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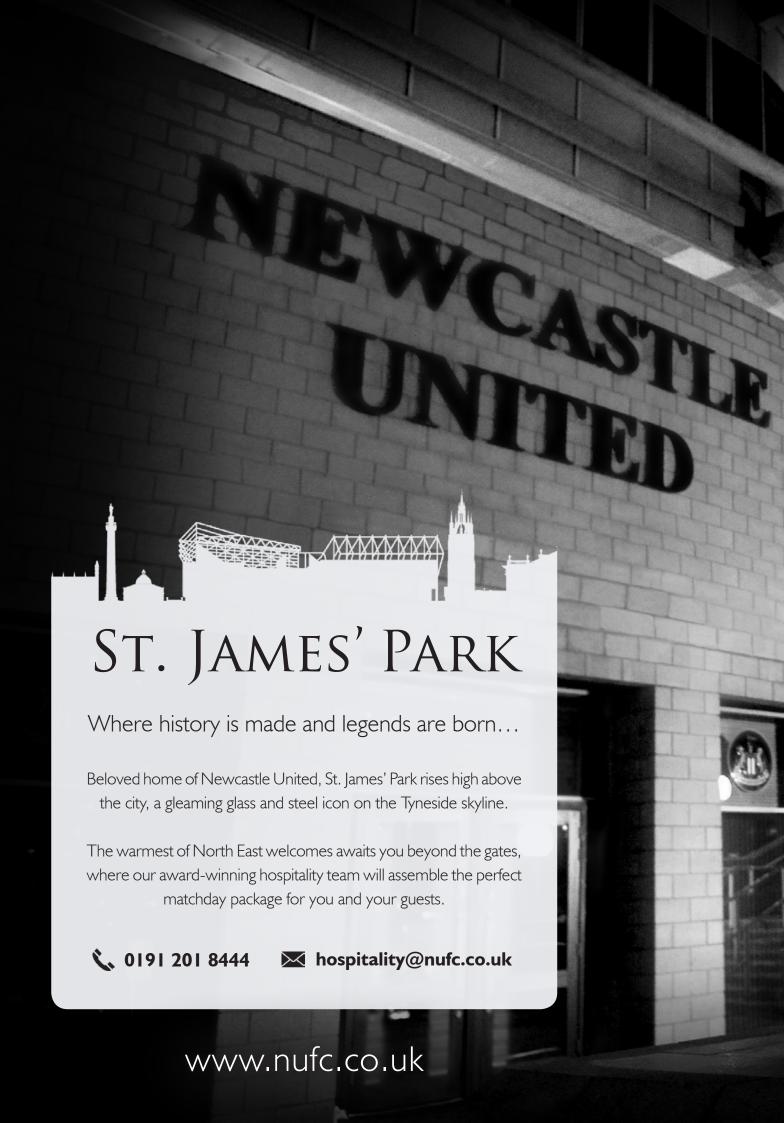


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# **FOREWORD**

# Welcome to the March edition of Northern Insight

With Spring and lighter nights looming I am delighted to bring you another vibrant edition of Northern Insight which is undoubtedly one of our best thus far.

Our cover star is the inspiring Nunnykirk Centre for dyslexia. Celebrating their 40th anniversary we look at their story to date.

We also profile some of the fantastic social events from the past month including Sport Newcastle's 50th anniversary launch evening, the Entrepreneurs Forum Chairmans Dinner and the annual Alan Shearer Foundation Charity Ball.

For Dining Insight we visit Sabatinis, a staple of the Quayside dining scene for over 2 decades and still a winner.

> Look out also for our enlarged property section showcasing some of the regions finest properties.

> > All in all much to enjoy and enthuse.

Thank you for your continued support. Till next month... Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher

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# Editorial

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# BREWIN DOLPHIN CONTINUE CHAMBER PRESIDENT'S CLUB SPONSORSHIP

Brewin Dolphin has committed to a further year as sponsor of the influential North East England Chamber of Commerce President's Club which boasts over 250 of the region's leading businesses as members.

The Newcastle-based wealth management firm has supported the President's Club for the past three years and has now confirmed a fourth, having seen clear benefits from engaging with the group, which meet regularly to hear keynote speakers and provide a unique forum for networking.

In the past 12 months, the Chamber's Presidents Club has heard keynote speeches from many leading figures in the region and beyond, including Stephen Kelly, CEO, Sage plc and Jonathan Rutter, who outlined his multi-million development strategy for Auckland Castle in County Durham. Members also benefit from specialist topical events that include in-depth analysis of important business issues such as the Government's Budget.

William Baker Baker, who heads up the Newcastle office at Brewin Dolphin, said: "We are delighted to be supporting the President's Club once again as well as the wider North East of England Chamber of Commerce. At Brewin Dolphin we understand how important business is to the local community in helping it thrive economically and socially. The Chamber and its President's Club does a fantastic



job in promoting and championing the region and its businesses so we are very proud to support it in its endeavours whenever we can."

Eamonn Leavey, Head of the President's Club, said:

"We are delighted to have the invaluable support of Brewin Dolphin for 2017. Through this influential network, we are able to give an opportunity for the region's key senior business leaders to meet, share best practice and do business with each other."

# AIRPORT STRIKES DEAL WITH MIDDLESBROUGH FOOTBALL CLUB

Newcastle International Airport has signed up to become a partner of Middlesbrough Football Club.



A deal has been agreed until the end of the season between the Premier League club and the North East's biggest airport with an option to extend the partnership.

As part of the agreement, the airport's logo, 'Newcastle International: Your Airport', will be on display throughout The Riverside Stadium and across the club's social media platforms.

The airport will work closely with the club to highlight new developments and to benefit the local community with tickets and flight giveaways throughout the season. With over 80 direct destinations on offer, Middlesbrough fans will be able to discover the world from the airport recently voted the most punctual small airport in the world.

John Irving, Business Development Director at Newcastle International Airport, said: "We are delighted to have signed this exciting partnership. We believe it offers the perfect platform for us to highlight all of the great destinations available from Newcastle International."

Lee Fryett, Head of Partnerships at Middlesbrough Football Club, said: "We are delighted to announce Newcastle International Airport as our latest partner and are looking forward to promote its service and help promote the region internationally."

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# TAIT WALKER EXPANDS OFFICE

Gosforth headquartered Tait Walker has opened its brand new work space designed for collaboration and inspiration.

As the firm enters its 80th year, the new-look offices at Bulman House form part of a significant transformation of the leading accountancy firm's working environment, increasing the total office space by over 9,000 square feet.

New kitchens and informal team areas have been created for the staff, as well as flexible meeting spaces with the latest technology, including flat screen TVs and WePresent, a presentation system offering wireless screen sharing from any device. Tait Walker is also opening these rooms up to clients, offering them a non-city centre space to work from, use for meetings or hold events.

The team can benefit from relaxed breakout zones for meetings or to take time away from their desks to share ideas. Pool tables have also been introduced to encourage interaction, allow staff to <u>unwind and</u> create a dose of healthy competition.



# SENIOR PARTNER CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN PRACTICE

Ryecroft Glenton's Senior Partner, Tony Glenton CBE TD FCA DL, one of the North East's most prominent businessmen, is celebrating 50 years in practice as a Chartered Accountant.

Tony joined the firm as a partner, two years after qualifying, in February 1967. In the 50 years since, he has helped build Ryecroft Glenton into one of the leading independent practices in the North East. Tony acts for a substantial number of clients and takes great interest in mentoring and supporting the firm's growing number of younger partners.

In 2000, Tony was appointed CBE for his contribution to the region, his leadership of the Port of Tyne Authority and his contribution to the UK Ports industry.

He said: "I'm privileged and grateful to have had the enjoyment of practising for 50 years. I'm excited at the prospect of the years ahead and look forward to continuing my involvement with Ryecroft Glenton well into the future."



# REFURBISHMENT COSTS FOR NEW NEWCASTLE HOTEL

Details have been revealed about funding support to refurbish the spectacular Grade II listed Eldon Chambers on Newcastle's Quayside.

Chartered surveyor and property agent Bradley Hall has announced that the renovation of the four-storey Eldon Chambers will be part funded by the landlord.

Planning permission was recently secured to convert the building into a new boutique hotel, with bar and restaurant, giving fresh life to a four-storey building which has only ever provided office space since its construction more than 180 years ago.

Bradley Hall is marketing this prime accommodation for lease, for either leisure or office use. Offers are invited in the region of £195,000 per annum.

Neil Hart, Managing Director at Bradley Hall, said: "Our client, the landlord, has confirmed they will part fund the fit out, making this an opportunity not to miss for investors. The level of funding support will be determined and agreed once any refurbishment costs and plans are fully itemised."

# RECRUITMENT DRIVE AT DRINKS FIRM WITH A THIRST FOR GROWTH

When botanical drinks manufacturer Fentimans needed to hire a financial controller to oversee ambitious growth plans, the Hexham-based firm turned to Edward Reed Recruitment to identify the ideal candidate.

Trading since 1905, Fentimans is a household name in artisan soft drinks and mixers with stockists across the globe. As part of the company's five-year plan for further expansion, Fentimans is creating a number of new job roles.

Managing Director at Newcastle-based Edward Reed Recruitment, Chris

Stappard, said: "We were approached by Fentimans with the task of recruiting a financial controller. This is a new role for Fentimans as they wanted to bring somebody in-house who could manage the day to day financial reporting and support the executive team as they focus on growth and strategy."

The successful candidate, Craig Whitfield, will now be responsible for monthly reporting and financial forecasting at Fentimans. Craig will help to deliver continuous improvement programme efficiencies throughout the business.

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community'. Here is to the next decade of success!







# 50 YEARS OF SPORT NEWCASTLE

A host of North East business leaders and sports personalities including Jonathan Edwards CBE came together to celebrate the launch of Sport Newcastle's 50th Anniversary.

The plan is to raise £50,000 during 2017, through various fundraising activities to allow the charity to continue its work supporting grass roots sport and helping to develop the rising sports stars of the future.

Patron Sir John Hall helped kick start the fundraising when he announced a personal donation of £10,000.

For more information, visit: www.sportnewcastle.org.uk











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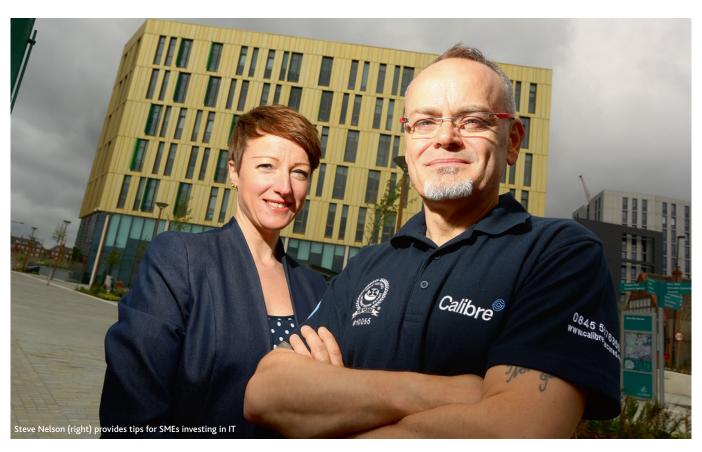
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# CHOOSING THE RIGHT IT PROVIDER?



Most SMEs would agree that having an IT service provider is critical to their own success yet for many the struggle to find the right partner, or identify the best products and services, can be a source of much hand wringing. Steve Nelson, Operations Director at Calibre Secured Networks Ltd, offers some to tips.

# Understand your needs

Whether you're a start-up, or an established SME shopping around for a better deal, it's important to identify exactly what it is that you are looking for. And to do this, it's essential to bear in mind budgets, service-level agreements, current technology, and the availability of internal IT expertise among other things. Ensure you communicate the challenges, needs and goals that need to be achieved – a good IT integrator should then demonstrate how their solution addresses these.

# Single source

Opt for a single source supplier who offers hardware, software, networking and support. This can avoid the need for multiple suppliers, problems relating to aftersales and technical support, and poor levels of customer service (be wary of the supplier who's not prepared to go the extra mile to prove the value of the partnership).

### The price is right

Value for money is unquestionably one of the most important factors in reviewing different proposals and quotations. Individual suppliers will have different approaches to solving your problems or meeting your requirements. Bear in mind that a

supplier who is willing to be transparent about costs and wants to work with you as a trusted partner, is more invested in the success and lifespan of your IT than someone who's simply selling a 'solution' before disappearing without providing adequate aftersales support and maintenance. Always check that your potential IT supplier's pricing is transparent and watch out for hidden extras.

# Service-level agreement (SLA)

It's important to have some element of SLA in place. This should be linked to what you want from the service that directly contributes to the business, not the technology itself - for example, how quickly will any issues or problems be resolved? Don't forget to challenge your supplier over SLAs, and undertake regular reviews. These will show if they are being met, but ensure you have clear and realistic expectations from the outset. Insist on having a dedicated contact or account manager to avoid the confusion and stress of contacting a different person every time you ring up.

### Contract duration?

An IT provider should live or die by the quality of their service, no matter how long the contract lasts. However, if you feel it's right for your business, check out the benefits of a longer contract. Ensure

More at www.calibre-secured.net

the supplier is willing to build in a break clause in longer-term contracts in case they fail to deliver on their promises or SLAs, and check if there are options for different contract lengths with the same supplier. Are they prepared to allay your concerns and risks to your business by offering shorter terms?

### Proactive service provision

A key to success is identifying and preventing problems before they happen to reduce downtime. A decent service provider will regularly visit customers to assess and identify how IT is currently used, and what changes can be made to better manage it in future - their familiar face at your premises will reflect a willingness to demonstrate the value they place in you as a customer.

# **Growing pains**

What happens as your business expands? It's important the supplier works with you to plan for growth because so many start-ups and SMEs forget that extra staff places increased demand on IT resources and capabilities. A good IT supplier should be able to help predict how your business needs will change in line with your growth strategy. So plan to build your IT in a highly scalable way.

# NEW PREMISES FOR KYLES



Kyles are delighted to announce the April opening of their new offices in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Based on the Quayside, they will be situated at Rotterdam House, a fantastic location overlooking the River Tyne, which allows easy access to all local courts. The offices will be the central hub for their Crown Court department and will house 5 specialist solicitors, dealing with the entire range of criminal issues.

Head of Kyles' Criminal Department, partner Brian Mark a senior barrister of 35 years' call will head up the new offices. Brian, himself a specialist in terrorism, murder, serious sex cases, high profile fraud and economic crime, takes the view that this new office represents another stepping stone in ensuring that the company has much more of a regional presence, yet still offers the personal touch to clients old and new.

"One of the factors that we considered when opening new offices was how best we could serve new and existing clients. Our Newcastle office is well served by all local transport and very handy for Newcastle Crown Court, which is where I do most of my cases. It also has excellent conference and parking facilities, making sure that all of our clients benefit from this expansion."

The offices will not just be used for their crime team. The firm will also be opening the doors to new private family and conveyancing clients. Their family department deals with the entire spectrum of family cases including divorce and separation, disputes regarding children, including Grandparents rights, financial disputes and pre and post-nuptial agreements. Their conveyancing team deal with both sale and purchase on both residential and commercial properties.

If therefore, you have any legal issue to resolve, however small, better call Kyles!



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



# HOME IS NOT NECESSARILY WHERE THE HEART IS

Home is where the heart is might ring true for some but for many an aspiring entrepreneur it may well not be the place to be when it comes to effective workspace, says Lynn Gate, who owns managed and serviced office accommodation provider, The Office Co.

While the 'dream' of working from home can be appealing, the reality for some people can quite often be the opposite, and certainly building a business from the expediency of your dining room table isn't the right approach for everyone. Personal preferences, incompatible working styles, motivational factors, and the challenge of divorcing your home life from your professional one can be prohibitive in working productively from home.

Organising a professional-style workspace is crucial. In addition to a computer, you will need a desk, a room, and business-quality support along with a fast and reliable broadband service. Having a real office with a real desk is important (tucking it away in the family room or kitchen may not give you the separation and quiet needed to work).

A separate office can nurture an important sense of professional separation, making it easier to 'go home' at the end of the day. And it's important that you understand your technology. Working from home, you will be responsible for your own IT - not having the latest business tools and technical support to hand could put you at a disadvantage.

So, for an aspiring entrepreneur, serviced and

managed office accommodation could well be the way forward when it comes to providing the foundations for getting a business off the ground, delivering significant benefits and savings on the road to (eventual) growth and success.

This type of commercial space is usually supplied fully equipped and managed, and comes with relatively flexible and simple rental terms. It also usually includes all the essential amenities as part of the package.

With the cost of office space spiralling seemingly ever upwards, one of the first questions for a start-up looking for a new place to call home, is how much will it cost? Conventional leased office space can be both expensive and inflexible, with restrictive terms that lock people in for way longer than they might need.

Alternatively, the cost for serviced workspace is likely to include internet and phone bills, cleaning, heating and lighting, reception, security and maintenance, redecoration and refurbishment, while the flexible nature of these all inclusive packages mean that there's far less financial risk involved should you enter into any difficulties - all that's required, in most cases, is payment for the

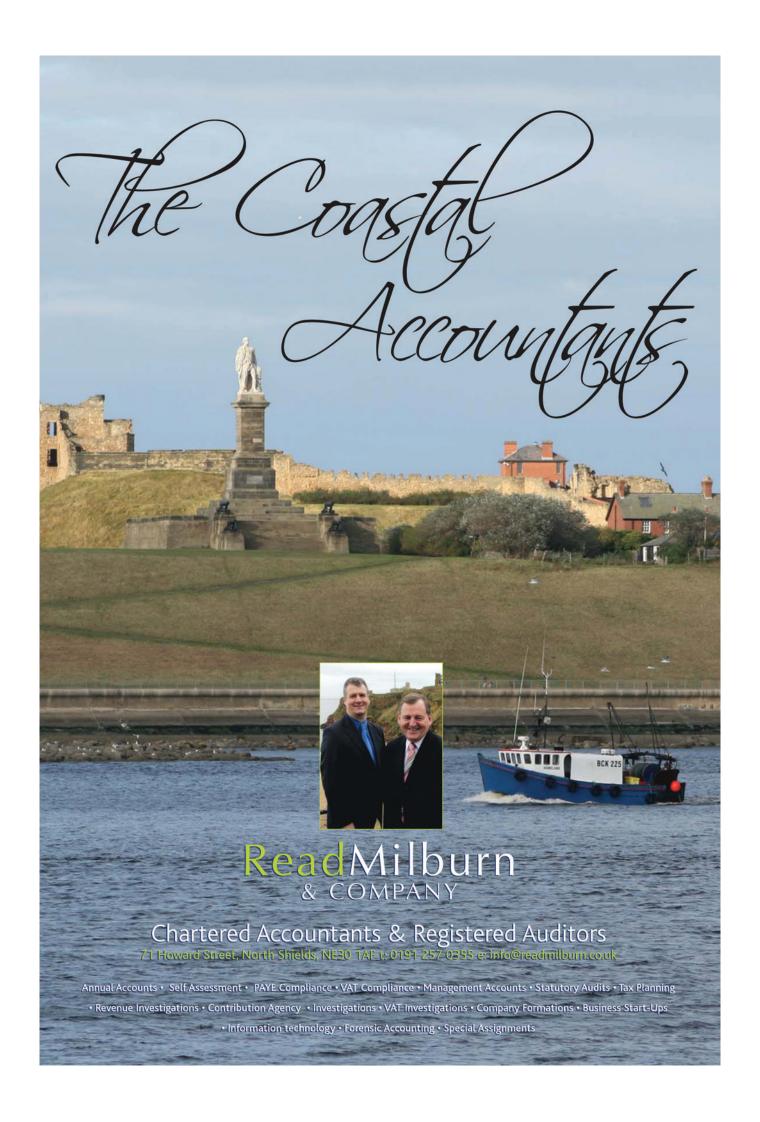
minimal rental period.

Working from home can also be a lonely existence. Staring at the same four walls everyday of the week can also be demoralising, dulling the senses and stifling creativity. You don't have the opportunity to build the deep personal connections you can when you interact with work colleagues every day. Without that connectivity, it's all too easy to feel isolated. That physical remoteness can also result in mental isolation, too – and the quality of your work becomes affected.

Don't lose your external focus. People buy from people, so get out and stay in touch. Meet people. Seek advice. That's why entrepreneurs gravitate towards places like Metropolitan House. They not only benefit from easy-in/easy-out terms but see it as a place to interact, to do business and network; helping each other to prosper and flourish.

Serviced and managed office accommodation can so often be a catalyst for entrepreneurial growth, providing a vibrant hub at the heart of the local community that's also a great place to do business. The Office Co. offers a range of serviced and managed offices, virtual offices and meeting rooms for a wide range of businesses.

More at www.theofficeco.co.uk





# A NORTH EAST FUND IS BORN

Local wealth management company Tier One Capital has recently succeeded in achieving a premium listing on the main market of the London Stock Exchange for a property backed lending trust.

The aptly named TOC Property Backed Lending Trust (trading under the ticker PBLT.L) will implement a £150m share issuance programme in its initial tranche and is now open as a unique North East focused fund for all North Easterners to consider allocating part of their portfolio to support the region within their ISA's, investment portfolios, pensions and offshore bonds.

The Tier One team have been at the forefront of direct lending in the North East for the High Net Worth space for five years now and have successfully built up an enviable track record of 100% delivery across 29 projects and counting, supporting the region with over £50m of lending to date.

Amongst the past credit book of the investment advisor, there is a clear targeting of specific sectors at different moments in time which the investment advisor believes to be well positioned. In line with this focused approach, the team has supported and successfully exited small serviced office based projects such as the impressive Town Hall Chambers office project in Wallsend (10% pa), the 320 City Road 'House of Creative' office project in Islington (6% pa) and the Clervaux Exchange office project in Jarrow (10% pa).

In its current UK wide credit book, the investment advisor is targeting projects where the underlying businesses hold opportunities for permanent revenue streams such as the award winning Lakes Distillery across in Bassenthwaite (6% pa), the internationally respected quartz glass and industrial ceramics producer Quartztec Europe in East Kilbride (8% pa) and one of the largest wedding and conferencing venues in North London at the Willows, Ilford (7% pa).

The regional focus of the fund is supporting North East house building in a significant way with 110 houses currently being funded at St Helen's Way in West Auckland (10% pa), 22 houses and apartments coming through in Marley Hill, Sunniside (10% pa) and 21 executive houses in Medburn, Ponteland



(8% pa). This regional focus continues with small serviced office space being supported at Commerce Chambers in Middlesbrough (8% pa), offices along with conferencing at Pendower Hall, Newcastle (10% pa) and offices with accompanying apartments at the Charlton Bonds building, Newcastle (8% pa).

Being able to offer both this quality and regional focus via a diversified fund based option for the first time offers clients of all sizes the opportunity to support the region whilst partaking in a service which has delivered a healthy and attractive average income for clients of 8.51% per annum over the past three years. The fund will aim to continue this by delivering a targeted total return of 8%-9% per annum, achieved via a split between an income target of 7% per annum (paid via quarterly dividend) and growth target of 1%-2% per annum.

With an array of highly regarded professional borrowing teams within the portfolio, the TOC Property Backed Lending Trust is an excellent way for individual investors to get access to institutional quality borrowers with capital investment starting from as little as £1000. Additionally, and in a unique

market leading way, investors into the fund will benefit from 25.1% equity profit share agreements in the projects being supported. This means that in addition to generating a set interest rate for each project, the fund will also partake in 25.1% of the profit for each one. To counterbalance what is a fantastic deal for investors, the fund uniquely agrees to support the borrowing teams across five projects rather than one to ensure that both sides are mutually rewarded by, and motivated to continue, working together over the longer term.

