



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THE ANNUAL INTU SPORT NEWCASTLE DINNER

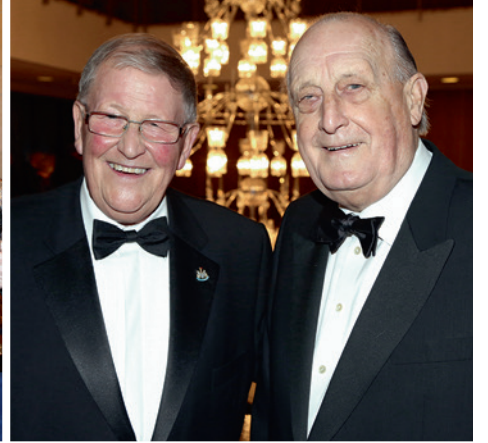
The event took place recently at the Civic Centre, Newcastle Upon Tyne to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Sport Newcastle.

Over five hundred guests attended a 'Feast of Sport' with awards including the Rising Stars of Sport, the Sports Personality of the Year and The Wilkinson Sword and Frank Brennan Trophy.

Newcastle United Manager, Rafa Benitez won the Sports Personality.

A special Lifetime Achievement Award was also made to Malcolm Dix for 40 years of dedicated service.





CITY RETREAT SALON AND SPA NAMED BEAUTY SALON OF THE YEAR

Jesmond-based City Retreat Salon and Spa was named Beauty Salon of the Year and Employer of the Year at the 2017 Professional Beauty Awards.

Regarded as the most respected awards in the industry, the night celebrates those who go above and beyond in the beauty, spa, nails and aesthetics markets.

A win in one of the prestigious categories marks a business out as a nationwide leader and provides unrivalled recognition that they are at the pinnacle of their profession. As well as the title and a trophy, winners are also profiled in Professional Beauty magazine; the leading business title for the beauty, spa and nails industries.

Winners were announced at a black-tie gala dinner at London's Tobacco Dock, hosted by Rob Beckett. Amongst the trophies won by City Retreat was Employer of the Year, which was sponsored by BTL Aesthetics; one of the world's leading manufacturers of medical and aesthetic equipment.

The second win for City Retreat Salon and Spa was the Beauty Salon of the Year: Four Rooms or More trophy, which was sponsored by Caudalie; the French skincare brand which combines the latest



L-R: Tracy Brasenell from Caudalie, Lesley Caster and Amy Holdsworth

scientific techniques with ancient secrets from the vineyards of Bordeaux.

Speaking on the night, salon owner Lesley Caster said: "it feels absolutely amazing to win two

awards! A true honour and we can't wait to share this with the rest of the team, they work so hard and are very deserving of this trophy!"

For more information please call City Retreat Salon and Spa on 0191 281 9222. or email beauty@city-retreat.com

PODIATRISTS STEP UP TO THE MARK WITH NEW PRACTICE

Two hugely experienced podiatrists have put their best feet forward to launch a new podiatry practice in Whitley Bay.

Robert Stringer and Steve Hannant who collectively have more than 32 years experience of providing NHS podiatry services across the region, have decided to take a leap in to self-employment, setting up their own dedicated practice, Bay Podiatry, in the town's Whitley Lodge Shopping Centre.

The duo, who both live in Whitley Bay, are bringing their clinical expertise to the high street and have set up Bay Podiatry to provide patients with quicker and easier access to a wide range of specialist podiatry services and foot care treatments.

Steve who has worked alongside Robert for the past 15 years said: "Podiatry is now well recognised across the medical profession for its role in helping to prevent, diagnose, treat and rehabilitate abnormal conditions of the feet.

"However, we recognise that there is still some way to go to help the general public understand exactly what a podiatrist can offer. Whilst we most certainly alleviate day to day foot care problems such as ingrown toe nails, fungal infections and verrucae, a podiatrist can offer so much more and we are hoping that our new visible shop front will help to increase people's awareness and understanding of podiatry.

"Often the problems and pains that we can treat



are the pains that once upon a time people felt they had no other option but to simply put up with. We can offer complete bio mechanical assessments to establish the root cause of pain and therefore treat the cause and not only the symptom, often freeing people from years of ongoing pain and discomfort with something as simple as specially built up insoles."

Podiatry is well recognised and respected by the medical profession and is available both privately

and through the NHS, depending upon the condition and geographical location.

Robert and Stephen are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and are members of the Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists.

Robert added: "If anyone is unsure if podiatry can help them, we would urge them to simply give us a call or pop in and ask; no question is a silly question and if we can't help we will no doubt be able to suggest an alternative professional who can."

For more information visit www.baypodiatry.co.uk 0191 252 4441 Bay Podiatry is located at 5 Claremont Crescent, Whitley Lodge.