"Both our existing clients and new clients into the fund are attracted by the ability to generate a healthy long term return from what is traditionally a very stable activity." explains fund manager Stephen Black. "Such a combination competes very well in the current environment of low cash rates and potentially latent risk in asset classes such as bonds and equities. The funds average loan to value sits at c68% meaning that ultimately, on average there's a healthy buffer in the portfolio to protect against falls in property prices. The regional focus absolutely helps the balance of risk and reward in this way because the North East property market has been quite exceptionally stable over the past ten years. We haven't had the boom of areas such as London and on the back of that, we shouldn't have the bust so to speak."

lan McElroy, also fund manager, adds "We don't feel the regional market is anywhere near as likely to perhaps fall back as somewhere like the London market is because it's not driven by the same dynamics. The traditional banking support for regional house builders in the North East, and indeed for speculative commercial development in the region, hasn't been particularly great from what are usually London-centric credit committees. This has created a very appealing lending environment for the fund where at the moment we can absolutely cherry pick to find the exact quality of borrower, of strategy and of security we are looking for."

To find out more about Tier One Capital's services, please call 0191 222 0099 or visit www.tieronecapital.co.uk. You can also find out more about the TOC Property Backed Lending Trust by contacting the Tier One team or by visiting the PBLT website at www.TOCPBLT.co.uk.

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# LANDLORDS - DON'T SLEEP-WALK INTO THE NEW TAX RULES

The tax rules regarding buy-to-let property have long been complex. However, things are about to become even more difficult for individuals who are landlords of residential property.

The 2016/17 tax year brought significant changes including replacing the 10 per cent wear and tear allowance with what is probably a less generous replacement allowance.

On top of this, whilst general capital gains tax (CGT) rates have fallen, the rates applicable to residential property have remained at 18 per cent and 28 per cent. We have also seen the introduction of a 3 per cent Stamp Duty Land Tax surcharge on all purchases of buy to let homes costing above £40,000.

More is yet to come from April 2017 when we see restrictions on the interest relief available to individuals who let residential property. The current legislation allows interest relief at the marginal rate of tax. This relief is soon to be replaced by a tax credit at the basic rate of tax. Landlords may find that although they are making a loss after interest charges they are still left with an income tax charge. The resulting higher level of taxable income may also have a knock-on effect on an individual's personal allowance, high-income child benefit charge and entitlement to child tax credit.

The new rules will be phased in over a four-year period and between now and then individuals could see a huge increase in their tax bills.

Residential landlords need to consider exactly how these changes will affect them. It may well be that the way in which they structure their property businesses will need to change in order to ensure commerciality in the longer term. Moving properties into corporate ownership may be an option for some. All the more important then to plan ahead and not sleep-walk into the changes.



For more information on property taxation, please contact Stuart McKinnon, Tax Partner, on 0191 255 7000 or stuart.mckinnon@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact.

# SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE: AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY?

A recent case at an employment tribunal in Scotland has awarded roughly £28,000 to an employee over his employer's shared parental leave policy.

### What is this case about?

Both husband and wife worked for the same employer and informed their employer that they intended to take shared parental leave. It was discovered that mothers and primary adopters were entitled to an enhanced shared parental leave, however, fathers and secondary adopters did not receive the same entitlement.

A grievance was raised on the grounds of sex discrimination by the employee when comparing his pay entitlement to that of his wife. His grievance was heard and after a long period of time rejected by his employer.

The employee then appealed against the decision on the basis of direct and indirect sex discrimination. His appeal highlighted:

- the length of time taken to deal with his grievance;
- the employer's choice of comparator, suggesting that the correct comparator is a woman taking shared parental leave in order to care for a child;
- that there is no material difference between a

father or mother taking shared parental leave;

that the policy reinforces stereotypes that mothers are the primary care givers; and that no examples could be found of other employers that pay mothers an enhanced rate while paying fathers the statutory minimum.

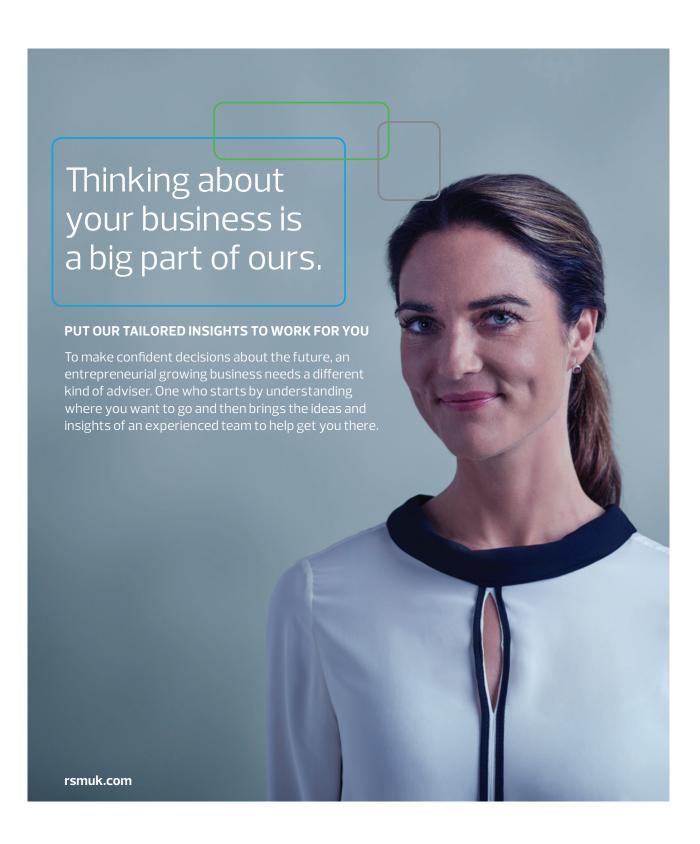
The appeal was again rejected and the employee made a claim to the employment tribunal. The tribunal decided that the employee was indirectly discriminated against in relation to the application of his employer's policy.

- making an informed decision about a shared parental leave policy;
- when considering offering an enhanced payment ensure that it is applied equally and fairly to avoid discrimination claims;
- given the nature of the shared parental leave provision, to offer enhancements only to mothers and primary adopters goes against the intended principle of its introduction; and
- the majority of employees who would experience detriment as a result of an unequal policy would be male which is contrary to the intention of the shared parental leave provisions.

This is the first decision of its kind and is likely to be considered in future claims of this nature.



For further advice regarding the offer of enhanced terms to employees, please contact Judy Pearson at judy.pearson@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact.



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# NIKKI TAKES THE HELM AT CHARITY HEI PING FAMILIES

Impact Family Services has appointed a new CEO as Hazel Hedley steps down to retire after ten years of service.

Nikki Turnbull has taken over the reins at the charity that supports families across South Tyneside, Sunderland, Newcastle, Cleveland, Northumberland and North Yorkshire through traumatic times of separation, divorce, domestic violence and abuse.

From North Walbottle, 41-year-old Nikki has over 20 years' experience in health and social care and has held a number of director positions in charities. Through her roles, she has worked with people of all ages and backgrounds and says she thrives on making a difference to people's lives.

In her new position, Nikki hopes to sustain the charity and its current services whilst also growing and expanding what is on offer and sourcing new funding routes.

She said: "I have very big shoes to step into with Hazel retiring. I am looking to cement her achievements at a sustainable journey of growth. Our services are much needed, well-loved and very special so anything new I bring in will only complement what projects we currently deliver."





# NAYLORS STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT TEAM WITH DOUBLE APPOINTMENT

Naylors commercial property consultancy has announced a double appointment as part of its expansion strategy.

The Newcastle-based firm has appointed Viv Walker as Property Manager following a number of new management instructions. Viv is responsible for liaising with tenants and contractors to ensure that the firm's extensive management portfolio is managed to a high standard. With a background in electrical planning, Viv managed a nationwide team of 8 people for 5 years before joining Naylors.

She commented: "From the outset I was impressed with the Naylors' work ethics. This is a very varied role but one which I am really enjoying. My experience enables me to ensure that tenants are happy and buildings are operating smoothly."

The firm has also appointed Martin Watson as building surveyor to work within the facilities management and building consultancy teams. Martin is responsible for managing over 30 properties across the North East and Yorkshire. His role involves carrying out building surveying related tasks including reactive maintenance inspections, as well as the planning and design of new projects.

Martin said: "I have an interest in Building Information Modelling (BIM) and how digital tools can help to improve the design, construction and management of buildings. I am currently looking to see how BIM can be used to help the management of buildings at Naylors."

# TWO SOLICITORS RISE TO NEW HEIGHTS AT NEWCASTLE FIRM

A leading North East law firm is promoting two experienced solicitors to senior positions within the company.

Solicitors Rachel Swinburne and Katy Rushworth, of Newcastle-based Clarke Mairs LLP, are being named as partners in recognition of their dedication to the firm and the successful development of their departments.

Rachel joined Clarke Mairs in February 2013 to bolster the firm's Private Client division. She advises clients on all aspects of wills and estate planning, trusts, succession planning and inheritance tax. Since joining the company, Rachel has continually grown the Private Client department's case load.

Katy Rushworth, who joined Clarke Mairs as a trainee in 2007, acts almost exclusively for landlords and tenants in the exercise of rights under Leasehold Enfranchisement legislation. She has steadily brought in a number of new clients and built relationships with local and national supperpressions.

Partner of Clarke Mairs, Tim Clarke, said: "We're delighted to announce Rachel and Katy as our newest partners at Clarke Mairs, in recognition of their hard work, loyalty, initiative and the immense success they have both had in developing their respective departments."



# QUANTUM PHARMA PLC MAKES STRATEGIC FINANCIAL APPOINTMENT



# County Durham based Quantum Pharma has bolstered its executive team with the help of business advisers UNW.

The niche pharmaceutical developer and manufacturer, which supplies a range of innovative products to wholesalers, retailers and hospitals, approached UNW's unique Strategic Talent team with the objective of sourcing a new chief financial officer to replace Chris Rigg, who was recently promoted to become the company's new CEO.

After UNW introduced relevant and experienced candidates to the Quantum Board, Ged Murray was identified as the appropriate candidate to help drive the business forward, and started his new position effective from 23rd January 2017.

Ged arrives with a wealth of experience working as a Finance Director for several of the region's most well-known and respected companies, including Northgate PLC, Reg Vardy PLC the Benfield Motor Group. He returns to the region from London to take up the role, where he was Group FD for Ardent Hire Solutions.

Speaking of the appointment, Chris Rigg said: "I am absolutely delighted that Ged is joining Quantum as our new CFO.

"His vast experience and track record leave me in no doubt that he is the right person to further strengthen and complement our Board moving into 2017 and beyond.

"This appointment was an extremely important one. Having worked with and known both Dave Bowman and Laura Dean from the UNW Strategic Talent team for a number of years, I knew that their extensive networks and knowledge would ensure the recruitment of an individual who shared the same values and vision that we hold here at Quantum. In Ged, I believe we have acquired that and more."

Dave Bowman, Strategic Talent Senior Manager at UNW, said: "As a team, we strive to achieve a perfect fit for all parties and, collectively, our large

networks mean we are connected to some of the very best talent, not just regionally, but nationally too. It is testament to our service that in addition to existing UNW clients, other companies such as Quantum Pharma PLC are approaching us to help them meet challenges and support their growth and development.

"We ensure that the individual is not only a good fit professionally, but also culturally, and are delighted that in this instance this has resulted in Ged's appointment."

Focusing on board level and finance recruitment, UNW's Strategic Talent team works closely with its clients to help them source and attract suitable candidates for a variety of positions. A unique service for an accountancy firm to offer, the team harness their extensive networks to ensure they connect the right people to the right roles across a range of sectors.

For more information regarding this service, please visit: www.unw.co.uk





It's February 14th, the most romantic night of the year and I have a Valentine date. Not as one may hope with a knight in shining armour who is going to sweep me off my feet and declare undying love but rather with HM Revenue and Customs and Making Tax Digital for Business.

If you have heard of 'Making Tax Digital', and not many businesses have, you will know that it is HMRCs way of helping you to understand your business finances by reporting your income and expenditure to HMRC quarterly using your digital software and then following that up with an annual summary. The much heralded 'End of the Tax Return'. This will also help you to calculate your tax due so you can budget for the payment across the year. Oh and there was mention of an £8bn tax gap which apparently arises mostly in the small business sector and HMRC are tasked with closing.

This all kicks off in April 2018, just over a year away and starts with small businesses and landlords. The turnover limit was originally proposed at £10000 but following the consultation process in the latter part of last year and the somewhat scathing comments of the Treasury Select Committee this is now 'under active consideration' and the figure will be announced in the budget along with the primary legislation to be included in the Finance Bill. There will also be a decision on deferment for some businesses. There are exemptions - CASCs, Lloyds Underwriters, Charities (but not their trading subsidiaries) and partnerships in excess of £10m.

So how do you submit your data? It will not be possible to just type figures into boxes via the government gateway as you may do now with VAT returns or SA returns. It will all have to be done with your digital software. HMRC are not providing any sort of software to allow you to do this, they are building the API for software providers to feed in to. And they are expecting those software companies to provide software and some sort of support free of charge. There were two software companies represented tonight but they couldn't

tell us what that software will be because they simply don't know. They are, of course, working with HMRC who themselves seem very unclear as to what it entails. Apparently it will 'evolve' as the public beta, due to start in April, progresses and there will be a 'viable product' by April 2018. Initially spreadsheets had been ruled out but they have had a reprieve although the data from them will still need to be fed into some sort of digital software for submission. HMRC will be, we were told, training up a team to deal with customer support and education and there will be an advertising campaign to promote it once they have decided exactly what it is they have to promote. Please, no purple furry monsters!

What exactly needs to be reported quarterly? Good news is that on quarterly returns HMRC are not expecting accounts on an accruals basis. The cash reporting limit has been raised to an annual turnover of £150k (exit level £300k) and the three line reporting available to small businesses still applies. The annual summary will be the definitive figure used to calculate your final tax liability. The software will submit the data as a summary only but there still remains a requirement under tax legislation to complete and retain proper records to support those figures.

If the technophobes out there are starting to panic then don't worry there are filing exemptions similar to those currently in place for VAT filing. So - membership of a religious society, disability, age, remoteness of location or 'any other reason'. Don't get excited about that one, 'can't turn on a computer' doesn't cut it. If you can't do it yourself you are expected to find a competent person to help.

How will HMRC use this data to close the tax gap.

They will not, we were told, be running checks on quarterly data and any risk assessment would be based on final annual figures. However, given that this will data will be fed into their 'Connect' computer system which gathers information from various HMRC departments, government organisations and other sources such as eBay it is possible that triggers from the information provided may influence an enquiry. It is estimated that the cost of compliance by a small business will be £2770 a year and that arguably any tax gained by stricter reporting will be offset by the tax relief given against those costs.

And of course no HMRC initiative would be complete without that dreaded word - Penalties. Yes, there are deadlines and of course if those deadlines are missed there will be penalties. Original proposals were that quarterly returns would be filed within one month of the end of the quarter and the annual summary by 10 months or the end of January following the end of the accounting period. That bit didn't make sense and HMRC couldn't explain how it would work. Presumably something else that will 'evolve'. The level of penalties has not been set but a soft landing has been promised so you're not going to be hit immediately. There will be further discussions on penalties in Spring.

So have I fallen in love with Making Tax Digital? I can wholeheartedly support the idea that business owners are more aware of what is happening financially within their business. It's the whole ethos behind how we work to support our clients. But is a mandatory filing regime the way to do it? And are HMRC competent enough to deliver it in the timescale they have set? Ask me again next February 14th when hopefully that knight in shining armour might just turn up...

If you would like to discuss how Making Tax Digital might affect your business give us a call on 0191 4879870 or email us on info@csaccounting.co.uk

# MUCKLE LLP HELP PARKOUR REACH NEW HEIGHTS

Expert legal advice provided by two of the North East's leading sports lawyers has helped Parkour become Britain's newest, recognised sport.

Defined as the discipline of moving 'freely over and through any terrain using only the ability of the body', Parkour UK recently had its application for Parkour/Freerunning to be recognised as a sport and Parkour UK as the National Governing Body (NGB) approved by the Home Country Sports Councils – making the UK the first country in the world to officially acknowledge Parkour/Freerunning as a sport.

Muckle's expert sports lawyers, John Devine and Anthony Coultas, played a key role in helping to shape the governance of Parkour's NGB, Parkour UK, in advance of its application.

In the lead up to its 2015 and 2016 AGM's, the Newcastle-based law firm advised Parkour UK on the re-drafting of its governing document, the articles of association, to implement Sport England's Code of Governance for Sport prior to submission of its application for recognition as a NGB by the UK Recognition Panel

Parkour UK achieved this status in October 2016, with the formal announcement being made in January 2017, by the Sports Minister Tracey Crouch - opening the sport up to funding opportunities.

Eugene Minogue, CEO Parkour UK, said: "For Parkour UK to be recognised as the NGB and Parkour/Freerunning to be recognised as a sport is a groundbreaking moment for Parkour, not just in the UK but globally, and we're extremely grateful to the support provided by Muckle LLP. Without the firm's expert advice and guidance during our application for recognition as an NGB, which they kindly provided on a pro-bono basis, we wouldn't be in this position today.

"Parkour UK is now looking ahead to an exciting future and we hope to see more and more people across the country embrace our growing Parkour/Freerunning community in the UK."



Muckle secured the work with Parkour UK, which was delivered on a pro bono basis, through its place on the Legal Panel Framework set up jointly by Sport England, Sport Wales, UK Sport and Sport and Recreation Alliance.

John Devine, Partner and Head of Sport at Muckle, said: "Parkour is a relatively new and growing discipline that is enjoyed by participants all over the world so it is fantastic to see it gain the recognition it deserves, which will hopefully encourage more people to take up the sport.

"We were delighted to work with Parkour UK and play a role in helping bring this fun and creative sport to the fore. We hope to continue our working relationship with Parkour UK in the future as the sport continues to go from strength to strength."

Parkour originated in France – known as l'art du déplacement - in the 1980s. The sport is principally the non-competitive physical discipline of training to move freely over and through any terrain using only the abilities of the body, principally through running, jumping, climbing and quadrupedal movement.

Muckle LLP is the only law firm in the North to be recognised in the top tier for 'Sport' by Legal 500. www.muckle-llp.com











# "WORLD'S GREATEST LIVING EXPLORER" VISITS NORTH EAST FOR CHARITY TALK

Intrepid explorer Sir Ranulph Fiennes recently recounted tales of his adventures at a special charity evening in the North East.

The only man alive ever to have circumnavigated the Earth along its polar axis, Sir Ranulph raised money for international charity WaterAid at the exclusive event at Ramside Hall, Durham.

Having conquered the Antarctic, Arctic, River Nile and multiple marathon challenges, Sir Ranulph was described by The Guinness Book of Records as "the world's greatest living explorer" in 1984 and has since broken many more records.

The money raised will support WaterAid in its work to transform the lives of the world's poorest and most marginalised people through improved access to safe water, sanitation and hygiene.







# BRANDING AGENCY CELEBRATES A SURREAL TEN YEARS WITH RENEWED NORTH EAST FOCUS

A North East branding consultancy is marking its tenth anniversary by renewing its focus on its home region while also aiming to break into new sectors and territories overseas.

Entrepreneur Ian Smith set up Surreal in 2007 and now leads a team of 22 people which is split between the firm's Newcastle headquarters and its premises in northern Portugal's largest city, Porto, which it opened in 2014.

More than three quarters of the work undertaken by Surreal over recent years has been focused on continental Europe, with international businesses including Alcon, Cockburn's and Stryker amongst its client base, and it is aiming to work with more global 'blue chip' brands in the future.

But while it is currently looking at opening another office in continental Europe, as well as tackling the US market, Surreal is now also hoping to use its branding and export expertise to bring in more names from its native North East alongside existing regional clients such as technology transfer company RTC North and electric vehicle consultancy Zero Carbon Futures.

Ian Smith is also using the tenth anniversary to recognise the impact that the guidance and support provided by RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, who have worked with the company since its inception, has had on its commercial success.

Surreal is expecting 2017 to be its most successful ever year and already has a number of high profile

projects taking place across Europe in the coming months, including their first ever global brand launch for Italian medical company Orthofix.

The firm has gained a strong reputation for delivering strategic branding solutions for both internal and external campaigns for some of the world's leading companies.

Their work enables clients to engage with their customers under the banner of 'Global Thinking, Local Delivery,' with the teams in the UK and Portugal providing a unique insight into a different way of delivering creative solutions.

Ian Smith says: "Reaching our tenth anniversary is a real landmark for the company, and while there have been plenty of ups and downs along the way, we're moving into our second decade in the best shape in which we've ever been.

"The business has evolved hugely over the years, and while we want to add to the growing number of global brands with which we work, we think it's just as important to support and work with startups and established firms in the North East, and especially with companies that want to build their export business.

"We've learnt a lot of practical lessons over the years through exporting our services, winning

contracts overseas and setting up an office in another European country, and with so much focus being placed now on UK businesses tackling new export markets, we think we've got a great deal of useful information to share on how to actually do it

"The RMT team has been with us from the start, and has played a key role in supporting us through both the good and not-so-good times - we've worked with every part of the RMT business, and it's fair to say that without the easy access we've had to their expert guidance, it would have been much harder to have reached the landmark we're celebrating now."

Stephen Slater, Director at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, adds: "Ian has always remained wholly focussed on his vision of building Surreal through strategic creative and commercially-adept thinking, and the success he's now enjoying is due reward for his long-term commitment to the firm.

"There's every opportunity for North East businesses to follow his lead of achieving national and international success from a regional base, and being part of Surreal's journey through everything that the last decade has thrown the company's way has been a rewarding and valuable experience for our team too."

For more information on Surreal, please visit whysurreal.com

# REFLECTIONS FROM THE SADDLE



Having signed up for a second cycling challenge in three years, Michael Leather, Managing Partner at Leathers LLP, gives his thoughts on combining cycling training with running a successful accountancy practice.

This will be the second time I prepare to ride the 'Tour de Force" (the route of the Tour de France – seven days before the Pro's).

Beyond the obvious physical challenge (2,185 miles in 21 days with only 2 rest days); it is a great opportunity to raise money again for the William Waites Memorial Trust (www.wwmt.org) and support their work. In 2015, we were fortunate enough to assist in the award of a North East Grant to The Wheels Project in Hebburn. Money spent on a charitable activity in the North East is key, but more fundamental is the work undertaken by the charity which includes support for the following projects:

# a) Access Sport

London BMX was setup as part of the Olympic Legacy Programme with the aim of building new BMX tracks and encouraging people into cycling.

# b) Chaos Theory

A grass roots Violence Prevention Charity which attempts to stop the spread of violence using 'violence interrupters' to detect, intercept and diffuse potentially lethal situations in local London communities.

# c) Hampton Trust

A charity which aims to break the cycle of abuse, conflict and exploitation, by running programmes for individuals, families and children, and training programmes for professionals.

There are, however, some key business side effects which, as we prepare for a new fiscal year, come from the time I spend training on the saddle be it on the road or, more often at the minute, in the garage on a static trainer. These are:

# Partners/Directors in Accounting firms also run businesses!

It might not always be apparent; but running the business, delivering client service and managing the team are all essential attributes of technical/accounting advice.

Sitting on my bike gives me an opportunity to reflect on the good (and the bad) – it provides distance and a time for reflection.

How often do business people get that opportunity?

### Opportunities/Threats

Possibly random thoughts:

- Latest HMRC missives/current stance
- What is happening in the world of accountants?
   Acquisitions, personnel and developments
- Specific Tax Opportunities:-

5 April Planning Charitable Donations Pension Planning

- Has that R&D claim been made?
- Our business strengths

Property Taxation

Board Room Consultancy

Corporate Structuring

Personal Client/HNWI work

Having said all of that; sometimes, I just concentrate on turning the pedals; looking forward to a hot shower and trying not to suffer!!



If you would like to hear more about the Leathers LLP Tour de Force challenge, or for any tax or accounting needs, contact Leathers LLP on canwehelp@LeathersLLP.co.uk or call 0191 224 6760.

# THE BUY TO LET MORTGAGE MARKET HAS CHANGED



Getting a buy to let mortgage is easy right? All you need is a good credit history, a minimum of 20% deposit and a rental income or proposed rental income which is 125% of the new mortgage payment.

Well no, not anymore, as the market has changed, with many banks and building societies scrutinising applications in a similar way to a "regulated" owner occupier mortgage. Rental cover calculations (the proportion by which the rent covers mortgage interest) have also become much more complex and can differ dramatically both between lenders and even within individual lenders for different fixed rate terms. For example, those borrowing on a fixed rate of 5 years or more can often now borrow more than those clients choosing a 2 year fixed rate.

Once this hurdle has been cleared and an in principle mortgage level established (which in some cases may be much lower than previously), an in depth review of the borrower's finances is undertaken looking at areas such as: -

Salary or self-employed income

- Personal borrowing levels
- Residential mortgage balance and payment
- Review of other buy to let borrowings
- Overall reliance on total rental income received

With further changes due later in 2017 for landlords with an existing portfolio now is the time to review your mortgage options.

Confused? As ever changes to mortgage regulation can present opportunities as well as threats. In many areas lenders requirements can vary significantly, such as some of the 5 year fixed rate calculations now being used may allow higher borrowing level than under the old rules. So far this year we have already helped landlords with 3-4 property portfolios to re-mortgage and fix their interest rate for 5 years which will save them £50,000 and £20,000 respectively against the variable rates that they previously paid.

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@innovateml.co.uk or tony@innovateml.co.uk or call 0191 223 3514.

Think carefully before securing other debts against your home. As a mortgage is secured against your home, it could be repossessed if you do not keep up the mortgage repayments. Commercial buy to let mortgages are not regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

# CHANGE ON THE WAY

Change is very much a part of life and certainly something that goes hand in hand with financial planning. New regulations and changes to the rules constantly alters the financial advice landscape and part of my day-to-day role is to alert my clients to these changes to help them make informed decisions about their money.

In April 2017, we will see the launch of the Lifetime ISA. Designed to encourage saving among the under 40s, the Lifetime ISA will provide people with a method of saving for those milestone purchases, like a first home, but it will also offer a viable alternative to a pension as a means of retirement planning.

Unlike current ISAs, contributions to Lifetime ISAs will benefit from tax relief, just like pension contributions. In addition, the initial "credit" added to any new Lifetime ISA by the government is up to 25% compared with just 20% for pension plans opened by basic rate taxpayers. To me, this makes Lifetime ISAs a very attractive way of saving.

This April will also see a significant rise in the overall ISA allowance limit to £20,000 per person from the current £15,240. This means that married couples can now invest up to £40,000 per annum in one ISA. I see this as another significant change for the better and a strong indication that the government intends to continue to encourage savings via ISAs in the long term.

And of course, on a much wider scale, what about Brexit?

Political uncertainty will continue to have a significant impact on financial markets this year and I foresee some stock market volatility on the back of ongoing negotiations around Britain's departure from the European Union.

Managing this investment risk with our clients and ensuring their pensions and investments remain on course towards achieving their objectives will be the key focus for myself and the team in 2017.



If you have any questions regarding the new Lifetime ISA, ISA limits or how Brexit could affect your investments and pensions, contact Stephen and the team on 0191 285 1555 or visit www.explorewealth.co.uk



# Great benefits to help your business grow.



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Excellent IT infrastructure



Quorum community with amenities, free events and sports



Only 10 mins from the heart of the City



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The newly created Qeleven provides high quality Grade A office space. Suites that can accommodate upwards of 5 people are available now and located only 10 mins from the city centre!

At Quorum we love potential. Sure we do big business, but business gets really exciting when it's just about to fly. At Qeleven, we're really big into small to medium enterprises. Suddenly small is the new big just waiting to grow.



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# THE ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM CHAIRMAN'S DINNER

with special guest Mark Mullen, Atom Bank.

Set in the beautiful Jesmond
Dene House, 100 of the region's most
aspirational entrepreneurs got the
new year off to an inspirational start
when they joined Entrepreneurs' Forum
chairman, Nigel Mills, and his
special guest, Mark Mullen, CEO
and co-founder of Atom Bank, for an
evening of amazing business stories,
shared experiences and
new connections.













# BIV BOWES

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Whichever way you look at it, there's only one number you need for professional property advice

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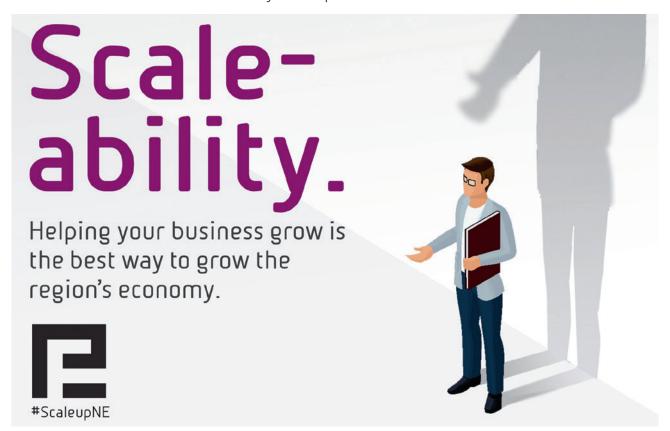
Commercial Rent Reviews and Lease Renewals - Schedules of Dilapidation and Condition - Rating Appeals - Tax Valuations

Most of our work comes from recommendation, from existing clients, solicitors, accountants and others. Philip was a life saver for restructuring my business with his positive nature of sorting things out smoothly and hassle free, I would highly recommend him for overseeing property portfolios, and communicating with professional bodies.

(London property investor)

# INTRODUCING THE SCALE-UP LEADERS' ACADEMY

By the Entrepreneurs' Forum



This year the Entrepreneurs' Forum is launching the Scale-up Leaders' Academy, an innovative new programme to help business owners with high-growth ambitions.

By helping entrepreneurs understand what their scale-up journey will involve, the challenges that lie ahead and some of the tools that can help them on their way, we're aiming to raise aspirations and prepare them for a period of rapid and sustained business growth.

Increasing the number of North East businesses successfully scaling up and creating new jobs has been a goal of the Entrepreneurs' Forum since 2002, so we are very pleased to see organisations like the Scale-up Institute and the North East LEP backing high-growth enterprises.

Our latest initiative will see 50 hours of dedicated support offered to business owners who have already demonstrated a capacity for growth. Spread over 12 months, we will be helping them to scale-up their companies faster, as the benefits of tackling the scale-up gap could be huge; especially here in the North East where unemployment is higher than in other regions.

While the other issues that cause the scale-up gap are access to finance, infrastructure, finding the right skills, and accessing new customers, the Entrepreneurs' Forum focuses on improving leadership capability, working with partners to address the other challenges.

It is impossible to increase the size and capacity of a business without also growing its leadership base, whether that is by recruiting experienced directors, board members or developing senior management teams. This process also needs to allow founders to grow as leaders and even divest if they can't progress the company, as the skills needed to take a business through a period of scale-up are not necessarily the same as those needed to bring it to the cusp of high-growth.

There are a number of ways entrepreneurs can develop their own leadership skills, many of which we have provided for some time at the Entrepreneurs' Forum. Our mentoring programme links business people with experienced peers from whom they can gain knowledge and advice, and our conferences and events bring some of the best minds from the world of business to share their expertise and experience with North East entrepreneurs.

The Scale-up Leaders' Academy will add a new string to our bow by helping entrepreneurs to raise their growth aspirations and get ready to scale-up by preparing them for the road ahead.

Entrepreneurs enrolled in the programme will explore the six biggest barriers to business growth, reflecting back with their fellow participants at every stage to see the impact the course has had on each area.

The Academy will include inspirational and role

model led events, practical workshops, scale-up coaching, peer-to-peer mentoring support and action-based learning sessions.

In its first year, fourteen companies, each with more than ten staff and turnover growth of over ten percent in each of the last three years have been selected to take part.

We will be working with these entrepreneurs to examine what their organisation needs to grow quickly, what must change and how they can do this by developing an actionable plan that helps them to cope with the changes scaling-up will bring.

We won't show people what to do, but we will get them ready to scale-up and at the 'starting-line' with peer support around them and a clear idea of what they need to do, so that they can succeed in achieving their business goals and vision.

Newcastle University will be independently evaluating the Academy's performance, from initial participant diagnostics to ongoing research and analysis. This will give us a robust method of analysing success that is over and above measuring turnover and job growth.

Applications are currently closed for the 2017 Scale-up Leaders' Academy, but to register your interest in future programmes, please get in touch at info@entrepreneursforum.net.

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





# **GUY LETTS**

### **CUSTOMERSURE**

Guy Letts founded CustomerSure, a software product that tracks customer satisfaction in real time and helps companies gain valuable insights on their products and services. Before starting his business Guy held roles including R&D Director and Head of Services at Sage.

### Tell me a bit about your background

I was interested in a career in the software industry, but I decided to study for an engineering degree. I'd been advised by one of my teachers that this was the best way to keep my options open. I was in my final year at the University of Exeter and I knew from the burns on my hands from the soldering irons that software was definitely the route for me!

I was lucky enough to get a job at Logica, one of the big software firms of the time. Logica worked on large projects in areas including transport, telecoms, defence and manufacturing, the latter of which I was assigned to. In my career there I worked for clients such as Jaguar, Whitbread and PepsiCo. This was a very exciting time, and I was fortunate to spend time living in Silicon Valley in its very early days.

After ten years at Logica I moved to Speedwing, the consulting arm of British Airways. There I got to work on computer systems for businesses that had to function under extreme demands. Booking an airline ticket might seem simple, but the systems behind it are incredibly complex, which made the job rewarding, as did the opportunity to learn from some fantastic people.

From Speedwing I moved to Sage in Newcastle. It was already established by this point, but wasn't the FTSE 100 company we know today. The team at Sage were talented and generous in sharing their experience, and my work there helped me gain an appreciation of how to keep up with the rapid growth.

I started out in R&D, but ended up as Head of Services, a role in which I was able to gain knowledge of customer retention and increasing revenue.

I had a long held desire to start my own company, so in 2010, after a lot of thought, I decided to take the plunge. I spent six months researching the market and planning before I was ready to start, at which point I found the two colleagues who would help me build CustomerSure.

# Where was your first business premises?

We started at an office in Cramlington, then later moved to the John Buddle Work Village in Newcastle, where we've been based ever since. What I like about our office is that the rent we pay goes to a charity and benefits the local community. That's actually one of the things I love about the North East, people look after each other here.

## How has the company grown?

Key to our growth has been using outside agencies

and contractors to do the work that lies outside of our core set of skills. While we have had to learn to understand more commercial skills, this allows us to give our product the attention it needs.

Since the very start, it has been our policy to grow organically, with no outside money other than my original investment. This approach doesn't suit every company, but as engineers it works for us.

# Did the recession have an impact on your business?

Not really. We first started in 2010, which was in the depth of the recession, but at that time we were very much focused on small and medium sized clients. While individual SMEs may have found the recession difficult, there are a lot of them, so there was always a market. If we'd started out targeting large corporates this would perhaps have been different.

### How has your market changed?

We're actually lucky that we started at the time we did. The barriers to entry for starting a technology company had fallen immensely at that time. To do the same a decade earlier would have required huge capital expenditure in terms of servers and storage for them, now there are cloud-based solutions that remove those costs.

Our target market has changed from SMEs to larger companies, not through circumstances, but because of a conscious decision after we found that what we do is even more beneficial to them.

# How would you describe your unique selling point?

As a business we have a heritage in delivering outstanding customer service, this is what I did at Sage. Our customers are often challenger brands, like Utilitywise, which are growing quickly and need brilliant customer insights, and to deliver a very responsive service in order to stay ahead of the curve.

What differentiates us from our competitors is that we deliver much more than just data and trends from customer surveys. When customers give feedback the way it has traditionally been collected, they don't see any benefit from giving it, while our system allows our clients to respond quickly and address their concerns directly. That leads to a dramatic improvement in customer retention and repeat business.

# How do you handle internal motivation?

We all have a stake in the company, but it's what

we do for our customers that really motivates us. As engineers we know that we've built something that delivers value and we get a kick when our customers tell us they love it. We have clients around the world, on four continents, that's a big source of pride for us.

We also have a retreat once every three months, a discipline which lets us get out of the trenches and think about the business strategically. It's important to be able to put decisions in perspective, and to be accountable to one another for progress in our respective areas.

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

It's actually pretty similar. Like any business the early years were hard, now growth presents new challenges. At the beginning advice from members of the Entrepreneurs' Forum helped a lot, from people who'd been in my position before and could reassure me.

# How did your business structure come about?

We follow, but not to the letter, the advice in a book called The Lean Startup by Eric Ries. We begin with a hypothesis, test it for a fixed amount of time, and then measure the results. From there we can build on what we've done or pivot onto a different idea, this can be a large pivot or a small one.

One of the benefits of being around today is the availability of skills from around the world. For example, our marketing strategy is done by a man in Boston, Massachusetts. It's possible to bring in exactly the right people from wherever they are in the world, through the power of digital communications.

### Do you get involved in mentoring?

I mentor a local business person through the Entrepreneurs' Forum, someone who felt my areas of expertise were relevant to their needs. We meet every three or four months for about an hour. I've learnt that mentoring is best when you're just a catalyst, helping them to work out the best way forward themselves. It's about listening and questioning, sometimes challenging, but never telling.

### What are your future plans?

We want to continue to grow and to make more customers happy; we've learnt that the financial rewards follow when you put customers first. Obviously we have commercial ambition but we also want to do our part for the North East's economy.







# SHEARER'S FUND RAISING BALL RAISES £380,000 FOR THE LESS FORTUNATE

Headlined by British pop star Jess Glynne, Alan Shearer held his fifth annual charity ball in support of the Alan Shearer Foundation, the dedicated fund raising arm for the Alan Shearer Centre.

Jess Glynne took to the stage at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead hotel to give an exclusive performance at the glittering ball attended by guests from the local business community and sponsors.

The ball raised an incredible £380,000 to help fund the pioneering facilities for disabled people at the centre in Newcastle.

Guests were also treated to performances by singer Hollie Shearer, Alan's daughter and electronic string quartet, Escala former Britain's Got Talent finalists.

Alan added: "I'd like to thank everyone that has given their support to my Foundation and helped raise such an incredible sum."

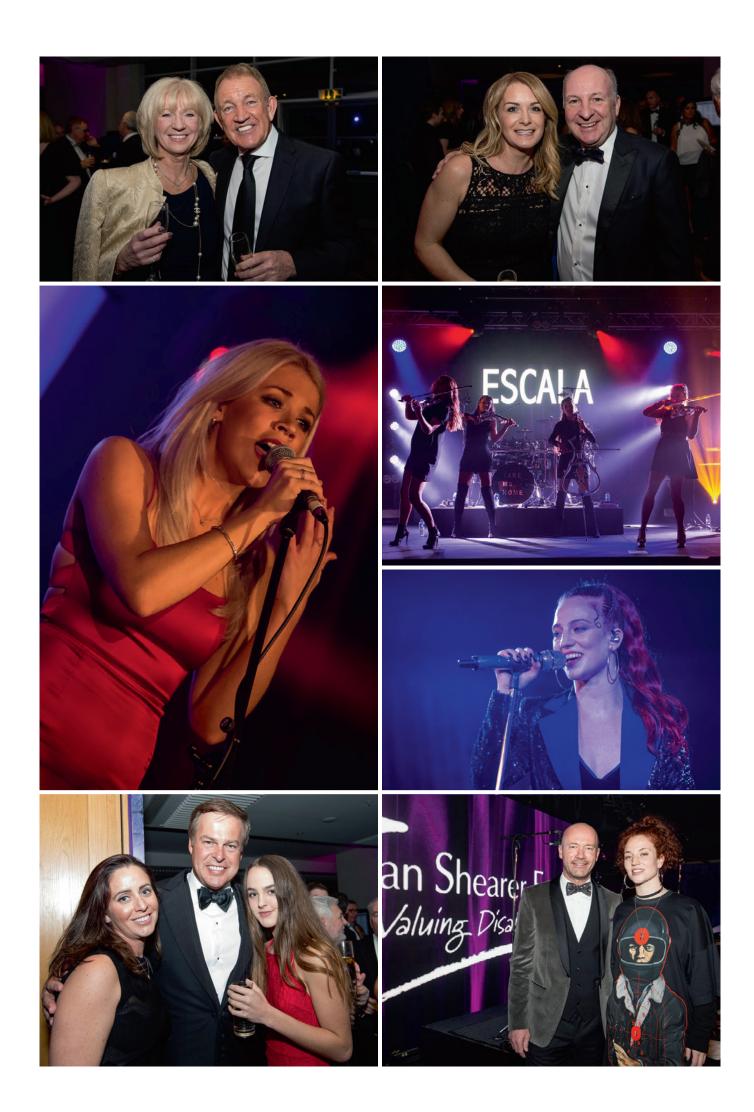












# SOMETHING OLD, SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING BORROWED, SOMETHING BLUE



With 136 years in the region, and a new research complex being built in Felling, AkzoNobel is building on its relationship with the region by borrowing some North East spirit and culture for its new – incidentally blue – state-of-the-art manufacturing plant in Ashington.

In February AkzoNobel announced a new £10.7 million research and innovation hub located in Felling. The facility will be home to teams of scientists and technical experts who will work on developing protective coatings for the energy, mining, infrastructure and oil and gas industries. The main focus will be on delivering cutting edge innovations and efficiencies for protecting steel and concrete structures from damage caused by corrosion, abrasion and fire.

The new innovation hub will also offer a world class testing and simulation facility, enabling tests to be carried out in conditions experienced in the world's most extreme environments.

That investment, which will help revolutionise the coatings industry, is small fry however to the £100 million investment which AkzoNobel made in Ashington.

The company chose Ashington in South East Northumberland as the location for its new flagship manufacturing plant, which would form part of the company's UK and Ireland decorative paints supply chain.

AkzoNobel, whose products include household brands such as Dulux, Cuprinol, Hammerite and Polycell, selected Ashington based on the opportunity that the company saw there to really make a difference to the local community and economy.

With construction completed the facility, which boasts some of the most advanced paint production technologies in the world, has created more than 120 new jobs directly for local people. However, AkzoNobel's presence in the county isn't just about economic regeneration.

AkzoNobel is on a self-professed mission 'to add colour to people's lives'. The vision of the new plant at Ashington was to create a manufacturing facility that not only outperformed the competition from a technological perspective, but that also provided a unique and inspiring place for people to work, centred around a culture of community within the plant and the wider locality.

In the opening chapter of the site handbook, Head of Manufacturing Unit, Jeff Hope states:

"Culture is for us all to create, value and feel proud to be part of, it really is and always will be in our hands. I urge you all to work with me in creating it, improving it and to always protect our unique and inspiring culture, for the sake of all our customers, our shareholders, our families and of course our community in this beautiful county of Northumberland."

This is where AkzoNobel is borrowing from the local community; Jeff is a born and bred Northumbrian who has lived and worked in the region for more than 15 years. Jeff's passion for the North East is infectious and it is through his leadership that AkzoNobel will inspire and nurture a colourful

culture of community in Ashington.

"Ashington is a brand-new site for AkzoNobel that has been designed to be the world's most sustainable paint plant, but it is also so much more than that," Jeff said.

"At the same time as creating a great place to work, we want to make AkzoNobel famous for inspiring and enabling beautiful living spaces, in Ashington and beyond.

"We hope that our competitive advantage as a manufacturer and an employer will be sustained by the unique culture that AkzoNobel promotes through our staff and our work within the community."

AkzoNobel places strong emphasis on work within the community at all of its sites, and in Ashington the site has already started to build relationships with local businesses, public sector organisations and community groups and has supported a number of regeneration projects locally through investments of funds and paint. The company has also committed to supporting one local charity each year as nominated and voted for by the team and has recently signed a five-year sponsorship deal with Ashington Community Football Club.

Over the next five months, in each issue of Northern Insight, you can find out more about AkzoNobel, the work we do in the community around you, our innovation focus and our sustainability aims.

www.akzonobel.com

# NORTH EAST CASH SAVINGS COMPANY CREATES UNIQUE ONLINE PORTAL TO ENSURE FINANCIAL RETURN

A North East based cash savings company has developed a groundbreaking service that will get the UK's IFA's and high net worth individuals a little hot under the collar with a cash savings service like no other in the UK.

Cascade Cash Management (Cascade) is an independent and transparent service created to generate enhanced cash returns and increase protection on deposits through professional cash management.

As the service approached its fifth birthday and more banks slashed interest rates, managing director Dr Emma Black decided that a radical move was needed to help people protect and heighten the returns of their hard earned cash.

In response, Cascade has heavily invested in a newly launched unique online portal with accompanying website for IFA's and their clients, with the company adding in excess of £25m of new cash into the service within the past three months alone whilst in beta testing.

The portal is the only one of its kind in the UK allowing independent and unbiased cash solutions using the company's proprietary algorithm that means clients don't have to choose only one bank. With the online portal and Cascade's client support team all banks can be accessed quickly and easily, on a daily basis.

The service is suitable in particular for high net worth individuals tracking their own savings, companies and charities who are cash rich and



should be getting returns on their 'savings'. The dataset also includes solutions for attorneys, personal and corporate pension schemes and more. It is also ideal for independent financial advisors (IFA's) complementing their existing propositions for a range of client types benefitting from the economies of scale afforded by the central administration team. IFA's can even brand their own portal and client reporting as their own.

Dr Emma Black explains further: "The Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) recently conducted

research that showed that although 93% of the UK's adults have a savings account, not many of them are achieving attractive returns due to the inertia inherent in the savings market. This is especially true when you get to the high net worth cash investments of over £250.000.

"Our portal has individual secure log in details and a comprehensive dataset using our unique optimisation and proprietary technology that can administer bespoke cash portfolios in seconds. It is not just all about good interest rates. Our product means clients can improve the term structure of their cash (from instant access up to five years) while also allowing for them to ensure that they have the desired degree of protection under the Financial Services Compensation Scheme or European equivalents.

"The service has been designed carefully so that power of instruction remains with the client and designated signatories only. This means our clients can have peace of mind that their cash savings are directly held with regulated financial institutions, with no money ever passing through Cascade Cash Management. Advisers and their clients can layer the level of support they desire and we do, of course, offer a full management service too."

Cascade has a team of ten experts, headed up by Dr Emma, servicing IFAs and their clients across the UK. The central administration support team is based in Newcastle, a hub for the savings administration for many financial institutions.

Anyone wanting a demonstration of the portal, please contact the team by requesting a call back on the website or by calling 0191 4813777.

More information on the service can be found on the brand new website www.cascade.co.uk



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# EXPERT INTERVIEW TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS



Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares advice on the right questions to ask when you're searching for the perfect new recruit.

Richard Reed, co-founder of Innocent Drinks, said: "The single most important business decision one ever makes is who you get to come join your business".

If you agree that an organisation is only as good as the people it keeps, then it follows that your company's approach to recruitment should be one of the most important parts of your business plan.

Made up of a number of key phases - defining the role, building an employee profile, attracting talent, shortlisting applicants, the interview process, negotiating contracts and preparing for new arrivals - the typical recruitment process can take a long time and have a huge impact on your business and resource.

As the interviewer, your goal is to identify the perfect person in terms of ambition, personality and experience. If you've ever had to pick up the pieces of a bad hiring decision, you'll understand how important this is.