HAPPY AND HEALTHY ONCE AGAIN



In her younger years Susan Potter was a fit athlete, swimming over 12,000 metres a day and competing at national level. A bad injury and starting a family meant she was unable to train and subsequently gained a significant amount of weight. Susan was no longer the fit, healthy and confident person she once was.

Here, she shares her story:

"I used to be really fit. I loved swimming and was a keen gym-goer, but an injury meant I had to pull out of swimming for a long period of time and I didn't return. I ate healthily and worked out occasionally but nowhere near as much as when I was swimming.

"As I got older I started a family and went on to have four beautiful children, but when I was pregnant I ate food like it was going out of fashion. Throughout my pregnancies I gained nearly five stone and my breasts went up to an H cup. After having my youngest child, I rarely exercised and continued to eat a lot. I was getting bigger and didn't feel like myself at all.

"We were on a family holiday a couple of years ago and I felt so down about how I looked in a swimsuit I decided enough was enough – I needed to do something about it. We often go on holiday and I never ever let anyone near me with a camera.

"When we got home, I began eating healthily and exercising again. Gradually, I began to lose weight as well as inches from my body. I was thrilled with my progress, although my breasts remained the same size. This got me down as I still had to wear bigger sized clothes and the more weight I was losing, the more my skin around my stomach became saggy.

"A friend recommended I get in touch with Spire Washington Hospital. I gave them a call and spoke to a very friendly adviser – my appointment was booked and I can honestly say I haven't looked back since.

"My consultant Mr Ali-Khan was lovely – he put me at ease, explained everything and kept stopping to make sure I understood. I went onto have another two appointments with him for further discussions and after that I decided surgery was one hundred per cent what I wanted.

"Just a month later I underwent a tummy tuck with liposuction and a breast reduction and uplift. On the morning of surgery I arrived at the hospital and was shown to my room which was newly refurbished with its own private bathroom. Mr Ali-Khan, the anaesthetist and a nurse all came to see me before I bounced down to theatre with excitement.

"When I woke up, I looked down and my eyes filled up with tears - I could not believe what a fantastic job he had done. I had my stomach and waist back - I was so happy.

"I cannot fault Mr Ali-Khan or the staff at Spire Washington Hospital. He even came in at six o'clock the next morning to see how I was as he was en-route to another hospital. To me, that is excellent patient care - I don't think many consultants would do that.

"I'm now recovering well and have begun gentle exercise again. I'm enjoying spending time with my children and am able to play with them and do things I felt I couldn't before. I feel healthier and happier and I'm counting down to our next family holiday – I won't be shying away from the camera this time!"

Mr Ali-Khan said: "Susan's story is very common amongst the patients I see. The changes that occur after pregnancies and motherhood are not always easy or possible to undo. Susan had worked hard to regain her shape and only came to see me after she realised and accepted there were areas of her body that were not going to improve with exercise or diet.

"From a surgeon's perspective she was an ideal patient as she had realistic expectations of what surgery could achieve. I always offer further consultations, at no extra cost, to allow patients time to think about the information I have provided. We met again and Susan had questions, which reassured me she had absorbed and considered the information I had given her. It's important never to rush into surgery and often I advise patients to attend consultations with a family member, or friend, so they have an independent and trusted person to offer opinion before making a final decision."

For more information on having surgery at Spire Washington Hospital or to book an appointment, call 0191 448 9645.

ON THE TEE BOX

At Gosforth Golf Club



Location

1 mile on the north side of Gosforth and under 3 miles from Newcastle City Centre.

Setting

A leafy parkland course completed by Dog-leg fairways, cavernous bunkers and hazardous water features.

Length of Course

6040 yds from the Men's Medal Tees.

Course Type

Gentle walking with pleasant views in a quiet location.

Toughest Hole

7th

Signature Hole

18th. Has to be one of the best finishing hole in the county.

Course Record

63.

Competitions

There is a full diary of Ladies and Gents competitions throughout the year and host of Open events.

A word from the Secretary

Although Gosforth Golf Club is a Members club we extend a warm friendly welcome to all who come to play. The course provides a true test for golfers of all abilities.

For great deals on visiting parties call Grahame Garland on 0191 2853495/2856710

WE CATER TO YOUR EVERY NEED...

We are a family owned and managed company who together have over 25 years in the catering and manufacturing industry. Our hands on experience in the outdoor catering sector gives us great insight into the every changing needs of the mobile caterer.

We take time to listen to your needs and always go the extra mile to meet them. Your unit will be unique to you, visually and functionally. We will do all we can to help you stand out from the crowd and give you a head start in making your business a successful one.

We employ a loyal team of craftsmen who have many years of experience between them and our attention to detail is such that we see clients return to us time and time again. We manufacture bespoke catering units using high quality materials to a very high standard, at competitive prices.

Our customers include:

- Apartment group
- Ramside event catering
- Angel of Corbridge
- Longhorns ...to name a few!



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