In any interview, the best candidates will be well prepared and trying to make a good impression. With their guard up, it's your job to get under their skin and find out what they're really like.

The key is to build a strong rapport from the start. If candidates trust you, they'll relax and that will make it easier for the conversation to flow in to

topics they haven't previously rehearsed.

This not only helps you to get a feel for their communication skills, but it uncovers potentially unseen aspects of their personality and behaviour, which is crucial to making sure they are the right fit for your business.

Try opening with a request for their personal and professional goals; and how they see the role fitting in with these.

Ask them to tell you about a situation that has brought out the best in them; giving examples and sharing the experience they feel makes them ideal for your company.

Other behavioural questions could be: What attracted you to this role? What are your motivations? What are your strengths and weaknesses?

All standard stuff, but this will give you an insight into how much research applicants have done, whether they fully understand the requirements of the role and if they are passionate about your industry.

It will also create a good basis for the rest of the discussion, and become an effective way to compare candidates against each other when making difficult decisions. Once you're happy that someone can do the job, you should move into unchartered waters.

Ask about any mistakes they've made. This is a great test of self-awareness and will show the scope of which someone is willing to take ownership of their actions; and whether they learn from their mistakes.

Ask who the smartest person they know is (and why). By getting people to explain this you'll not only find out about their networks, but also the values and personality traits they aspire towards.

Find out what it is that gets them out of bed on a weekend. People's passions outside of work are critical to fitting in well to any team environment.

Are they entrepreneurial? Examples of innovative ideas they've put into practice will help you measure whether they're a self-starter, commercially minded or have a healthy attitude towards calculated risk.

Of course these are just a few examples to try and help you, but whatever you discuss, don't forget that interviews are a chance to find out more for both parties.

While your aim is to work out what makes someone tick, they will most likely be doing the same to you, so make sure you give a good impression of your business too.

& accountancy role or recruits on (0191) 375 9983.

Alternatively, visit www.bryonygibson.com, connect on LinkedIn or follow @bryonygibson.

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# YOUNG ENTERPRISERS HIT METROCENTRE

Students taking part in Young Enterprise's Company and Start up Programme's enticed weekend shoppers at their recent MetroCentre Trade Fair.

The Young Enterprise Charity helps students set up and run their own company for a year with the support of volunteer business mentors. The students elect a board of directors, raise share capital and market a product or service that they create.

Awards on the day were won by 'Charmed' from Priory Woods School,'Eco Style' from Carmel College and 'Urban Garden' from Northumbria University.

To hear more about how you could be involved please contact Kerry.tipple@y-e.org.uk

















"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). So stop dreaming and start-up your dream business today with all of the business support you need all in one place - Accountancy, Insurance, Legal, I.T., Funding, Investment, Training and so much more provided by our credible partners that all guarantee to offer "the right service at the right time

The SME Centre of Excellence aims to be the default and defacto SME Support Hub for the Northern Power House. A truly collaborative ethnical approach that will provide a one stop high quality centre for all support needs, helping SMEs to start, scale and sustain.

# SMEFest 4.30pm 9th March

This unique launch event is your chance to attend a number of invaluable workshops that give you the latest news and updates on key issues facing north east SMEs all under one roof! The event launches the SME Centre of Excellence. The event brings together a host of renowned businesses and speakers from the area to share their expertise in areas that we know employers seek advice and support on, including:

•Skills and training •Finance •Digital Marketing •HR •Do Business in India Our agenda is packed full of workshops to enhance your business journey and we will also be featuring the entrepreneurial success story of Blue Kangaroo, a creative agency based in Gateshead who work with some of the biggest global brands in the toy, entertainment and licensing world. Followed by the hugely popular ABCurry Club.

Register at EventBrite SMEFest or email info@abconnexions.org

In partnership with













Dear Pie'oneer,

On Friday 31st March the BIG PIE Friday Challenge returns.

We have invited every single Primary School in Tyne and Wear, Durham and Darlington to participate in an Enterprise, Coding and Engineering Competition.

Targeting 9, 10 and 11 year olds this unique, exciting and ambitious Challenge will aim to engage inspire and educate our future generations in enterprise and STEM based activities. The project helps young people realise their ambitions and aspiration, creating better life choices and improving life chances.

Last year over 1,000 pupils and 21 primary schools and 50 businesses participated in the North East's largest combined STEM and Enterprise competition and this year we intend to make it bigger and better.

The PIE Project which is now established as a formal charity, aims to counteract the current negative misconception around education and the lack of employer engagement with the intention to platform the North East as a truly committed region investing in its future generations. We recognise there is good practice within the education sector and a whole host of employers and individuals that are already engaged. However, we want to galvanise this interest, helping to bring the whole community together for a common purpose creating a movement all around enterprise education.

Supported by a range of partners and stakeholders, the Challenge will engage with local businesses, parents of the pupils and the wider community. We have a range of media partners confirmed, together with Teesside University, our Armed Forces, and Gainford Group as delivery partners, alongside a broad and large number of supporting businesses. The activities will clearly align to the Gatsby Career Information, Advice and Guidance Benchmarks and Enterprise Advisors initiative.

The second stage of the competition will deliver a vocational industry recognised qualification to 9, 10 and 11 year olds accredited by NCFE. Finally an awards ceremony will be held to recognise the schools achievements.

As a firm believer in the industriousness potential of our region, recognising that we all need to contribute to the success and prosperity of our future generations, I am spearheading the Campaign. I now need you to get behind this exciting initiative. Whether you are a school teacher, 10 or 11 year old, parent, business owner or indeed any member of the community, we want you to help.

On the 31st March we will need to oversee the challenge into potentially 200 schools. Between 10am to 12 midday, two timed activities will be undertaken. As Pie'oneers you will need to record and report back the results. However, your engagement doesn't stop there, you will have the opportunity to support stage 2 of the Challenge and attend the award ceremony – where we will be recognising teachers, pupils, parents and businesses - if your school is one of the finalists. Even if you cannot commit to attending the school on the 31st March, maybe you can consider supporting your local school in the future or making a donation to the work of the charity.

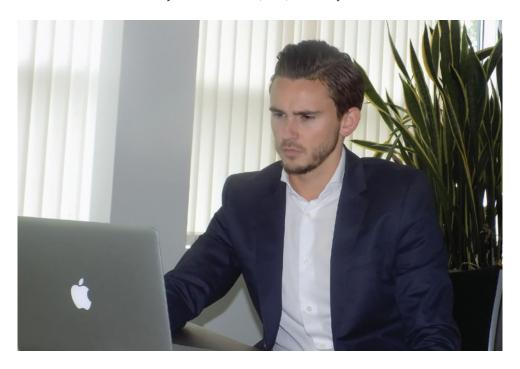
Moving forward I hope that you will consider becoming part of and supporting the PIE Project to help us influence and deliver enterprise education, together with career advice and guidance, in a collaborative and consistent way. I look forward to you supporting a truly inclusive and ambitious Challenge that will significantly benefit our future generations. Email BIG@PIEPROJECT.ORG to register your interest.

With best wishes,

Sir John Hall

# HOW CAN WE HELP THE REGION GROW?

BY JAMES BLACKWELL, CEO, RONALD JAMES



Nobody likes to see their team lose, so businesses in the North East should be working together to help the region to grow and become the best it can be. This doesn't only apply to the tech and digital sector. Business owners can also help in making the area more attractive to potential candidates, thus improving recruitment rates going forward. Here are just some ways that companies can achieve collaboration and solidarity, to embrace and nurture the local area.

#### Collaborating with the councils

There seems to be a genuine desire in Newcastle and Gateshead for businesses and communities to work together for a common cause, and this is evident in the councils' positions. The councils in the North East are already doing as much as possible to support industry growth in the region. They have recognised the importance and the potential of the digital tech sector and have made known to the public their wishes to prioritise growth in the sector.

# Build the best possible teams to let business in the region thrive

According to a survey carried out by Auxin Partnership in the Newcastle and Gateshead area, almost a quarter of tech companies have already implemented in-house training and development schemes. This figure can be improved on in the future, and almost certainly will be. In addition to providing employers with substantial gains in the

form of increased knowledge and productivity, developmental services can also really benefit staff, by ensuring that they are trained to a high standard and are up to date in the fast-paced world of tech.

# Treat workers with respect and reap the rewards

No matter what their position is in the workplace, every member of staff should be treated with respect, and this is an approach that should be adopted by all. Feeling that you are appreciated for the job you do, no matter how little impact it has on the business, is sure to make an employee want to impress further and to contribute to future successes for the company and, in turn, the region. Acknowledging what people do can encourage them to work even harder, and they will, in turn, be loyal to your company and reward you in other ways. Word of mouth comments initiated by past and present employees about the company's working ethos and team dynamics can be one of

your best sources of advertising, so make sure that your workers only have good things to say about their experiences at your company.

# Expanding without building on every available open space

Though there is a widespread shortage of Grade A office space in the North East, there are lots of potentials to turn existing office spaces, which might not be considered as Grade A now, into suitable floor space for the digital sector. These spaces can be made attractive to the market by refurbishing them. The best part of this? Companies can expand without taking up precious land, and without burdening the region with more commercial buildings. With other regions proving that the repurposing of old buildings is highly appropriate in this market, the approach would seem to be the best way forward for growing digital and tech companies in the North East.

james@ronaldjamesgroup.com or call 0191 3006501





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# FINANCIAL SERVICES FIRM INVESTS IN APPRENTICESHIPS



A national wealth management specialist with a century of heritage on Tyneside is upskilling its workforce by investing in apprenticeships for the first time.

Brewin Dolphin is a progressive, fast-growing national company that has a network of 28 offices around the UK, Channel Islands and Ireland. Recently the company struck a £28 million deal to acquire Duncan Lawrie Asset Management (DLAM) to take group funds under management to more than £36bn.

Brewin Dolphin is now looking to develop a pipeline of new skills that can support the expansion of the business in the region. The company has formed a partnership with leading training provider Gateshead College to hire three business administration apprentices, who will embark on a two-year training programme designed to equip them with a wide range of skills needed to forge a career in the industry.

It's the first foray into the apprenticeships market for Brewin Dolphin and an opportunity that the company is eager to pursue.

Richard Buxton, human resource director at Brewin Dolphin, said: "Brewin Dolphin's place in the community in the North East is a longstanding part of our heritage and we have a vibrant and talented group of colleagues in our Newcastle office. The apprenticeships are a great way of bringing new

skills and fresh ideas into our business. The content of the training has been tailored specifically to our business to support the goals and growth plans of our Newcastle office. This will help us as we look to consolidate our position as the leading investment and wealth management specialist in the North Fast

Robert Irving, head of Newcastle business support, continues: "Our first three apprentices, James Capstick, Jerome Hardy and Matthew Tulip, will undergo on-the-job training at Brewin Dolphin's Newcastle office in the business support function, where they will gain a sound understanding of the business and develop specific competencies in finance operations, IT, admin and the financial services regulatory environment. They will also benefit from a mentoring scheme to assist them through their apprenticeship programme.

Robert also noted that "the partnership with Gateshead College has been an effective one, and we're already working with the team to add to our apprenticeship resource by recruiting four more apprentices in April."

Gateshead College has a 60-year track record of sourcing high-calibre apprentices for large

companies and SMEs across the North East. Rated 'outstanding' by Ofsted, the college is leading the way in education and skills by providing industry with the skilled workforces it needs now and in the

Ivan Jepson, director of business development at Gateshead College, said: "We are thrilled to be working with such a prestigious national company as Brewin Dolphin that has had roots in the North East business community for more than 100 years. Our aim is to help Brewin Dolphin build a professional, skilled workforce through bespoke apprenticeships and provide a training solution that ensures they see the best possible return on their investment, and which offers real career progression opportunities for the individual apprentices."

Brewin Dolphin's Newcastle office now offers an extensive range of investment management advice spanning portfolio creation, ISAs and other tax-efficient investments, charity fund management, pensions and inheritance tax. A highly qualified and experienced financial planning team also helps clients develop a sound strategy for managing their financial affairs and safeguarding their long-term wealth

To find out more about Gateshead College and the business courses on offer, visit www.gateshead.ac.uk

# MAKE AN IMPACT ON YOUR EMPLOYEES



Be Aware And Save Lives.

Impact Family Services has joined forces with Northern Insight to launch a new campaign designed to reach out to employers and the corporate world.

The only kind of its type of charity in the UK, Impact Family Services supports the entire family through family breakdown and domestic violence.

In fact, it is the only organisation (charitable, public or private) to offer all the services it does, catering to every member of the family affected by domestic violence and break up.

And now the charity needs the help of employers to keep an eye out, notice differences in the behavior of their team and be aware if someone, be it male or female, is likely to be experiencing family breakdown and/or domestic abuse.

CEO of Impact, Nikki Turnbull, explains where the role of the employer can help and what they should do: "As an employer you see your team members every day. If you see changes, it is likely that something is happening at home. We are not asking you tackle it or to pry into employees home life. All it needs is a gentle nudge — send an email around all employees bringing our service to their attention. Ask us for a poster to display or leaflets to have around, and talk about us openly in the office mentioning our services. That person who is struggling will pick up on it and hopefully contact us."

The other way that the corporate world can help is

by choosing Impact family Services as their charity of choice, so that any fundraising efforts benefits us or any CSR contributions are made into the charity. Those donations will assist grow and sustain the services massively, and the charity is always looking for partners to fund specific projects...that could be any company out there willing to help.

Over the last few years Impact FS has developed some innovative partnerships to allow delivery of a whole of host of services and unique programs. Programs that the charity runs are growing constantly and currently include:

- Domestic Violence services for adults
- Domestic Violence support group focusing on children
- Perpetrator services (stopping reoffending)
- Mediation
- Child contact Centres
- ) Womens' services
- Separated Parents support and information
- Counseling
- Helplines
- Respect Young People program (Adolescent to Parent Violence)

All the services are designed to improve the lives of

families from the North East and North Yorkshire.

Having started as a small South Shields organisation the charity now offers services in Sunderland, South Tyneside, Newcastle, Middlesbrough, Scarborough, York and Harrogate and has permanent basis in Sunderland, South Shields and Scarborough. The team now needs to reach out further and to do that new funds are needed.

Nikki concluded: "Every member of the family needs to know there is somewhere to turn – in the North East and North Yorkshire that place to turn is Impact Family Services.

"We would welcome the opportunity to be more involved in the corporate world of our regions. We can present to your team for a small donation for example, positioning you as a caring employer. We can send you packs to encourage your fundraising efforts and we can provide leaflets and posters to advise of our service. We also have a new website which all employers are welcome to share on an internal email with their staff.

"We need, as a region, to take a stand and help those in family crisis or in danger from violence and abuse — it is all our responsibility, and we would love to hear from any companies that would like to build a relationship and assist us in expanding further, helping more people."

www.impactfs.co.uk

# HAS ANYONE SEEN MY BAG?



How often do you think to yourself 'It will never happen to me'? The safety of travelling in the UK is perhaps something domestic travellers take for granted, with only major incidents gaining any substantial media coverage we tend to forget about the numerous other risks that may be faced.

According to British Transport Police statistics from 2015-2016 there were a total of 48,718 recorded crimes within the rail network of Scotland, England and Wales. This included 1,952 sexual offences of which 1,893 were against women, 12,098 passenger thefts and 11,097 incidents of violence including murder, serious assault and rather scarily 23 related to firearms and explosives!

Bringing this closer to home over 7000 of the total crimes were committed in C Division Pennine covering the North East and North West counties of England. 1,546 were violent crimes up 17.2% from the previous reporting year. There was also 174 sexual offences which to put some context on it is almost one incident every other day. Theft however has gone down to 1,436 incidents (including robbery) which doesn't leave a warm fuzzy feeling when you consider that's still almost 4 incidents a day. In comparison to other regions only London and the South East has higher statistics with C Division Pennine having the highest for public order and drug offences, higher in comparison to almost everywhere else in the country.

It's not all doom and gloom though, taking the figures aside and applying some statistical maths the figures are surprisingly upbeat! If you compare the total population against these figures you only have a 1 in 20 million chance of being a victim of a crime, compared to the chances of winning the National Lottery (1 in 14 million) means the chances of being a victim are low. It should be noted though this is only a snap shot of available data on the rail networks, looking at a broader context to include air and road travel the statistic would look slightly different. Rather than focusing on percentages the question we should really ask is 'how do I avoid being a victim of crime when travelling'?

How you present yourself is a key way to protect from being targeted, avoid wearing your wealth and try to dress down in such a way as to avoid displaying expensive brand names unnecessarily, whilst we want to feel good and project an image of success to clients looking like your 'rich' can bring unwarranted attention. Be aware of the people around you, who is sat next to you? Does the person from the coffee shop sit near or next to you on the train? Is anyone taking a particular

amount of attention in you, especially if strangers strike up a conversation, it's surprising what people will reveal with a little prompting! Be mindful of phone calls and discussing business with colleagues and strangers, a seemingly innocent conversation can reveal an extraordinary amount of information, as the old saying goes 'loose lips sinks ships'! This leads me onto laptops and mobile phones, protect your data and IP, screens are easily viewed, check who is sat behind or next to you, can they see your screen easily? Do not have push notifications on your mobile, they are easily read and savvy individuals can obtain personal and bank details just by a quick photo.

For all the neuroticism ask yourself how much distress and inconvenience would it cause if you suddenly discovered your laptop or phone with your entire life on missing, or the prized luggage containing your Louboutin's, passport and house keys gone? Could these things easily be replaced and are you confident they couldn't be used to infiltrate your life at further cost? Security is not a dirty word and rather than think 'it will never happen to me' adopt a 'it can't happen to me' approach.

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# COHABITATION AND PENSION RIGHTS THE PICTURE CHANGES



A recent case in the Supreme Court is set to change the situation when it comes to pension rights for people cohabiting. Ward Hadaway Family lawyer Sarah Crilly looks at the case.

An estimated 3.2 million people in the UK are cohabiting rather than getting married. However, until very recently, cohabiting couples had fewer legal rights than their married counterparts, especially when it came to financial issues.

A recent Supreme Court ruling has now shifted the landscape when it comes to the pension rights of unmarried couples.

As a result of the case, the Supreme Court has unanimously agreed that a surviving partner should not be discriminated against because of their marital status and is entitled to receive a survivor's pension.

The ruling was made following the case of Denise Brewster, who was denied payments from her late partner Lenny McMullan's occupational pension following his sudden death in 2009.

Ms Brewster, who lived with Mr McMullan for 10 years in a home they jointly owned, argued that she was the victim of "serious discrimination" after she was told that she had no rights over his pension. Mr Brewster, who had worked for the Northern

Ireland public transport service, Translink, for 15 years, had paid money into an occupational pension scheme administered by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (NILGOSC).

If they had been married, Ms Brewster would have automatically shared the pension that he had built up.

Instead, co-habiting partners were only eligible for survivor's allowances in the same way if they were nominated on a form. Ms Brewster believed that this had been done, although it later transpired that the form had not been completed.

The Supreme Court ruled that the use of the form was "unlawful discrimination" because only unmarried couples had to fill it in. As a result, Ms Brewster had a right to receive a survivor's pension.

The ruling has potential implications for the rights of co-habiting couples working in the public sector - including nurses, teachers, civil servants and police, although the local government schemes in England, Wales and in Scotland has already been changed.

With more and more couples choosing to cohabit, the decision highlights the question of whether reform is needed to provide all cohabitees the same rights of financial protection as those who have married or entered a civil partnership.

The Cohabitation Rights Bill has been introduced to try and alleviate the problems. It has had its first reading in the House of Lords but the second reading is yet to be scheduled.

The Bill proposes that where cohabitants have lived together as a couple for a continuous period of at least three years, even if they do not have children together, they will be afforded some legal protection. Provided they meet specific eligibility criteria, they can apply to the Court for some form of financial settlement Order.

However, for now, rights of cohabiting couples are limited and it is important for couples who haven't married to be aware that their rights aren't the same as their married counterparts.

This should be taken into account when planning for the future or when relationships change.

For more information on the issues raised by this article please contact sarah.crilly@wardhadaway.com or call 0191 204 4463.

# THE ACHILLES' (HIGH) HEEL OF THE EQUALITY ACT

BY CLAIRE ROLSTON, SOLICITOR, DIRECTOR, CLR LAW

#### **Discriminatory Dress Codes**

A recent report\* has said that, despite the Equality Act 2010 (the "Equality Act"), workers are not being protected from discriminatory dress codes.

The report follows the publicity surrounding a London receptionist who was sent home for not wearing high heels.

#### Why have a dress code?

It is often sensible to have a dress code. It is one of the ways a company can promote its brand and project the right image. It may also be necessary for health and safety reasons.

#### What is the law?

Direct discrimination occurs where an employer treats an employee less favourably than it treats others because of a protected characteristic. An employer cannot objectively justify this. So, requiring a female employee to wear high heels or look a certain way, when there are no corresponding rules applicable to men, is likely to be direct discrimination.

Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule or policy has general application across the

workforce but puts employees with a particular protected characteristic at a disadvantage. An employer can seek to justify the policy on business grounds, provided there is not a less discriminatory way of achieving their aim. Cases of indirect discrimination have arisen in relation to banning religious jewellery.

#### What are the risks?

An employee could bring a discrimination claim which takes up time and is costly to defend. Where the employee remains in employment, there will be no loss of earnings but a tribunal can make an award for injury to feelings. These awards can be substantial and lead to negative publicity.

#### What can employers do?

Review your dress codes. What is it you want to achieve? Does the dress code do this without adversely impacting on protected characteristics? Treat both informal complaints and formal grievances seriously and, if you are contacted by ACAS in relation to a claim, seek advice.

\*Petitions Committee Report, 23 January 2017



CLR Law, a niche law firm specialising in employment law and HR. Call us on 0191 6030061 or email us at hello@clrlaw.co.uk for advice about dress codes or any other issue involving discrimination.

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# FIZZ IN THE CITY BY MINCOFFS

Fizz in the City has fast become one of the best ladies networking events in the North East — and now the word is even starting to spread outside of the region. This month, Mincoffs hosted their 9th event at Mr Lynch in Jesmond for an afternoon of informal networking over a glass (or two!) of prosecco.

The event had around 130 people sign up which ensured a fun, vibrant and valuable afternoon. Mincoffs host Fizz in the City bi-monthly with the next event being held on Friday 24th March.



























# MIND THE GAP! GENDER PAY GAP REPORTING



The Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations were published on 6th December 2016 and will come into force on 6th April 2017. ACAS and the Government Equalities Office have published guidance on how businesses can calculate and report their gender pay gap.

Under the new rules employers with more than 250 employees must publish a snapshot of salaries and bonuses and publish information about pay differentials between men and women.

These new regulations are not directly related to the issue of "equal pay" claims – the right to bring Employment Tribunal proceedings for equal pay based on discrimination on the grounds of gender has been enshrined in UK law for over 40 years. However, the statutory requirement to publish information about how men and women are paid within an organisation will shine a spotlight on employers who would, up until now, have been able to maintain an element of secrecy around such issues by relying on the principles of confidentiality and data protection. Those days are gone.

The Government has made clear that this policy is "absolutely key to achieving equality in the work place, which is why we are introducing requirements on all large employers to publish their gender pay and bonus data from April" (Caroline Dinenage, Parliamentary under Secretary of State for Women, Equalities and Early Years).

The ACAS guidance sets out a number of detailed steps for employers to follow:-

- Identify essential information such as which staff are covered by the regulations, what ordinary pay and bonus pay they have received in the snapshot pay period;
- Identify whether the calculations in relation to relevant pay and bonus gap figures show a disparity in the proportion of men and women receiving bonuses and the proportion of men and women in each salary quartile;
- Prepare a statement for publication and consider relevant information as part of the explanation of why there is a pay gap as a supporting parrative:
- O Publish the gender pay gap information;
- Implement plans to manage the gender pay gap issues in order to reduce the pay gap (if it appears reasonable to conclude that the pay gap is related to gender rather than other legitimate factors).

The duty to publish such information and to deal with any gender pay gap in a more transparent way than has previously been the case could be used by individuals and groups of employees as evidence that any inequality in pay structures which is related to gender could be actionable by bringing

an equal pay claim in the Employment Tribunal.  $\,$ 

One interesting point which could be of practical relevance to a number of large organisations is that the definition of "relevant employer" within the regulations does not expressly state that a company which operates a number of separate legal entities within a group company structure would have to count the total number of employees within the group to reach the 250 mark or whether each individual legal entity within the group should be treated as a separate and distinct employer for these purposes. It appears that, for the time being, it would be reasonable to interpret the regulations on the basis that each company within a group company structure should be treated as a separate employer. This means that if there is no individual company within the group company structure which has 250 or more employees it seems that the obligation to report on any gender pay gap would not apply. However, this could change if clarification was given in relation to how the definition of "relevant employer" should be interpreted in relation to group company structures. At the moment it is a case of "watch this space" and be mindful of any case law developments as the years go by.

If you would like Collingwood Legal to review and audit your company pay structures, please contact me on 0191 282 2870 or at paul.johnstone@collingwoodlegal.com

# HOW CAN I MAKE SURE MY SALE GOES THROUGH QUICKLY?



Kathryn Taylor is Managing Partner at Gordon Brown Law Firm and specialises in Residential Conveyancing with a particular emphasis on New Build Transactions.

Working in Gordon Brown Law Firm's busy residential conveyancing department, this is a question I am frequently asked by clients selling properties. I always respond with the answer that a sale can only go through as quickly as the slowest person in the chain! That said, there are a number of things that sellers can do to ensure things run as smoothly as possible.

Here are my top tips and suggestions:

ID & Client Care Letters — Your solicitor will request your ID and a Client Care Letter at the start of the sale process. Return these at the earliest opportunity to enable your solicitor to start the work on your file.

Forms - Your solicitor will send you a number of forms throughout your transaction, including the Sellers' Property Information form. Remember that buyers' solicitors generally reject incomplete forms or raise enquiries on missing answers which can cause delays. If you don't know an answer to a question tick either 'don't know' or call your solicitor.

Leasehold Properties — As soon as you put your property up for sale, even better if you can do so before, check your remaining lease term. In some cases sellers need to extend their lease because the remaining term is too short — this can end up being a very lengthy process. As a good rule of thumb, anything over 80 years is generally acceptable, however this should always be checked with your solicitor. Another helpful tip is to locate your ground rent receipt and send it to your solicitor. The absence of a ground rent receipt can cause a delay in your transaction and a fee may be payable if your solicitor has to request a duplicate from the freeholder.

**Central Heating/Boilers** — Make sure you have a copy of the last service report for the central heating. If it is a long time since your boiler was last serviced then be aware that the buyers may request a new service. If so it is best to arrange the service for as soon as possible. New boilers should have a Gas Safe/Corgi installation certificate.

**Double Glazing** – If you have had new windows installed give your solicitor both the guarantee and the FENSA installation certificate at the earliest opportunity.

Building /Electrical Work/Covenants — Give your solicitor everything you have record-wise in terms of Planning and Building Regulations approvals; the buyer's solicitor and their surveyor will ask for details. Also remember that alterations to a property often require a covenant consent under the terms of your title deeds. If you have done any work to the property and don't have covenant consent check with your solicitor straightaway to see if consent is needed.

Although this is not an exhaustive list, being organised from the outset and having all of the relevant paperwork filed and close to hand will go a long way towards keeping your part of the process speedy and without hiccups.

Get in touch with our friendly team...

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# Southfield House Farm Spring Lane, Sedgefield

A fabulous 18th Century farmhouse, extensively refurbished with high quality finishes, situated in an attractive, rural location. Ideal for a family seeking equestrian facilities, it has approximately 17.25 acres with open lawns, grazing paddock/fields, and two barns with loose boxes.

**-**











Price Guide £1.1 Million

Ashleigh Sundin
ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk
rare! Office: 0191 223 3500
www.sandersonyoung.co.uk













# **Ashlea** Middle Drive, Woolsington

A charming and substantial detached family home with fantastic character and located in a popular residential area. The property is set on a mature garden site extending to approximately 0.72 acres with two summer houses, a detached double garage and beautiful views over farmland.

(£







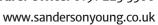




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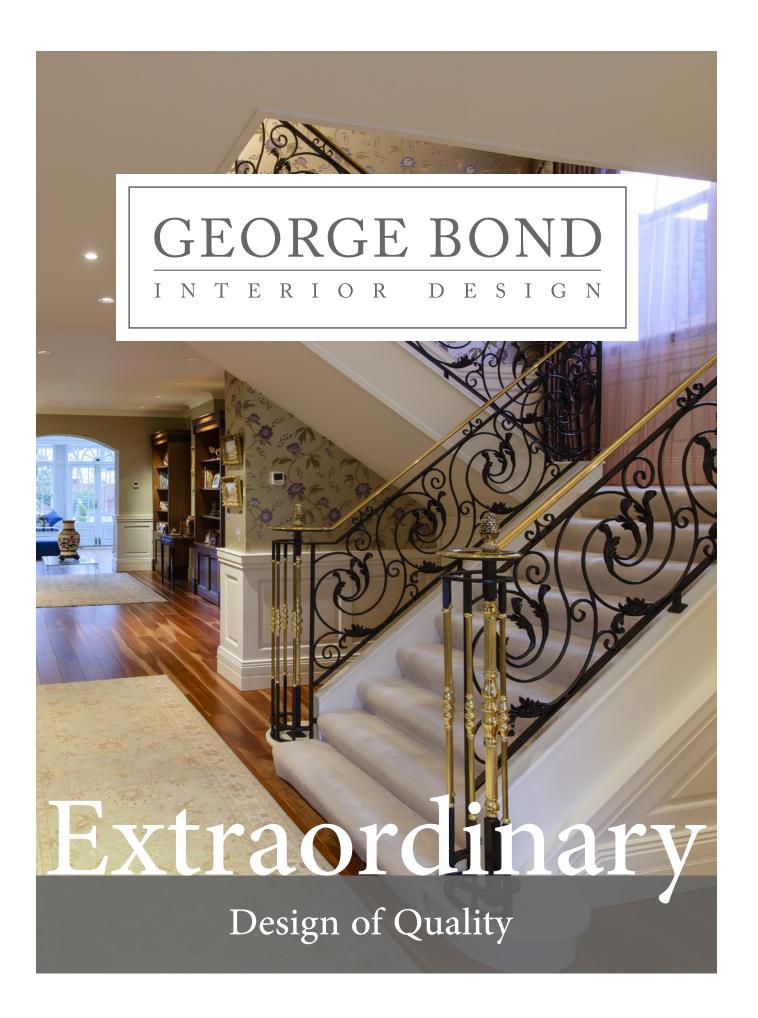
OLD ORCHARD HOUSE, HIGH BUSTON, ALNMOUTH, ALNWICK, NORTHUMBERLAND



# PRICE GUIDE: £1.9 MILLION

Old Orchard House is an outstanding stone built property benefiting from an elevated position in the most picturesque of settings. This impressive, five bedroom country house has countryside and incomparable iconic coastal views surrounding it which creates a very special allure. The property has 6120 sq ft of accommodation and offers the most luxurious refinements of a modern home such as a leisure suite with heated swimming pool, a superb kitchen with Aga, a solid oak sweeping staircase and beautifully tiled contemporary bathrooms; solid maple wood parquet flooring, egg and dart cornicing, central ceiling roses, exceptional décor and exquisite fireplaces are just some of the features in this incredible family home. Externally, there are landscaped gardens, a stable block, menage, two paddocks and an orchard site which could be developed as a separate dwelling or as an annexe to the main house.





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# THE HOUSING WHITE PAPER

After a lengthy wait and much speculation, the government finally released the Housing White Paper. It has arrived with a focus on four main areas:

1. Planning for the right homes in the right places;

2. Building homes faster;

3. Diversifying the market; and

4. Helping people now.

In a time when the UK housing stock falls short of the level required, and demand remains high from first-time buyers to own their own home, we have to ask is the right type of housing being built and offered in our region. Housing has become an epidemic problem for Britain, government reforms range from councils producing up-to-date plans for housing demand to using a £3bn fund to help smaller building firms challenge major developers.

### What does The Housing White Paper really mean?

The Paper recognises a need to build 225,000 to 275,000 (or more) homes per year to keep up with population growth and to tackle years of under-supply. It calls on communities to accept that more housing is needed 'if future generations are to have the homes they need at a price they can afford'. The Paper calls for a more cohesive approach and open engagement between local authorities, communities and stakeholders with developers, housing associations and lenders. This all sounds very positive — and we will welcome seeing it become a reality, but we have to ask (1) how can it be delivered with such a shortfall in labour, and (2) will quantity effect quality?

Developer costs will increase and this additional cost will inevitably be shared with the eventual buyers paying more for the future new homes they aspire to own. Sajid Javid commented "The only way to halt the decline in affordability and help more people onto the housing ladder is to build more homes. Let's get Britain building." Does this inevitably mean we become a nation and region of renters, with more homes being developed by investors for the Private Rented Sector (PRS) and see high net-worth groups investment equity grow along the way.

At urban base we welcome any change that can improve our regions housing. Our Land & New Homes department assist Chapter Homes at Eden Field in Aycliffe offering a range of house types to create a diverse community for buyers looking for 2 bed terraced starter homes to 4 bed detached family homes, for rent and sale. At Durham Gate, Eve Lane there is a variety of 4 and 5 bed detached family homes, offering an executive luxury range of quality housing in a location where starter homes are in abundance. These new homes are creating a new aspirational destination with new amenities being established to support the new residents. And on Newcastle's vibrant Quayside we have the city living apartments on offer from Telereal Trillium converting Level One empty office space on Queen Street in to ten cool luxury apartments.

The White Paper may therefore encourage planning to support more housing to meet regional demand, and as such this can only be good for the NE Millennial buyer looking to get a foot on the ladder.

For more information on urban base Land & New Homes please contact Charlotte Thompson, Regional Manager, on 0845 6431186.



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# SANDERSON YOUNG RENTALS DIVISION NEARLY DOUBLES THE AVERAGE RENT IN THE NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND

There have recently been a number of articles in the national press about the cost of housing within the country and the lack and shortage of supply of homes to purchase and to rent.

The performance from Sanderson Young Residential Lettings division improved in 2016, where they saw an increase in their overall turnover of just over 2% from the previous year and continued to build upon their managed portfolio with increasing numbers.

One of the most significant results for the lettings division within Sanderson Young was the average rental value, reported at £1023 per calendar month against the Rightmove reported figure for the North East of England of £542 per calendar month. This firmly establishes Sanderson Young as an agent known for renting the middle and top end of the market where prices are higher.

Gail McLean, the Regional Lettings Manager for Sanderson Young commented, 'Whilst our volume business in our city centre flats remain very popular at the lower values of £600 - £900, I was delighted last year to see increased demand for larger family homes, which include significant detached mansions in Ponteland and Darras Hall, as well as fabulous family semi-detached houses in the suburbs of Jesmond and Gosforth.

The regional demand for lettings throughout the North East continues to be very strong and we were pleased to see our income grow a little in 2016. We are aware that many agents saw their portfolio fall during a time when the supply of rental properties has decreased and increasing demand has led to prices rising.

We are aware of the ongoing discussions in respect of the tenancy fees and we are certainly delighted to work with the government on their regulations and direction for the future

Gail concluded 'I am delighted to be going into 2017 with a good pipeline of stock and a number of properties throughout all price levels available coming to the market very soon. We look forward to helping our landlords and tenants for many years to come.'



Gail McLean can be contacted on 0191 2233510 or gail.mclean@sandersonyoung.co.uk

# FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR DREAM HOME AT LUXURY LA SAGESSE IN JESMOND

The iconic La Sagesse by David Wilson Homes North East is a truly unique development situated in Jesmond, Newcastle. Combining traditional grandeur and contemporary style, redeveloped 19th century former school buildings built in the gothic revival style are seamlessly combined with a series of new-build properties including detached homes, town houses and apartments. With just four properties now remaining on this historic development, David Wilson Homes is urging prospective buyers to visit and take a look around its stunning view home: the Carham.

The Carham is a six-bedroom family home, which includes a vast range of luxurious features such as glass and steel balustrading, and a terrace to the front of the property overlooking the beautiful development — which makes an ideal space for the summer months. Buyers visiting the view home will first see the breath-taking, light filled hallway that makes way to a range of elegant living spaces. The high specification, German-made kitchen is a stylish and elegant space for family and friends to enjoy. Added features include bifold doors that open onto the rear garden, bringing plenty of natural light into the space. The first floor includes an impressive master-suite along with five bedrooms whilst there is an additional sixth bedroom on the second floor. The Carham also benefits from underfloor heating, providing cosy and comforting living spaces throughout the home.

As well as the Carham view home, the two-bedroom Iona House apartment which is located on the first floor of Iona House will be available to view as a show apartment, giving prospective purchasers an idea of the sophisticated living style that can be achieved within these exclusive properties. Iona House is an original La Sagesse school building that has been beautifully converted



to provide modern homes with classic charm and original features. There are currently just two stunning apartments available to buy from £499,995.

Ashlea Wright, Sales Manager at La Sagesse, commented: "The homes at La Sagesse have to be seen in person to be fully appreciated and both the Carham and the Iona House apartment really are stunning properties. Due to the unique nature of this development, we have seen exceptionally high demand since the launch. Now, with just four properties remaining, we're urging buyers that are interested to visit us and speak to our sales team to avoid missing out on owning a piece of local history."

Situated in Jesmond, Newcastle, La Sagesse is a one of a kind development. With easy access to Newcastle's city centre and Quayside business hubs, the development is perfectly located for growing families and young professionals alike. Jesmond itself is home to some of the area's most prestigious bars, restaurants, schools, hotels and spas.

To find out more about La Sagesse or to book an appointment, please visit: www.dwh.co.uk/lasagesse

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# A UNIQUE CITY BREAK

by Michael Grahamslaw

Properties Unique are a leading luxury accommodation provider for the North East of England and offer serviced apartments to discerning business and leisure travellers.

Their expanding portfolio of properties encompasses a series of prime locations including Newcastle City Centre, Gosforth, Jesmond, Gateshead and the Quayside and offer an extremely cost-effective alternative to a hotel for those looking for a short or long term stay.

The lady at the helm is Vivien Herrera-Lee, winner of several "Outstanding Customer Service Awards" and also the prestigious "North East Business Woman of the Year" accolade. Possessing a set of exemplary customer skills, "Viv" as she is affectionately known, is on call 24 hours a day and tirelessly goes above and beyond to ensure the best possible experiences for all of her guests.

I thought the concept was an inspired one so I was thrilled to land the opportunity to review one of these apartments for the readers of Northern Insight. Doubly chuffed when I discovered our apartment would be laden with slick mod cons and boasted the coveted NE1 postcode to match. Now what could possibly go wrong there? I rounded up the rest of the Grahamslaw Clan who were also in the mood for a spot of city living.

Our designated complex was Manor Chare Apartments, a superior site tucked away just off the Quayside with easy links to its many attractions (60 seconds to the Broad Chare pub, Live Theatre & several excellent restaurants) and also to the city centre itself. The perfect base camp from which

to explore, Manor Chare is comprised of 2 bedroom penthouses which are all modern, capacious and tastefully appointed. In addition to these opulent living spaces there's also complimentary on-site parking, secure door entry and lift access.

Properties Unique are a top firm who pride themselves on the personal touch. It was little surprise then that we were greeted on arrival by Property Manager Len; an extremely friendly and courteous gentleman who was more than happy to give us the grand tour of our weekend abode.

It soon grew apparent that this was very much a home-from-home environment. Dubbed an "upside-down flat" by Len, our 2 bedrooms (both featuring an en-suite) were each situated on the bottom floor whilst a chic corner staircase led upstairs to the hispec kitchen/dining area, spacious lounge and additional bathroom. There were a few cries of "It's even bigger than our house!"

Neutral shades lend a nice bright and airy feel whilst cosy spotlighting and a chunky brown sofa usher in feelings of warmth and sanctuary. In fact, the whole apartment is a neat fusion of style and convenience. There's also gadgets galore as each apartment comes equipped with a wide screen TV, DVD Player, stove, grill/microwave oven, toaster, refrigerator, cooking utensils, tableware, washing machine and hairdryer. Conscious of the modern business person, each suite also

includes a versatile workspace comprising a desk, lamp, telephone connections and free high-speed Wi-fi. We also learnt that each apartment is attended to by a weekly housekeeping service and that all bills and utilities are inclusive in the rental price. How about that?

Len soon left us to our own devices and we all revelled in the breathless freedom with which living in the city can bring. Wrapped up in the novelty of it all we packed in plenty including cinema trips and morning walks across the bridges, not to mention a swift pint or two down our new local haunts on the Quayside. Well, only for review purposes.

It was a truly memorable weekend and totally reassuring knowing that if anything was to go wrong (of course it didn't) we had 24 hour access to Vivien and her devoted team. As luxury apartments go it was clear that this was one in the very top echelon although that doesn't necessarily mean for an extortionate price; in fact, Properties Unique offer highly competitive rates. It also dawned on me that this was would be highly suitable for businesses looking to accommodate corporate clients, team members or other travelling associates. Some food for thought I think.

Whether like us, you fancy a leisurely escape, or you're an enterprising business executive seeking comfort and luxury, the Properties Unique experience cannot be overlooked.

For more information visit www.propertiesunique.com or to make a reservation contact +44 (0) 191 490 0789 or email reservations@propertiesunique.com www.facebook.com/PropertiesUnique @PropUniqueLtd







# GET SUMMER READY INSIDE AND OUTSIDE YOUR HOME WITH TYNESIDE HOME IMPROVEMENTS...



Summer in Britain is a rather hit or miss affair. Cloudy days and light evenings are regular scenes on a daily basis with the inclusion of a rare sunny day to excite the masses and tan the pale, but as a rule, we all know that it cannot be relied on to deliver the always-promised Indian summer.

We wait as a nation eagerly anticipating the 'warm week', the warm week is a string of glorious sunshine filled days reaching relatively high temperatures over the course of seven whole days. The 'warm week' consists of the few days in the year dedicated to making our working lives a misery, sleeping patterns abundantly sweaty and our weekends something to cherish, even if we do end up looking like a beetroot as we dare to expose our pasty skin!

Warm week aside, the spring/summer weather is an ideal time to consider home improvements and working to patch up any home damages inflicted during the winter season. On the other hand, various homeowners within the UK won't undertake the home improvements that they hope to achieve this year at all.

In a recent survey completed by DigitalBridge, the company asked consumers if they were planning to make home improvements over the next 12 months to which 56% of consumers replied positively. However, a third of consumers said they decided against making home improvements because they were too worried about making the wrong decision with a third of consumers saying they have delayed a purchase because of their lack of imagination.

Tyneside Home Improvements can help out and

spring/summer is a great time to begin home renovations and with their team of experts in both design and working within your properties individual capabilities they can ensure that you get the most of your beloved home. It's summer, a time to let the light in and innovate your home with a set of new windows. If you're looking to invest in Double Glazed Sash and Casement Windows, rest assured that these will not only improve the overall look of your property but as the glass is structurally bonded to the sash it will ensure that your home is incredibly safe and secure.

And, as all of their windows are currently offered at up to 50% off until March 2017, what are you waiting for?

If you're as untrusting of the British weather as the rest of UK citizens introduce your home to SupaLite Roofing this summer season. The SupaLite roof system has been designed to fit existing conservatory window frames, helping you keep cool in summer and warm in the winter; turning your conservatory into a usable year-round room.

There is the option to purchase your SupaLite roofing this summer time at up to 25% off plus an additional £500 discount, and as they are National Installer of the Year for SupaLite Tiled Roof System five years running, what's not to trust?

If like a good percentage of us Brits, you love to spend time in the garden, relaxing, sparking up the odd BBQ or just pottering with the kids and the thought of gardening has you coming out in a hot sweat, then you might want to consider replacing your time-zapping lawn and replenish the turf with their high-grade polymer artificial grass.

The artificial grass is a perfect substitute for tired and worn grass that you have to cut on a weekly basis. Enjoy a year-round green plush lawn and eliminate the mowing aspects of your weekend chores. If you're worried about the how your dog will react to the artificial grass then don't. Tyneside Home Improvements artificial turf is dog friendly and your pooch's business can be eliminated quickly and hassle free. Sound good? For a limited time you can purchase artificial grass courtesy of Tyneside Home Improvements with up to 30% discount.

Don't be afraid of home improvements this summer, you can enjoy the fulfilment of a fresh development to your home and garden and ultimately save money in the process by hiring the professionals. Tyneside Home Improvements are proud to have served thousands of local customers in the north east and they'll be able to fit your desired improvements to the highest standard with minimum disruption.

To get in touch with the experts to make your summer the best yet, call Tyneside Home Improvements on 0191 489 5063 or visit their website at www.tynesidehomeimprovements.co.uk



# LOVE AND MONEY

Spring is almost upon us and romance is in the air. Or is that pragmatism? Recent research from property portal Zoopla reveals that four out of ten young people believe taking out a joint home loan is a bigger commitment than marriage. Since couples are together on average for three to four years before jumping onto the property ladder we can only assume bricks and mortar have taken priority over windy walks and roses?

My concern for happy couples making the move to home ownership is many seem to treat buying a property in much the same way they treat downloading a cool new app. They neither read nor understand the terms and conditions. This is particularly true when it comes to leasehold rather than freehold.

Home builder Taylor Wimpey hit the headlines last month for all the wrong reasons when residents living in a development in Preston discovered their annual ground rent doubled every ten years. What began as a reasonable £250 per annum ended up after forty years costing them £4,000 per year. An eye watering sum but worse, they will then be unable to sell their property with these fees attached.

In an interview with the local paper one resident said "Everyone we've spoken to said they wouldn't have gone ahead with getting their homes here if they had known." This jaw dropping statement revealed

that most of the 250 residents of the development had no idea that their ground rent would double every ten years when they put pen to paper.

In fairness to Taylor Wimpey they have discontinued this practice and now link ground rents to the Retail Price Index. A spokesman for Taylor Wimpey, said: "All our customers received legal advice from independent firms of solicitors and the contracts and lease terms were set out clearly and simply."

And there is the rub. Home buyers solicitors and conveyancing experts had sight of the contracts and nothing was hidden under the carpet. Yet 250 presumably intelligent, educated people signed up to eye watering fees on a property they can never sell

Leasehold can be an attractive option for first time buyers. In a block of flats, insurance and maintenance are covered by a reasonable fee but it is up to the buyer to decide if these fees are indeed reasonable.

Consumer law in the UK has moved away from the Caveat Emptor model with the Consumer Rights and Sale of Goods acts offering us all enhanced protection. The one exception appears to be leasehold contracts. Once you sign a lease there is no going back so my advice is talk to someone who really understands the contract and until you do, step away from the pen.

www.heatonproperty.com

# WEEK2WEEK SERVICED APARTMENTS JOIN CHINA TOURISM DRIVE

Week2Week Serviced Apartments was recently awarded a new Chartermark confirming its suitability for Chinese visitors.

The great China Welcome Charter was launched in 2014 by VisitBritain to help make Britain the destination of choice for the rapidly-growing Chinese market. Visitors from China to Britain have trebled in the last five years and tourism bosses believe they will be worth over £1 billion to Britain by 2020.

The Charter – which now has over 400 members - is designed to help Chinese visitors easily identify hotels, attractions, retailers and tour operators that are making themselves 'China-ready' by providing information in Chinese and creating new products especially for the market.

Week2Week qualified for membership because it welcomes Chinese visitors from the second they land in the UK, making them feel at home almost instantly.

Claire Parry said, "We pride ourselves on providing very high standards of service to all our customers and the Chinese are no exception. We are experiencing strong interest from China who seem to particularly enjoy our prime location, fully serviced apartments in Newcastle-upon-Tyne."

Jo Leslie, who manages the great China Welcome programme for VisitBritain, said, "There is strong evidence that businesses who go the extra mile in catering for certain nationalities quickly reap the benefits. Week2Week is a great example of a serviced apartment provider which has been quick to recognise the massive potential of the Chinese market and has invested accordingly. We look forward to working with them in building their share of the market."

Membership of the great China Welcome Charter is completely free but is only open to organisations which can prove they are 'China-ready' by providing evidence of one or more of the following:



- O A product or a service that is of genuine interest to potential Chinese visitors and meets their distinct cultural needs and expectations
- O First-hand experience of welcoming Chinese visitors within the past two years
- O Mandarin speaking staff
- O Translated websites, apps or literature
- O Visitor information or signage in Mandarin
- O Visitor-facing staff who have undergone training about Chinese culture and etiquette
- O Facilities for customers to pay using China UnionPay
- O Some form of formal collaboration with a peer organisation in China

www.week2week.co.uk

# BRADLEY HALL CELEBRATES COMMERCIAL LEISURE PROPERTY SUCCESS



Leading North East chartered surveyors and estate agents Bradley Hall is celebrating the sales and acquisitions of some of the region's most outstanding leisure properties.

Following recent company expansion, investment and the relocation of its head office to a bigger, more central space on Hood Street, Newcastle, the company has taken on and completed a range of big commercial leisure deals.

Most recently, the sale of Newcastle's Union Rooms, a 19th Century five-storey building on Westgate Road, was completed for an undisclosed fee to long term Bradley Hall client Andrew Ward. Other projects between Bradley Hall and the businessman have included the £6.25m sale of the Three Tunns Hotel in Durham and its adjoining retail properties.

Bradley Hall is also currently orchestrating an opportunity for investors to create a boutique hotel with bar and restaurant on the Newcastle Quayside. Interior designers Collective Design, the Newcastle firm currently involved in a range of city centre leisure developments, drew up designs for the successful planning application, showing how the ground floor could be taken up with the restaurant and bar, while upper floors would have rooms, many with views over the River Tyne.

Number 14 High Bridge, based in a bustling area of Newcastle for leisure, entertainment, dining and

nightlife has also recently been successfully let to Danieli Holdings Ltd. The four storey terraced building provided a unique investment opportunity thanks to its accompanying planning permission with official A4 Drinking Establishment approval.

The Georgian property is now set to undergo major refurbishment to create an impressive three storey bar surrounded by the £12m Motel One 222-bed hotel and stylish gin bar and restaurant Pleased to Meet You.

In business outside of Newcastle, North East cult burger empire, Fat Hippo, found a new base in Durham, creating 40 jobs and utilising a 17th century building on the historic Saddler Street. The Grade II listed building was sourced by Bradley Hall Director Peter Bartley for Fat Hippo owner and Director Michael Phillips, who deemed the property and its location 'perfect' for his third restaurant.

Peter Bartley, Director of Bradley Hall, said: "We are fast becoming a leading property specialist in the leisure sector. Thanks to our strong links and experience with local businesses and investors we are often brought on board to market or acquire some of the region's most interesting and exciting properties.

"Thanks to our recent company expansion we are consistently able to take on bigger deals and play a part in creating some of the most outstanding leisure opportunities in the North East.

"We are looking forward to continuing this success into 2017 with a range of exciting projects."

Bradley Hall currently manages over 600 residential and commercial properties for clients, along with a rising rent roll of over £5m per annum. An expert team, led by Neil and fellow director Peter Bartley, are highly trained to offer specialist services to clients including property and asset management, accounts and facilities management.

The past year included many milestones for Bradley Hall. These included the launch of a financial services subsidiary, BH Financial and BH Mortgage, which have both gone from strength to strength. At the end of the year, Bradley Hall moved to new, larger premises on Hood Street to accommodate further growth.

Bradley Hall offers a full range of property services including valuation, commercial and residential agency, property management, business sales and disposals, acquisitions, rating appeals and town planning, as well as financial services.

For more information on Bradley Hall's commercial and residential services, please visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk

# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT – SO MUCH MORE THAN A BOX-TICKING EXERCISE



A discussion I had late last month got me thinking – how many companies and orgnisations are still surveying their customers and staff without really benefitting from what they are being told? How many are mentally ticking a box as they file the customer satisfaction survey, or prepare a report about what their customers are saying about them?

Engaging with stakeholders will not stop them from complaining about what they think may happen. Nor will it stop them fearing the unknown, but it will tell them that you want to hear from from them - and regardless of whether they are being positive or negative. It also helps to smooth the path through planning, mitigates conflict between community and contractor, and delivers opportunities for direct dialogue with developer.

So what are the benefits of engagement? He's my top five:

#### 1 Better decision-making

We are behind each of the two fundamental reasons for carrying out engagement. The idealist in us believes it's the right thing to do. The pragmatist in us knows it leads to better conversations and access to better information. Ergo, engagement leads to better decisions being made.

## 2 Eliminate risk and add value

Engagement is good for risk-management; it allows you to test assumptions, your proposals and your proposed solutions. Engagement proves you are being a good business, organisation or neighbour

- rather than just claiming to be - and it breaks down the barriers that lead to risk. Engagement done well adds value. By investing in engagement you are demonstrating that you value what you are doing, or proposing. And if people see the value in something, they get behind it; they want it to succeed It's human nature

#### 3 Bust those myths

It is a truth universally acknowledged that in the absence of good quality authorized information, the community will simply make it up. They will automatically assume the worst. We've lost count of how many of our developer clients have been told people will 'park on the road instead of their drives', 'all those extra cars will cause an accident', and the 'new houses will cause mine to lose value'. Repeated often enough and they become fact, and once that happens you have an unhill struggle to get the conversation back on the right path. Engagement with as broad a reach as possible means you can involve more people, encourage a more balanced perspective, and open up a debate leading to new truths and solutions rather than perveived problems.

#### 4 What matters most?

Time and time again we've seen that what matters to us and our clients quite often doesn't matter as much to the community we're talking to. Having multi-directional conversations with those who live in the community — and who amy hold that vital nugget of information you could really benefit from knowing, helps us all understand what matters to who. Engagement means you don't risk overlooking what's important to the wider community.

## 5 Manage messages

It doesn't matter what happens or who says what, it seems like it's instantly running amok both online and off. It takes seconds to make a statement in public, tweet a 'fact' and or set up a facebook page. All of a sudden you have a campaign building momentum around you, and the vision you had for your site bears no resemblance to what the community think you are planning. Engagement allows you to develop a strategy to ensure your messages are clear, consistent and managed.

Results Communications delivers bespoke and strategic marketing, stakeholder engagement and bid writing solutions to public and private sector clients regionally and nationally.

If you want to discuss how we could help with your stakeholder needs, or just want to find out a bit more about what we do we're reachable on 01434 603205 and via hello@resultscommunications.co.uk



# What were your career ambitions growing up?

As part of my GCSE's the class was given a project to survey the village where I grew up, shops, houses, vehicles, employment, who lived/ worked in the area. After a week my project was complete (it was a full term's project) I'd mapped the conservation area, listed buildings, found out interesting facts about the area, really immersed myself into the sociodemographic of the area, I loved it and obviously got top marks! So initially I thought my calling was as a Geography Teacher, inspired by Mrs Dennison who gave me such a great project and feedback then I realised through studying A-levels (Sociology, Geography and Classical Studies) and analysing the changes the area I lived had gone through in the 90's (an ex-mining settlement) that my passion was to try and make a difference to people/places and there began a passion for town planning. I didn't know what town planning was initially, my then boyfriend (now husband) thought it was about choosing whether to have red or yellow bricks on a building, however after completing my studies and working in the industry it's a fascinating profession which I'm very passionate about.

# Can you briefly outline your career path for the readers?

My first 'proper' planning role was at Hartlepool Borough Council initially part time to allow me flexibility with my then 9 month old son, however I soon realised that my passion for town planning needed to progress and within a matter of 9 years went from Planning Officer to Head of Planning, quite an achievement but my love for Hartlepool and my profession inspired me. At Hartlepool I led the teams responsible for all planning functions including the determination of all planning applications and the formation of planning policy for the Borough, including conservation and archaeology sections.

In 2014 I knew I needed a change in direction and was offered the role at Countrywide who are the UK's largest property services group as Regional Land Director (North) where I was responsible for growing the Countrywide Land team stretching from Milton Keynes north which included Scotland the team was responsible for the identification and acquisition of immediate and long term land opportunities predominantly for residential development. In early 2016 after a restructure I was given the role as UK Planning & Land Director at Countrywide, covering everywhere outside of London which allowed me to get back into a more 'pure planning' role which ignited my desire to start my own business which launched in July 2016.

# Can you describe a typical day in the life of Chris Pipe?

I probably shouldn't admit this but I'm not a morning person, so a cup of tea in bed helps while I check social media and catch up on any business news, then up and about I try not to start work until after my daughter's school run. After the school run which I amalgamate with a dog walk for Fozzie & Bear (my Bedoodles named after my favourite Muppet) I head to my home office to check emails and start the business day, I have 'to-do' lists relating to appraising sites, writing planning documents and making calls and I try to work my way through these, however as with

everything a new opportunity can arise which means I've got to be flexible in terms of visiting sites or meeting clients. I work on an evening until I need to which can vary depending on the needs of the business and clients, however I'm generally a chauffeur in the evening for my children taking them to whatever activity they have on: golf, football, gymnastics, horse riding, cheerleading etc. At the end of the day once the children are in bed I do enjoy relaxing on my sofa with my husband, dogs and a glass of red wine.

# What inspired you to form your own business?

There were two main reasons I started Planning House, personal satisfaction and choice. My focus has always been providing a great professional service, I'm also a bit of a control freak so controlling my own work stream appealed, I get personal satisfaction by knowing a projects needs and ensuring the best route has been taken for a particular client, ideally with the ultimate aim of achieving their aspirations. Also previously my working hours and travel did impact on my time with my family — adding all this together it was an easy decision to make.

My professional expertise hasn't changed, nor has my drive to ensure clients receive the best planning advice — it's just I'm now working for myself and can make business decisions based on my circumstances rather than based on KPIs or income forecasts.

# Can you tell us what you're currently working on?

One of the perks about planning is each project is different, I generally focus on projects in the North East/Yorkshire areas, but I've provided advice and guidance further afield generally on the recommendation of people in my contact base. I'm currently working on various projects including a planning appeal hearing to change the use of a vacant public house into a house, tourist accommodation in the countryside, a few large self-build/house builder sites and a few individual self-build plots — so very much a mixed bag. I thrive on knowing each day can be different.

# Summarise your greatest business achievements to date?

Whilst I've been fortunate to have some great achievements in my career I believe that starting my own business is by far my greatest achievement to date, I do however believe my greatest business achievement is yet to come. I love a challenge and strive for success so whilst the business has had a good start I'm excited to see what I'll achieved next year, then in 5 years and so on.

# Whats the best piece of business advice you've been given?

It's not really business advice but it's something I believe has been invaluable to me in my career: 'Town Planning is a game, an important game but still a game' which was from my former manager Richard Teece, who mentored me at Hartlepool. I took things too seriously and was very regimented in my planning views in my initial career and any decision which went against my recommendation I took personally and was very critical of myself. I soon realised town planning is bigger than just looking at policies and regulations, at the end

of the day it's about people and places, once I embraced that I became a better town planner which has led to an amazing career so far.

#### What motivates you?

Success, I'm a very driven person and ultimately I use my professional expertise to ensure my clients aspirations are realised, my service is tailored to a client's needs to ensure the right approach is taken in promoting their best case — I'm very honest with clients that sometimes their case may not be successful as town planning can be complex or grey — but if it wasn't there would be no need for Planning Consultants!

# Who are your inspirations both in and out of business?

Outside of business it's got to be my Dad, his support allowed me to fulfil my career goals, his advice helped shape my career with his philosophy of 'What's the worst that could happen' which is similar to my work mantra 'Shy bairns get nee broth', life's too short to wonder what if!

In business in general I admire the way Richard Branson sees the positives in every learning opportunity, failure is learning, this helped me in terms of setting up Planning House at the end of day what's the worst that could happen (as my Dad would say) — there'll be bumps along the road which I'll learn from but if I continue to provide an honest and pragmatic service I believe Planning House will thrive.

However in the planning world there are two people I owe a lot to, who inspired me in my early career - Richard Teece, who is not only the best boss I have ever worked for but also a kind and decent man who mentored a lot of planners through his career and Stuart Green who was the Assistant Director at Hartlepool for many years, an avid Sunderland supporter and a true gentleman who sadly passed away in 2016. Both Richard and Stuart dedicated their professional careers to Hartlepool and shaped me into the planner I am today and for this I am truly grateful.

### How do you like to relax?

I'll try not to sound like I have problem, however red wine generally plays a part in my relaxation with family and friends. In general I love to read (when I have time), going to the cinema and most importantly spending time with my children and husband. I have a passion for horse riding which I restarted in 2015 with my daughter who is now 11.

#### Whats your favourite book and why?

I love reading, everyday books would consist of any by James Patterson or Dan Brown, however my favourite book is The Iliad by Homer. I fell in love with Greek literature when studying Classical Studies at Durham Sixth Form, the architecture and politics of the ancient civilisation captured me and that's one of the reasons I choose to study Town Planning.

#### How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who was passionate and accomplished, whose life was filled with success both personally and professionally but overall just as a decent person (who liked red wine!).

# A DIFFERENT CONCEPT IN DEMENTIA CARE



In 2016 Eothen Homes opened a brand new, purpose-built residential home in Wallsend. The centre offers a completely different concept in dementia care for the North East, and getting the right team has been crucial to its success. Here Eothen's HR Manager Denise Hall and house assistant Lola Shaw shine a light on day-to-day life there.

Eothen Homes in Wallsend is different to other residential care homes offering dementia care. Space and room for residents to move around and enjoy life has played a central part of the building's design and its sheer scale is clear to see upon driving up.

Almost a year after its launch however, its success isn't just down to the way it looks but also to the team's unique way of delivering care. This is very much focused around the individual and not task-oriented, as is traditionally the case.

HR Manager Denise Hall explained: "When the concept was first discussed, we took guidance from Dementia Care Matters, which played an instrumental role in bringing the home to life.

"A key success driver was always going to be getting the right team in place and Dementia Care Matters advised us to recruit people based on values and attitudes rather than competencies and experience, so that's the approach we took.

"You can teach people how to look after elderly people with dementia, but it's a lot harder to teach 'people' skills. Here we employ house assistants with high emotional intelligence who interact well and form attachments to those we care for. There's an intense training period but those who come

through this are confident, highly competent and right for the job.

"What's interesting is that it opens up a career in care to people from all different professional backgrounds and sectors who might not have considered it before. Recruitment is driven by personality, values and behaviours and it has worked extremely well."

Lola Shaw, 20 from Wallsend, is a house assistant at Eothen, Wallsend. Having previously worked with people with learning disabilities, she was attracted to the new role by the pioneering model of care in place.

"Person-centred care really appealed to me so when I saw the job application, I was quick to apply," said Lola. "While I was nervous about working with elderly people because I hadn't done it before, the training was really strong and covered what to expect and how to deal with it, including the unpredictability that you experience with those with dementia. It was hugely valuable and that, coupled with shorter shifts than you would usually find in a care home, means we can always give our best to residents.

"I have to say the move has been fantastic for me – the positive impact you can have on residents'

lives makes you so proud. It's really motivating knowing that you're helping others have a really good quality of life."

Work doesn't stop there however. Dementia Care Matters training is ongoing and home manager Judy Mattison is currently being trained to deliver this to ensure standards remain high and Eothen's personcentred approach is continuously embedded.

Denise said: "We are committed to delivering the highest quality of care and that means keeping abreast of best practice and changes in regulations, as well as ensuring employees are given on-going training which develops their own attitudes and beliefs, consistent with the model of care.

"We promote an open door policy and encourage staff to discuss their feelings. It is important to support our staff because when you're working in dementia care, changes in residents can be emotional and distressing for everyone involved. We aim to provide continuous support not only for residents and their families but those internally too.

"It's a great line of work for those wanting to work with elderly people with dementia and it's lovely to see how everyone benefits from the model of care here."

If you'd like to know more about Eothen's specialist dementia care home in Wallsend, please contact Eothen Head Office on 0191 2819100, email enquiries@eothenhomes.org.uk or visit www.eothenhomes.org.uk

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Michael Grahamslaw meets

# JACK HARRISON

Director, Jack Harrison Estates

### Did you always envisage a career in Property?

Not initially. I did a Sociology degree at University and then a spell travelling and suppose when I returned I fell backwards into it. My Grandfather was formerly Senior Partner at Lamb and Edge so when I began my career at Rook Matthews Sayer in Gosforth there were some synergies there.

### Tell me about your current role?

I recently launched Jack Harrison Estates where I am Director and valuer. This is a family run business and our aim is to become the lead local agent in the NE7 area. I have wanted to run my own business for some time but waited for the right opportunity to come along.

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

Unquestionably the crash of 2008 changed the

industry forever and things are now far more challenging than ever. Competition is intense so it is critical to surround yourself with a good team and great knowledge of the marketplace.

### How would you advise people looking to buy property?

I would certainly recommend the NE7 area! This is central to everything, has an outstanding local school, good hospitals and very family orientated.

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

Very simply turning sales boards into sold boards! It is also hugely gratifying to hear clients commenting on your success.

### What is your fondest career memory?

Unquestionably establishing Jack Harrison Estates.

This has rejuvenated and revived me and been great for self confidence and self esteem.

#### What are your career aspirations?

To grow the business into a 3 office operation which is both manageable and profitable.

### What are the best places to live in the North East?

I'm biased but undoubtedly NE7!!

### Tell me about your team?

Friendly, driven and motivated, All live nearby and have great local knowledge which I think is important.

### How do you like to relax?

Time with my wife and young daughter. General sport and exercise and I'm also a long suffering supporter of Newcastle United.

www.jackharrisonestates.co.uk









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### **ASK SILVER BULLET**



What's the best way to capitalise on the new contacts we make at events and exhibitions?

New business is the very lifeblood of most organisations so Business Development is a vital role for most of us. Meetings, exhibitions, seminars and other events give us an opportunity to extend our networks, informing potential clients of our offer, yet all too often, the vital follow-up to such events falls flat, which often means the investment in making the original contact has been wasted.

Yet, with a little planning and effort, the follow-up can relatively easily be achieved, developing the relationship, justifying the expense of the initial contact and creating a real opportunity for new business. The alternative, of course, is to leave all those business cards you've carefully collected in the sponsor branded bag from the same exhibition along with the pens, stress balls and assorted other freebies, in the hope that the new business fairy will miraculously activate them into phone calls clamouring for your company's products or services?

So, realistically, make sure YOU, ie the person that made the contact, do the follow-up – don't pass this onto anyone else as your potential client made the connection with YOU and will want YOU to follow this up to develop YOUR relationship – people buy people, as they say. To pass it onto your sales team or anyone else is to

effectively belittle the importance of the person and the potential relationship. Make sure you do this quickly – preferably within 48 hours but if this isn't practically possible, set aside time to do your follow ups as soon as you can.

As to the message, this depends entirely on the relationship you want to build up and how the contact was left — ultimately you'd like an appointment with that company to make a sale, but this may not happen until much later in the relationship so don't blow it with the hard sell straight away, unless, of course, that is what was promised – "get back to me on Monday with your price etc."

More often, it's akin to an old fashioned courtship which might begin with sharing information of common interest – photos of the company's stand at the exhibition are usually welcome, for example. Another connection is to link via social media – use LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to follow not only the person but also the company. Not only will you learn more about the company and what's coming up for them, but you'll be SEEN to be interested in working with them. Mention your contact and their company on your own social media or even invite them to contribute to your blog?

An invitation to visit your own company never goes amiss too, especially if your products are produced

in an interesting and quality driven way – should the relationship develop, your customers will inevitably expect and may even insist in visiting for QA purposes, so why not show off your process as a selling tool?

For service companies, it's maybe not quite so interesting but your clients will still appreciate the invitation to see your company in action, and, if it's 'warts and all', so much the better for a truly transparent relationship.

An invitation to one of your own events is another means of developing the relationship – lunch, seminar, sporting event even an after-work drink are all informal opportunities where the two organisations can size each other up and see how they'll work together.

Why not try an old-fashioned hand written letter or card to continue the contact? Today's email 'infolanche' means an email may be just one of hundreds received every day but if you're looking to differentiate yourselves from the competition, why not revert to a note or card – we know a client who uses clever direct mail for just this purpose and to great effect. The only posted communications many of us now receive are invoices so mail is memorable, especially well-designed mail (OK, shameless plug...).

Do you need to 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 and use the hash tag #AskSB

# AWARD-WINNING CREATIVE CONSULTANCY GROWS TEAM



An award-winning creative marketing agency has announced three new appointments at its office in the Northern Design Centre, Gateshead, following a string of new contract wins.

r//evolution has welcomed Anna Graham as Head of Communications and Content, Steph Chalmers as a Creative Designer and Byren Atkinson as Junior Front End Developer taking the headcount of the growing consultancy to 12.

With significant agency and in-house PR experience, Anna Graham will advise clients on all areas of communication, marketing and events management. Formerly Media and Public Affairs Executive at Newcastle International Airport, Anna has worked with major international brands including Emirates, British Airways and United Airlines to deliver exceptional regional campaigns.

Steph Chalmers is a welcome addition to r// evolution's creative team. Having successfully run her own freelance design business for three years, Steph decided to join the firm to further her career in the creative industry. As well as having a BA in Graphic Design and a Masters Degree in Communication Design, Steph has a particular talent for branding and illustration.

For Byren Atkinson, r//evolution is the starting point for his career. His appointment demonstrates the firm's commitment to nurturing talent within the business.

Commenting on the growth, Managing Director Gill Burgess said: "We're thrilled to welcome Anna, Steph and Byren to the r//evolution team and believe that their skills will make a big impact on the business and services we can offer to our clients."

# AIRPORT ROLLS OUT DISCOVER CAMPAIGN

Newcastle International Airport has launched its first multi audience marketing campaign to highlight its range of available destinations.

The world's most punctual small airport is rolling out its 'Discover' campaign across the whole of the North East and its wider catchment area.

A major integrated multimedia campaign including digital, print, and radio adverts are now live across the region and further afield, ranging from the Scottish Borders down to North Yorkshire and across Cumbria.

An adventure in Australia, a break in Berlin or a cruise of the Caribbean are all within easy reach,

with over 80 direct destinations on offer.

The campaign will be supported via Newcastle International's social media channels, expecting to reach over 63 million people.

John Irving, Business Development Director at Newcastle International Airport, said: "As the airport continues to grow, we believe this campaign will help to ensure our key messages are delivered across the North East and beyond. We have an excellent route network that offers a wide variety of choice to suit all different needs. We aim to make people aware of this fantastic offering available from Newcastle."



# DARLINGTON OFFICE MOVE FOR PR CONSULTANCY



A public relations consultancy has moved to new offices in Darlington town centre.

As part of its plans for expansion, Reay Public Relations has re-located to the Regus Business Centre at 20 Woodland Road, Darlington.

Reay Public Relations provides media relations, social media and content marketing advice to a range of clients in the North East and the West Midlands. It specialises in commercial property, law, professional services, industrial and destination marketing.

Jonathan Reay, Director at Reay Public Relations, said: "This move is an important part of our plans to continue the growth of our business. It will give us the space to focus more on our social media offerings for clients, particularly on business-to-business platforms such as LinkedIn and Twitter."



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# INSIGHT MEETS INSPIRATION

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# RECOGNISING THE WORTH OF APPRENTICESHIPS



Over the last 10 years, National Apprenticeship Week has become a time to celebrate the positive impact apprenticeships and traineeships have on individuals, businesses and the economy.

However, in that time, there have been many debates about the pros and cons of such opportunities in the media industry. Here, full-service marketing, advertising and digital agency, The Works talk about their experiences of apprenticeships and training programmes and why they believe they can only have a positive impact on those involved.

Apprenticeships and training programmes like these have been around for a long time, but in recent years they've become a hot topic of conversation. People have debated whether the media industry is the right environment for such training schemes, whether apprentices or interns should be paid for their work and if training programmes should ever be considered a viable route into the industry like their degree counterparts.

As a business that has grown and developed its team over the past decade, we've seen the positive impact an apprentice or intern programme can have on all parties involved. In the past three years, we've worked with our partners at Gateshead

College and the University of Sunderland to bring three interns and an apprentice into our business, three of whom are now permanent, full-time members of our team and one who has just recently joined us. In doing this, not only have we found four team members who are the perfect fit for our business in terms of their personality, but we've also seen these young people develop their knowledge and skills-sets to become integral parts of our account management and studio teams, bringing different ideas, skills and ways of thinking to the teams and client projects they work on.

Studying for a degree has long been seen as the next step after leaving school and something that is required to be considered for a role in our industry. However, in our opinion, just like the way we work with our clients, there's no one-size-fits-all approach to education or to getting your first step on the career ladder- everybody deserves an opportunity, no matter what their educational background is. Whether that opportunity is paid or not comes down to how long the placement lasts- but you can't expect people to stay loyal

and motivated in their role if they're not being rewarded in some way.

In our experience, training schemes like apprenticeships or internships are ideal. As well as giving an employer a chance to see how an individual fits within their organisation, they give the trainee an opportunity to develop their current skills, learn new ones and gain some real, industry experience- it really is a win, win situation.

The Government has pledged to increase the quality and quantity of apprenticeships by 2020 to ensure they're seen as a high quality, prestigious route to a career, and the introduction of the hotly anticipated apprenticeship levy in April is the first step in doing that. As an industry at the forefront of a lot of things, it's about time we recognised the benefit of apprenticeships and training programmes just as the Government are doing and gave more young people opportunities- after all, they are the ones who will be taking our industry to the next level in the future.

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



# 2017'S CHANGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE

2017 has only been here for a couple of months, yet it has already brought with it a raft of changes, especially when it comes to digital. Here, online marketing agency Mediaworks shares their run-down of this year's essential developments - so far!

As digital marketers, change is second nature. Whether it's Google's algorithm updates or new tools and techniques shaping the way we work, digital is fast-paced - fail to keep up and you risk getting left behind.

2017 has only just begun, yet the world of digital has already shifted. Here are the key developments we've identified - how will your digital strategy react to them?

### Increased paid search competition

Nearly five years ago, Google's Product Search transitioned to Google Shopping, giving retailers product advertising space through product listing ads (PLAs). The ads are an alternative to normal text ads, which we have already seen Google slimdown in recent months - a move that heightened competition for premium advertising spots.

Clearly recognising the prestigious space PLAs occupy, marketers have adapted their paid search

strategies to gain the coverage they want - and rightly so. During the fourth quarter of 2016, PLAs were responsible for 48% of retailer's Google ad clicks. But could there be another obstacle to contend with?

Retail giant Amazon is starting to shake PLAs up. In the past, the brand's paid strategy has relied on other ad forms, but recently Amazon PLAs appeared across home goods and furnishing categories. Given Amazon's huge buying power, they could drive up the costs of PLAs for you, the marketer.

So how should you react? Essentially, you'll need to adopt smarter paid search strategies in order to create campaigns that deliver the returns you want in the budgets you have. Don't leave your success to chance - choose a digital partner you can trust.

#### Combatting mobile ads

Early in January 2017, Google rolled out the penalties they'd announced back in 2016. The

penalties target interstitials, the large pop-up adverts that appear when a web page loads on a mobile device.

From Google's perspective, pop-up ads that cover a page's content detract from the overall user experience, as users have to dismiss them before they can get the information they need. Sites that currently feature this type of interstitials will suffer impacted rankings.

Of course, some pop-ups are exempt from these penalties, such as log-in, cookie policies and age verification windows.

In the space of just two months, we've witnessed two key updates. If this is a signifier of what the rest of the year will bring, it's set to be a big year for digital - and by keeping aware of the latest updates you can create proactive digital strategies to keep your brand ahead of the curve.

Need help from the digital experts? Contact Mediaworks on 0191 404 0100 or email info@mediaworks.co.uk



Michael Grahamslaw meets

# SARAH M<sup>c</sup>CRADY

Director, Absolute Agency

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

From an early age to be a graphic designer! As a child I loved art and design - and when one of my drawings appeared on Tony Hart's TV show I was the talk of the class. Fortunately my school had graphic design as a subject and my teacher was fantastic. My parents bought me a book on typography when I was 11 which I used to make my friends birthday cards and I was hooked. I feel lucky to have chosen this career and to still be so passionate about it over 20 years later.

# Can you tell us a little bit about the inception of Absolute Agency?

Like all good things it started over a drink! I had very much achieved my ambition of becoming a Design Director and enjoyed spells at Yellow M, Robson Brown and Different as well as being Brand Manager at Barker and Stonehouse.

My friend and business partner Abbie Hartshorn had worked at Different, Inspired and Think and on a evening out we realised that our skill sets complimented each other and that running our own business may be possible. It just felt like the right time and Absolute was born.

### What services do you provide?

We provide branding, design and web services to a range of businesses across the North East. Since our launch in 2014 we have expanded the team to 5 with Abbie and I supported by Account Handlers Clare Hampton and Louise Elsdon and Creative, Michael Watts and moved into larger offices in the Northern Design Centre.

### What is Absolute's greatest achievement to date?

Realising our ambition of running our own business and making a success from doing something that we love. If you'd told me two years ago that we would have gone from no clients to almost 50 I wouldn't have believed it.

### What challenges have you encountered so far?

There are many challenges in starting a new business. Keeping an eye

on the books and what's coming in and out is of course a key priority. As is building a strong team and ensuring you have the right level of resource at any given time to meet growing client demand and to provide the exceptional customer service we pride ourselves on.

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

Short term, we aim to continue to grow our client base - especially within the lifestyle and interiors sector as it's a particular strength of ours. Longer term, we're committed to keeping the happy team we've got and providing them with a positive work environment that they enjoy being part of as we truly believe that is reflected in our work.

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

Work hard and be nice to people.

# What's the one piece of branding you wish you'd designed and why?

I would say Innocent Smoothies - from their inception they realised the power of a strong brand and made sure that absolutely everything reflected their brand values - even down to changing 'best before' to 'enjoy by' and decorating their van in grass!

### Who are your heroes in and out of business?

Fictionally Christine Cagney from the 1980s American TV Show Cagney and Lacey...I guess she was one of my first strong female role models (and she had a great wardrobe!). In real life Kari Owers who I've known from the early days and I really admire what she has achieved with OPR and as a female entrepreneur.

### How do you maintain a healthy work/life balance?

This is hugely important to me as I have 2 young children. Setting up Absolute has meant I can make time for all of the school events when they come along and work from home when necessary which makes for greater freedom, flexibility and an overall better quality of life.



# HISTORY IS WATCHING: HOW ARE YOU ADVISING YOUR MANAGEMENT TEAM?

If the role of the public relations adviser is to be the eyes, ears and conscience of an organisation, how are you advising your management team?

Public relations is a management discipline and rapid change within the political world is creating significant opportunity for practitioners.

Brexit and President Trump's inauguration have signaled huge shifts in opinion and behaviour. Both have created significant public division in the UK and US.

Businesses need to understand what these developments mean for trade; what their stakeholders believe and want; and be absolutely clear about their purpose going forward.

No one is better placed to help than the strategic public relations adviser.

### STANDING UP FOR WHAT'S RIGHT

Now more than ever, brands need to think very carefully about their role within society.

Reputation management is a critical function for any organisation. At a time of political upheaval, if a company isn't living its values, it will be judged against this.

As Professor Anne Gregory says in #FuturePRoof: "[Organisations] are being forced to re-think their purpose and how they gain and maintain their legitimacy not only with their immediate stakeholders, but to society more widely."

### A STIRRING RESPONSE

Starbucks response to President Trump's Muslim ban is an excellent example of an organisation prepared to defend its ethical credentials.

As part of a wider statement, Starbucks chair and CEO Howard Schultz sent the following message to employees and partners.

"We are living in an unprecedented time, one in

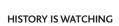
which we are witness to the conscience of our country, and the promise of the American dream, being called into question.

"These uncertain times call for different measures and communication tools than we have used in the past. [We] will neither stand by, nor stand silent, as the uncertainty around the new Administration's actions grows with each passing day."

### DRIVING IN THE WRONG DIRECTION?

This move was in direct contrast to Uber, which flouted the New York Taxi Workers Alliance hour long strike at JFK Airport on 28 January, organized in protest at what the Alliance called an 'inhumane and unconstitutional' move by Trump.

Its move to capitalize on trade rather than stand side to side with others in the transport sector caused a tirade of outrage on Twitter and the introduction of a #deleteuber hashtag, which quickly went viral.



As JK Rowling reminded Theresa May in advance of her trip to the US at the end of January, history is watching.

It's a useful pointer for any public relations practitioner advising the C-Suite on the leadership role its organisation should play both internally and within society. It's no longer acceptable not to have an opinion.

# WHAT WILL YOUR – AND YOUR EMPLOYER'S - LEGACY BE?

Within the CIPR and PRCA's code of conduct, professionals are reminded of their duty to act with integrity, fairness and honesty. Mutual respect and inclusivity are an important part of this.

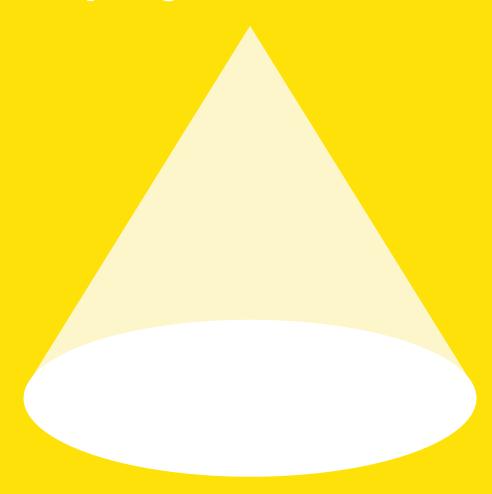
A key question to ask is where your organisation stands and whether it is prepared to defend its values — or whether it is going to watch and do nothing. Sometimes there is no choice but to stand up and be counted.

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# Plan for success! Skill up to keep up.

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Whether it's working on your current skill set or exploring a new area of expertise.



MEET Jenn who is the PR executive at NBS responsible for raising their profile locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. She already had a PR degree but studied CIM to help her integrate effective communication campaigns with her colleagues. They say every day is a learning day and that's so true in Marketing!



MEET Laura who is responsible for developing and maintaining the National Glass Centre's audiences. Studying CIM has given her the confidence to develop her own ideas and campaigns. Given the Centre's pivotal role in the Sunderland City of Culture bid for 2021, now is the perfect time to showcase these skills.



MEET Kris who is the Head of Marketing at Mammoth a high growth business, studying CIM has helped to facilitate the change to a far more strategic approach. It's amazing how powerful marketing data is. Knowing your customer more than they know themselves will always put you in a great position.



MEET Christine a National Business Development
Manager at Capita Property and Infrastructure
responsible for ensuring its commercial strategy is totally
aligned to its goals. The digital know-how from her CIM
Diploma is helping her to devise digital campaigns that
effectively engage her customers.

nesma delivers courses in Newcastle, Carlisle, Edinburgh, and in-house UK wide.



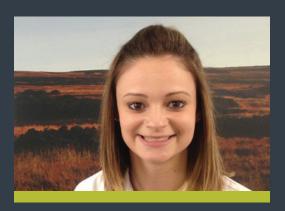




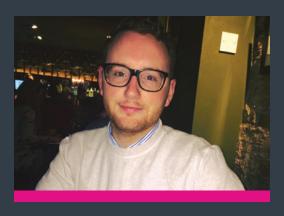
Learning new skills is essential to keeping up to speed with industry demands and trends. This is as crucial in marketing as with any other part of the business. Investing in your marketing team is an investment in your business. Actively pursuing new skills, information and qualifications will not only be good for business it will help individuals move their career forward.



MEET Kate Managing Director of Blue Shadow Marketing, working to promote growth in small firms by encouraging business owners to think more strategically about their marketing. Being self-taught, the CIM Level 6 Professional Diploma in Marketing gave her a much fuller, broader knowledge of the subject.



MEET Rosie the Sales and Marketing Assistant at Reays Coaches. She decided to work and study instead of going to university. She has already completed her Level 4 CIM Certificate in Professional Marketing and is now studying for Level 6. She loves how different and unpredictable each day in marketing can be.



IEET Alex who manages the B2B marketing campaigns for the software arm of Arup. No two days are ever the same as each channel continues to bring fresh challenges. Studying a CIM course has advanced his career and actively demonstrated he is willing to develop his marketing abilities outside of the workplace.



MEET Rachael a career changer, who moved into communications following a successful career in Finance and Project Management. Studying with CIPR helped to set in motion a new career journey. Proving with the right training and support network, it's never too late to follow your passions and find a fulfilling career.

Talk to us about what you want to achieve. T: 07900 223721 E: hello@nesma.co.uk







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# SHOULD YOU BE WORRIED ABOUT FAKING IT?



Fake news.

It's a term which has dominated for weeks and makes us all wonder who and what we are now supposed to believe.

The Donald has taken it under his wing and barks it at any media outlet who wont tow his line. Even Jeremy Corbyn's accused the BBC of reporting fake news when they challenged him about another resignation whisper surrounding the labour leader.

It's not that hard to take a simple stat and twist it in any way you chose. It's important to make distinctions, no matter how fine the line. There's inaccurate reporting, there lies and then there's fake news. Creating the latter to suit your narrative is sinister in the extreme.

Wikipedia took it to new levels when its editors voted to ban the Daily Mail as a source in all but exceptional circumstances, deeming the news group 'generally unreliable.'

It's an extraordinary move and a weird and worrying environment to be operating in where your political stance, such is the general polarization in sentiment, can be the making or breaking of your organisation. Apparently, you're either a hardline Nazi sympathizer or a leftie snowflake. In reality, I think most of us actually sit in the shades of grey in between the black or white that others want to label us with..

Post Trump's attempted travel ban, a host of major

organisations had to take a stance and take one quickly. Starbucks responded by saying they'll hire 10,000 US immigrants. Nike stood shoulder to shoulder with their Somalian born star, Mo Farah and Uber, who were deemed too slow to respond, got hit square in the pocket. #DeleteUber was trending worldwide and Lyft, a similar style of appbased taxi service and a rival to Uber, found its way into Apple's top ten most used apps in the days immediately after Trumps announcement.

Don't tell me social media has no affect on your business.

Facebook, who took the brunt of fake news criticism during the US elections at the back end of last year, have promised to improve their news feed and become better at spotting the bogus stuff. Easier said than done.

But what does it all mean for you and me, trying to keep up and keep track of how and what we doing when it comes to creating credible stories for our business?

One interesting development in this, and will be something that affects our every day usage of Facebook, is their publicly-stated intentions to introduce new signals to identify authentic content. As a part of that, its is increasing its monitoring of

the horrid request for likes, comments or shares. Facebook identifies this as 'gaming' posts – a route to generating artificially high post numbers – and will therefore penalise them. The very thing you're trying to achieve will have the reverse effect and your posts run the risk of sinking down the feed without a trace.

I'll be honest, I'm glad. Those like and share posts lack imagination and creativity and show that you aren't taking the time to listen to your audience and understand what they actually want. If all they want from you is free stuff, I'd suggest their loyalty to your brand is flimsy at best.

So stay authentic, friends. Facebook's going to reward that now and as Uber has experienced, other platforms will reward or punish you accordingly if you're not seen to be acting in a human manner. You have no need to worry about being 'found out' if you're keeping things level and straight with your audiences.

Talk to other humans like they're other humans. Listen to them too. Identify what it is they like about you, your product or your service and speak rationally. You shouldn't have to worry about faking it if you're being a human being.

Christian Cerisola is director at Glue PR. www.gluepr.co.uk Catch him being human on twitter on @ChristianCeriso

# FOCUS ON: NICKY HAYER

Throughout my time at University, I felt so sure that I knew exactly what I wanted to do and exactly where I wanted to be in ten years' time. But, things changed. The more experience I got in different areas, the more I couldn't quite nail down the one job that was going to keep me motivated and inspired, for the rest of my life.

So fast forward a few years of marketing internships, the family business, and hospitality roles and I found myself working as a Senior Manager within Bettys Café Tearooms; working to grow an area of the business, to increase both revenue and profit, whilst improving the all important, customer journey. This was an incredible company that pandered to my sales drive, but also taught me a huge amount about brand, management and myself!

Working at this level of luxury and hospitality, and with these sort of brand guidelines around sales and marketing was a real eye opener for me. And, it was the exact moment that I figured out what was going to keep me motivated across my career - challenge.

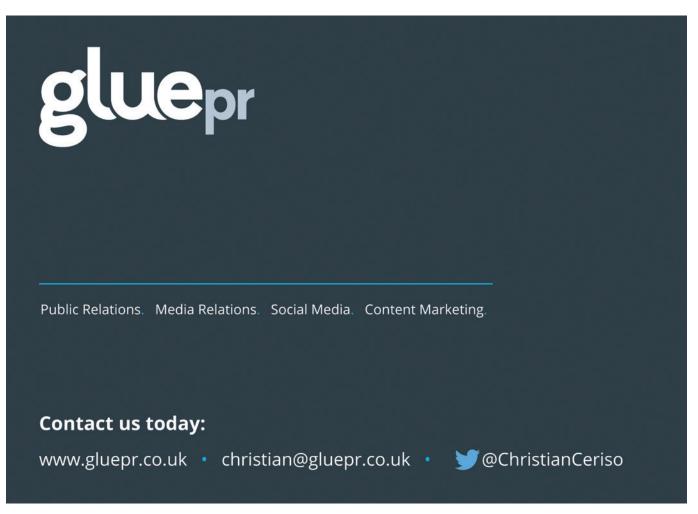
I wanted to go into a business and hear about their story, whilst gaining an understanding of their business aspirations. I wanted to develop the ideal solution to support them in their journey. I actually made this decision, over a tray of half cooked sweet potato fries one evening, and handed my notice in the next day.

Two weeks later, NIMA was born. A marketing agency, specialising in hospitality, luxury and retail, and offering support in areas including strategy, social media management, web design, brand development and perfecting the customer journey.

We're now 18 challenging months into our journey, and are thrilled to be working with businesses across the UK. Feeling inspired and motivated, with every new story.



Twitter: /nickyhayer Web: www.nimaconsultancy.co.uk





### What were your career ambitions growing up?

I was big into performing arts when I was growing up and spent most of my spare time in dance classes. I've gone from the one being centre stage to putting my clients in the spotlight through PR and marketing communications, so they shine above and beyond their competition.

# Can you briefly outline your career path for the readers?

I first came to the attention of the PR industry in 2012 through my student blog while studying for my MA degree in Public Relations. Since then I've progressed quickly through the ranks of agency life, going from an account executive to PR manager, then heading up a communications team at an integrated agency, before co-founding my own consultancy – Filament PR – in October 2016.

### What is Filament PR's USP?

It has to be our flexibility. We're not in the business of trying to flog something our clients don't need. We use data to enlighten our strategies and then put plans in place to deliver our client's campaigns with creative spark. It means we're well-positioned to advise our clients about what they need and more importantly, what business results they can expect as a return on their investment. For some, it makes sense to look at an annual retainer, for others a shorter project, while a few just need our

support 'as and when' there is a business need.

Equally, as we work flexibly, we don't have big over-heads — essentially we can do more with our clients' money. And if we need that bit of extra resource, we simply bring in some of our trusted suppliers — you only pay for the work you need.

Flexible working benefits our clients in other ways too. We aren't chained to a desk between 9am and 5pm so we manage our workload around our lives. We put in the hours but spread them out over the day, so often clients have access to us early in the morning or late in the evening, helping to create efficiencies as there isn't that time-lag between leaving work and arriving in the office the next day. It also means that our team has a better work-life balance, so we're generally happier, shiner people to work with too!

### What is your greatest business achievement?

Successfully launching Filament PR. In the first three months of trading, we won three big retainers, completed three exciting projects and are in new business conversations with three of the biggest brand names in global entertainment. They do say three is the magic number...

# What's the best piece of business advice you've been given?

Not so much advice but a quote from Walt Disney: "If you can dream it, you can do it."

www.filamentpr.co.uk

### What motivates you?

Doing a job that I love and being paid for it too – it never really feels like 'work'.

#### Who are your heroes in and out of business?

My business partner, Jason Knights. He's grown an internationally acclaimed design agency from the North East, and now we're working to do it all over again with Filament PR. His approach to dealing with clients and colleagues alike really inspires me — it's a culture that's rooted in the values of our business too.

Outside of work it's my Mum. She's the epitome of being strong yet sensitive to others at the same time

### How do you like to relax?

A nice meal and a trip to the theatre with my husband does the trick.

#### What's your favourite book and why?

Any of the Famous Five books as I remember my Dad reading them to me as a little girl each night before I went to bed. I think that's played a big part in the career choices I've made; a huge part of my job is communicating my clients' stories with their audiences. I'm sure my Dad reading Enid Blyton's books to me first sparked my interest in the art of storytelling...

#### How would you like to be remembered?

As someone who made their dreams a reality.





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# SCOTT LOGIC BRANCHES OUT INTO THE PUBLIC SECTOR



A bespoke software development consultancy is now a Government-approved vendor for work in the public sector, marking a significant expansion for the business.

Scott Logic, which has primarily delivered software solutions for international financial services throughout its 11-year history, has been listed as an approved supplier on the Government's new Digital Outcomes and Specialists Framework (DOS2), signalling its commitment to the continued development of its public sector practice.

Following the Government's commitment to invest 33% of its procurement spending with SMEs by 2020, the new framework is intended to simplify

the way public sector organisations commission digital and Cloud-based services, making it clearer and faster for them to do so.

As a service-led provider, Scott Logic is already listed on the Crown Commercial Services' G-Cloud 8 Procurement framework. It has now also committed to exhibiting at Digital Government 2017 later in the year.

General Manager Nigel Wilson said: "We're pleased that through DOS2 we'll be able to make even greater headway in delivering the highest quality software consultancy to meet the accelerating need to digitise the public sector."

# MYFIRMSAPP IS NAMED AS BEST NEW ONLINE APP



MyFirmsApp, the global FinTech company and world leader in App and mobile technology for accountants, has been named as the best new online App by the influential US publication, Accounting Today.

In its list of top new products for 2017, editors made the point that although "accounting firms can create new tools, it's just easier and more efficient to let someone else do it for you and MyFirmsApp is a great example of that. MyFirmsApp is ready to do it quickly and easily."

The MyFirmsApp team has created 2,000 Apps for accounting firms. There have been over 200,000 downloads as the service is now available in 8 countries.

One of the great advantages of the MyFirmsApp service is that there are no big upfront fees and an affordable monthly licence fee includes design, build, delivery, a marketing pack and ongoing support.

MyFirmsApp is currently the only fully approved and proven platform to provide tools such as GPS mileage tracking and Photo receipt management, which save both the firm and the client enormous amounts of time. All online portal and accounts software logins can be held in the App too, creating a single interface the client needs.

### DIRECTOR OF IT TAKES UP POST WITH BUSINESS AND IT CONSULTANCY



Waterstons, a Durham based business and IT consultancy, has recruited Steve Williams, Newcastle University's former director of IT, to come on board to lead on the education sector at the fast growing company.

Waterstons has had a record breaking 12 months, experiencing a six fold profit increase and recruiting over 30 staff, with sustainable growth set to continue in all sectors the business serves including education.

In his new role, Steve will be responsible for looking after the company's growing portfolio of Higher Education (HE) clients and developing new relationships with other HE institutions throughout the UK.

He is the first IT professional ever to be recognised with a Principal Fellowship by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), the national body that champions teaching quality throughout the HE system. It places him in an elite group of about 600 individuals throughout the UK.

Susan Bell, Chief Executive of Waterstons Limited, said: "We are delighted and flattered that someone who is held in such high esteem in the education sector has chosen our business after such a successful eight years at one of the region's most prestigious educational establishments."

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### WHY YOUR BUSINESS NEEDS UNIFIED COMMUNICATIONS



The increasing demand for smooth, real-time communications systems which enhance the exchange of information and ideas throughout organisations and their stakeholder chain has sparked massive growth in the unified communications (UC) market, with PWC forecasting a near 100% penetration of some element of UC in companies of all sizes by 2020.

UC is the merger of disparate IT, telephony and messaging communications into a single, easy to use platform that helps your staff, customers, partners and suppliers communicate more effectively. By running over a single voice, data and video network and switching to an opex pricing model, many organisations also experience reduced costs.

Many business owners still feel there is a confidence gap between the established technologies and the new wave of UC. In our regular UC briefing events we see the same questions arise from MDs, finance directors and IT managers, uncertain about the potential issues involved in streamlining and aligning a wide variety of methodologies.

This concern is not surprising when you consider the wide range of communications tools we use on a daily basis, such as voice, presence, video, email, instant messaging, conferencing and collaboration tools. These are all now commonplace in most workplaces, presenting a plethora of choices around which elements to implement, how to customise them, and how to ensure a smooth transition.

The key to getting it right is to find an expert UC partner. ITPS is one of just five businesses across the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to have

received Circle of Excellence status from global telecoms group ShoreTel, for our work helping organisations to adopt a successful UC model.

The award criteria centres on exceptional achievement in helping clients to reap the cost and efficiency benefits involved in integrating communications systems with the rest of their IT platform. It also covers growth, maintaining high customer satisfaction levels, and expertise in applying advanced communications tools.

The Circle of Excellence is the highest recognition given by ShoreTel to its partners and this achievement puts us in an exclusive group. It is testament to the expertise of our UC team in designing and delivering solutions that make communications more effective, improve customer care for everyone in the chain, and help clients achieve a lower cost of ownership and a better return on their investment.

Our years of experience working with UC technology leaders is your guarantee of achieving a solution that supports your business in the best possible way. We start by looking at your business requirements and the communications challenges you face, so we can tailor a future-proof solution that maximises your ICT investment.

A UC model can be implemented whether you host your IT infrastructure on your own site or in a data centre, or in a model that combines the two.

Many organisations choose to combine UC's functionality with a private cloud-based hosting platform, such as the fully managed service we provide from our £4m state of the art County Durham data centre, to give them a secure, scalable platform with built in resilience and backup, plus a known cost of ownership and a consistent, guaranteed service level and quality of delivery.

It means they also benefit from our investment in business continuity and disaster recovery services, including fully equipped workspace recovery facilities, which are designed to keep their businesses up and running 24/7.

If you are interested in removing communications bottlenecks, speeding up business activities, improving productivity, and in many cases seeing a drop in capital expenditure and operating costs, give us a call or come to one of our UC briefings and find out about the positive impact that the next generation of communications capabilities could have on your business.

For more information call 0191 442 8300, email contact@itps.co.uk or visit www.itps.co.uk



# See the Accountants App taking the world by storm

Selected as a 'Top Product' for 2017 by Accounting Today

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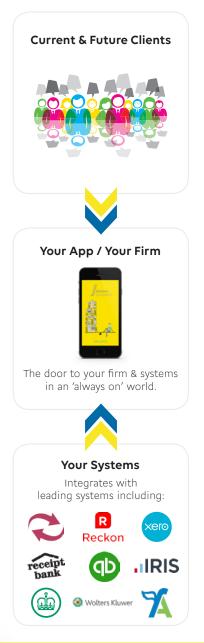
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# MOVING TO THE CLOUD IN 2017 WITH AERO NETWORKS



Simplifying the transition to the Cloud is a big part of Aero Networks strategy.

When designing a Cloud Strategy, the initial consultation in many respects is the most important part of the process. Ben Curry, Commercial Director of Aero Networks' said, "Assessing the client's requirements, both short and long term, are essential when planning the transition to the Cloud. We view every client as being unique, rather than trying to apply a generic proposition. It is impossible to have an 'off-the-shelf' solution; it needs to be tailored."

The advantage of using Cloud Technology is that the service aligns cohesively with your needs. When your organisation experiences growth, the Cloud usage increases seamlessly with your requirements. Initially a client may only need basic applications like email and data storage. If you then realise at a later date that you require additional services, these are then designed and integrated into your Cloud Service.

"The design process starts with a full review of the client's current infrastructure followed by an understanding of their future aspirations," advises Paul Curry, Aero's Managing Director. "We then present a timeline showing the Cloud Migration path. We're completely transparent throughout the entire process. We'll advise clients which elements of Cloud technology are a good fit for them."

Most IT installations can be separated into block components such as Email, File Storage, Connectivity, Business Applications & Bespoke Software. A particular client, they may rely heavily on an application which isn't currently cloud ready. In that instance the continued use of an on premise solution would be recommended, whilst other aspects of the IT Estate would be moved to the Cloud.

"Consulting is a key part of the Cloud Strategy," added Ben. "The client requires full sight of how the transition will take place. We take time to explain this and always communicate on a clear professional level. This is a great time for clients to make the investment and move their IT Services to the Cloud."

Industry experts support the view that Cloud Technology is revolutionising UK business. The Cloud Applications and Services which are now available for 10-50 user organisations were, until

very recently, geared towards large enterprises and the public sector. Not any longer. Aero Networks recommends that 2017 is the time to embrace the Cloud. They'll design, consult and advise throughout the entire process.

"Awareness is a big factor when we discuss Cloud Solutions with clients", said Paul. "Business owners and their management team very quickly see the benefits when things are explained clearly and concisely. We put together an easy-to-understand presentation and also provide demonstrations of Cloud Technologies that the client hasn't experienced."

Simplifying the transition to the Cloud is a big part of Aero Networks strategy. Many organisations generally don't know where to start or which part of their IT operations can be moved to the Cloud. Aero's structured approach towards Cloud Migration will clarify the requirement and give confidence to the decision-making process.

Paul concluded, "If you are considering or looking at designing a Cloud Strategy, please come talk us here at Aero Networks. We're here to help."

www.aero.net



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# DIAMOND REACHES A MILESTONE...

Things these days just aren't made to last anymore are they?

You could even say they are made to break and be replaced – there's even a term for it so you know it's true; planned obsolescence. Yes, in these modern times of ever changing technology it seems like it's rarer than ever before to find something that lasts the tide of time.

But that's exactly what's happened with one North East based office technology group as it approaches its major milestone birthday; 25 years – yes its celebrating its 25th birthday, it's silver anniversary no less!

The Diamond Group started in 1992 in Boldon as a printer and copier provider, but over the last quarter of a century, hasn't lost a single bit of its shine. In fact it has been polished to almost perfection over time and now offers IT Support, telecoms, asset finance and of course, copiers and printers, in addition to office furniture.

The success has even seen them move base, with a relocation to Team Valley's Diamond House, the latest in a string of good news for Diamond, who continue to grow the company year in – year out, and last year experienced 22% growth!

So what keeps Diamond sparkling, even as they approach their landmark silver anniversary in

business? A lot can change in 25 years after all. John Burns, the original Diamond – who opened the company with just one photocopier, which he upgraded and fixed and then sold on for a profit, is under no illusion as to what has made them a success and why they are still around to this day:

"Hard work, loyalty and moving with the times", said John, "that and making sure that you deliver on your promises", he told us.

Diamond's own dream team of staff have an uncanny ability to stay one step ahead of the game and on top of ever changing technologies which are often built to be replaced.

Even in the early days, Diamond offered high quality copiers and printers with even higher value for money. It's a mantra which has stuck true to the Gateshead-based firm. Take for example the cloud computing service offered from Diamond House.

Sensing that cloud computing may be the most

efficient way to store information in an almost limitless capacity, Diamond have developed a cloud storage service which can be tailored to fit the customer's needs and allows access to all your stored information from any location - without the need for expensive hardware.

"Putting people first is also something that allows you to keep your business going along efficiently." John continued.

"We know how frustrating some aspects of technology can be, so we will always be on hand to answer questions or even fit the hardware and install any software for you - with minimum of fuss allowing you to avoid those headaches and keep your business flowing."

It's just one example of how Diamond's approach is 25 years in the making and continues to grow as strongly as the beautiful stone they are named after!

So here's to the next 25 years! concluded John, we'll drink to that...

If you would like to know more about the Diamond Group, their services and what they can do for you and your business, visit www.diamond-group.net, or call 0191 519 3700.

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Based on 8,000 miles per annum

Official fuel economy figures for the Infiniti Q70 range in mpg (1/100 km): urban 25.2 to 15.0 (11.2 to 18.9), extra urban 36.2 to 28.8 (7.8 to 9.8), combined 31.4 to 21.6 (9.0 to 13.1). CO2 emission: 307 to 238g/km.

We are a credit broker, and we are not a lender. Finance provided by Infiniti Financial Services, Eagle House, 78 St Albans Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 1AF. Subject to status. Guarantees and indemnities may be required. You must be at least 18 and a UK resident (excluding the Isle of Man and Channel Islands). Models shown for illustration purposes. Metallic paint available at extra cost. Terms and conditions apply, please visit your local dealer for full details. Offer valid until 31st March 2017 at participating dealers only and subject to vehicle available in conjunction with any schemes or other offers. Vehicle price includes first registration fee and 12 months' road fund licence and delivery costs. Infiniti Europe Division of Nissan International SA, Zone d'Activités La Pièce 12, 1180 Rolle, Switzerland. Terms and conditions apply. Finance subject to status. CO2/MPG figures based on EU regulated laboratory testing, and may not represent real-life driving results (which vary depending on driving behaviour, conditions and other factors).



# **RUSH WITH HUSH**

Unbelievable deals on Q70 Sports Saloon at Infiniti Centre, Newcastle

The Infiniti name is steadily gaining ground in the UK. Last year was the company's most successful year in this country thanks largely to a range which is being rapidly refreshed. Infiniti prides itself on building top-quality cars which stand out from the rapidly increasing crowd of mundane cars which all look the same.

That is something you could never say about the Q70. If you are looking for an imposing, luxury, sports saloon, then the Infiniti Q70 will press all of your right buttons.



And, if you want to find out all about the Q70, there is no better place than the Infiniti Centre Newcastle. That's official because the Newcastle Silverlink dealership has just been given the "Best Customer Experience Award for Northern Europe" by Infiniti. Quite an accolade. Oh, and that's not all, in the Judge Service Recommendation survey 2016, the Infiniti Centre Newcastle notched up a stunning 97% score.

It's also worth taking note of the unbelievable deal which Infiniti Centre Newcastle can offer on the Q70. It surely has to rate as the best deal on an Infiniti Q70 in the UK.

If you take out a 2-year PCP (Personal Contract Purchase) you can drive off in the latest Q70 2.2 Premium from just £249 deposit & £249 per month. Alternatively, pay £19,625 up front for a car which retails at £33,750. Unbelievable.

The Infiniti Q70 2.2 Premium comes with the latest diesel power which appeals to drivers who want performance and economy. The 4-cylinder diesel which powers the rear wheels through a 7-speed auto 'box will easily reach high 50s mpg yet still deliver excellent performance for a large car. 0-60 takes 8.9 seconds; the top speed is 137mph. If you intend to cover a lot of miles or want a long distance cruiser, the Q70 2.2 diesel will fit the bill.



As for what you get for your money, go and compare this car with other sports saloons and make sure you take a careful note of the equipment list. Every Infiniti Q70 comes with leather trimmed, powered, front seats which have electrically operated lumber support and are both heated and ventilated. The steering wheel is powered for rake and reach. There's also tyre pressure monitoring, electrically operated double glazed windows and heated mirrors, headlight and wiper sensors, rear view camera, sat nav, cruise control, air con, front and rear parking sensors, park assist and a stunning audio system which will blow your socks off.

Remember, this is on every Infiniti Q70.

Okay...now go and add that little lot to any other

luxury sports saloon and then compare the price you will actually pay.

Elsewhere across the Infiniti Q70 range, if you want to blend serious economy with serious performance, then make a beeline for the 3.5 Hybrid Q70 (£43,950). 0-60 in a shade over five seconds and a top speed of 155mph. If you get stuck in town traffic or end up crawling along in the school run, the Hybrid Q70 will use electric power only. You waft along in silence and use zero fuel.

And if you really want to make the most of the Infiniti Q70s sporting potential, head for the 3.7 litre V6 petrol model (£45,565). 0-60 comes up in just over 6 seconds. Top speed is electronically limited to 155mph.

Every Infiniti Q70 is extremely comfortable. They're quiet, thanks to the double glazed windows. There's loads of interior space and plenty of luggage capacity. They're stunning to drive, hugely desirable and...yes...they're different.

The best idea is to go along to Infiniti Centre Newcastle on the Silverlink Business Park. Jeff Aynsley and his team will give you the full lowdown on this luxury sports saloon. Ask them nicely and they'll even organise a test drive. They'll also give you all of the info on their latest, sensational Q70 deals.



Call 0191 295 8686. The Infiniti Centre Newcastle at the Silverlink Business Park, Newcastle. Open 9.00 - 19.00 Mon-Fri. 09.00 - 17.00 Sat. Closed Sun.



# JENNINGS MAZDA UNVEILS ALL-NEW MX-5 RF MODEL AT EXCLUSIVE PREVIEW EVENT

Customers caught a glimpse of the hotly anticipated all-new MX-5 RF (Retractable Fastback) model at Jennings Mazda, part of the multi-award winning Jennings Motor Group, ahead of its official launch.

The all-new Mazda MX-5 RF model, was on display for one day as part of an exclusive preview event at the group's Cargo Fleet Lane dealership in Middlesbrough, where customers were given the opportunity to be among the first to see and test drive the award-winning two seater sports car.

Customers enjoyed exploring the all-new MX-5 RF in an exciting and dynamic new way using high-tech Oculus Rift virtual reality headsets. The special headsets allowed customers to interact with a high-definition 3D version of the Mazda MX-5 RF, personalising the car's exterior colours and interior trim in an instant according to their preferences.

Two Mazda Specialist Demonstrators were also on hand to accompany customers on test drives and deliver a personalised experience and detailed information about the latest car to join the popular Mazda family. With broad experience and knowledge of the UK car market, the professional drivers provided neutral, in-depth advice on the new compact roadster.

James Chorlton, Franchise Manager at Jennings Mazda in Middlesbrough, said: "The interest we've received in the all-new MX-5 RF since its initial reveal at the New York Motor Show last March, has been extremely encouraging. The new Mazda MX-5 RF adds a unique and stylish model to the range, one that stands distinct from the MX-5 Convertible, yet retains all the award-winning driver appeal the MX-5 sports car is famed for.

"The preview event was a huge success, it allowed customers to get out on the road and be one of the first to experience the Mazda MX-5 RF from behind the wheel."

Officially on sale from 4 March 2017, the all-new Mazda MX-5 RF joins the World Car of the Year MX-5 convertible range and is priced from £22,195 to £28,995.

Setting it aside from the convertible soft-top model, the all new Mazda MX-5 RF has a sleek retractable hardtop, which enables the thrill of open-top driving while retaining all the benefits of a hard roof.

A flagship Launch Edition will herald the six model range. Limited to just 500 cars, the special model is priced at £28,995 and features unique styling and equipment. It is powered by a 160ps 2.0-litre

SKYACTIV-G engine, plus boasts Blistein sports suspension and strut brace, a unique twin-tone roof, a numbered interior badge, BBS alloy wheels, black door mirrors and black rear spoiler. The limited edition model is available with a choice of free-of-charge Soul Red or Machine Grey metallic paint and is fitted with a soft-touch Alcantara trim and Recaro seats.

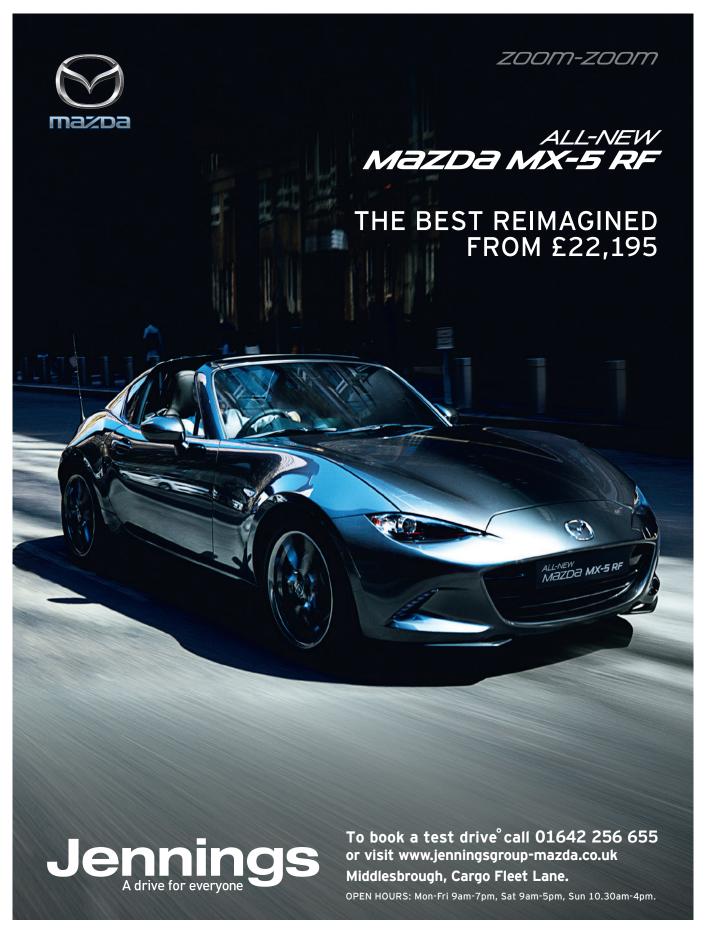
March will also see the arrival of the MX-5 Sport Nav Auto model, which is the first current generation Mazda MX-5 to feature an automatic gearbox.

Other new models on display and available to test drive at the Middlesbrough-based dealership, include the Mazda2, Mazda3, CX-3, MX-5, CX-5 and Mazda6.

As an accredited Motability dealer, customers who are entitled to a Mobility allowance, can exchange their weekly payment to lease a new car through the Motability programme at Jennings Mazda.

A range of aftersales facilities is also available as a result of a service, MOT, accident repair centre and parts department housed on the Middlesbrough site.

For more information about the range of products and services available at Jennings Mazda, call into the Cargo Fleet Lane dealership, contact 01642 256655, or visit www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk



The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (I/100km) for the all-new Mazda MX-5 RF range: Urban 28.0 (10.1) - 34.9 (8.1). Extra Urban 51.4 (5.5) - 57.6 (4.9). Combined 39.2 (7.2) - 46.3 (6.1).  $CO_2$  emissions (g/km) 167 - 142.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience.

Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of deployment. Retail sales only. Model shown: all-new Mazda MX5 RF 160ps Sport Nav, OTR from £25,695. Models shown features optional Machine Grey Metallic paint (£670).

# PROVIDING CONFIDENCE FOR LIFE



Academic success is crucial if pupils are to achieve their full potential but, when it comes to preparing them for life – and the workplace – it is just the beginning.

Last year, of Durham School's 74 A-level students, 2 gained Oxbridge places, 62% per cent achieved A\*-B grades and 39% are now studying at Russell Group universities.

These results put it among an elite band of academically high achieving North East schools, but Headmaster Kieran McLaughlin, himself a Cambridge graduate, believes the school's strength lies in providing far more than just good grades.

"Academic prowess is undeniably important," he said, "but no matter which career, field of study, industry or branch of academia our pupils enter, they will need far more than good grades.

"They will need self-belief, to ensure their voices are heard and their opinions listened to; they will need curiosity, to explore alternative methods and ideas and, above all, they will need to be confident and resilient"

In the workplace, as in life, it is not necessarily how often you fall that defines you, but how often and with what determination, you get back up again.

Resilience is possibly the most important attribute any of us can possess – particularly those with an entrepreneurial spirit – and it is an attribute Durham School takes time to foster.

"There has been much talk in the education sector recently about the need to nurture resilience in pupils," said Kieran, "with some schools considering introducing lessons geared to that end.

"However, at Durham School, we believe that resilience – like so many of life's lessons – is best established through experience; by giving each pupil the chance to try.

"Sometimes they will succeed and, inevitably, sometimes they will fail – but when that happens, we will pick them up, dust them off and encourage them to try again.

"And, whether they are taking up a sport, learning a musical instrument or simply climbing a tree, each time they try they will learn from what went wrong and, just as importantly, what went right."

Because building strength of character takes time, Durham School's ethos, of developing resilience, confidence, maturity, self-belief and the curiosity to embrace, rather than run from, opportunity, permeates each year group.

Among those opportunities offered to the coeducational school's 415 day and boarding pupils, aged from 11 to 18, are the Combined Cadet Force, Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes.

And, for musicians, the chance to practise and perform on the finest pianos in the world at the only All-Steinway Accredited School in the North of England.

"We also have large number of societies," said Kieran, "one of the oldest of which is the Heretics' Society. "Each member is invited to talk on a subject, or ideal, about which they are passionate and informed and then they must defend their stance under questioning from their peers.

"It's a hugely popular society and, from it, they gain confidence almost by stealth. Barely realising it, they are learning how to compose a clearly defined point of view, present it to a room full of people and mount a robust and considered defence of it.

"These are skills they will be need in virtually every work environment and throughout the course of their lives."

This year the school has also introduced a new initiative, called 98 in 9, aimed at encouraging the 14 and 15-year-olds in Year 9 to take up new hobbies, sports or challenges.

"They are tasked with doing 98 new things," said Kieran, "one for each of the 98 steps which lead to our school chapel and were laid in memory of former pupils killed in action.

"They might take up a new sport or simply read a book by an unfamiliar author but, by pushing their personal boundaries they will become more selfassured, more open minded and more capable.

"While academic success will always be at the heart of Durham School, it is my ambition that our pupils leave with more than just good grades: they leave with confidence, for life."

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



Tel: 0191 255 3980 www.westfield.newcastle.sch.uk

# ENGAGING THE SHARPEST MINDS







The Royal Grammar School is a special place, known and respected throughout the country as well as the North East, where aspirations are high, results are outstanding and the opportunities are endless.

Students go on to study highly selective courses at the most soughtafter universities, but also leave realising that life outside the classroom has been equally beneficial.

Academic success is at the heart of what we do and we believe that a broad and wide-ranging curriculum that is challenging yet balanced in association with a comprehensive extra-curricular programme of activities, visits and events is key to happy and ultimately successful children.

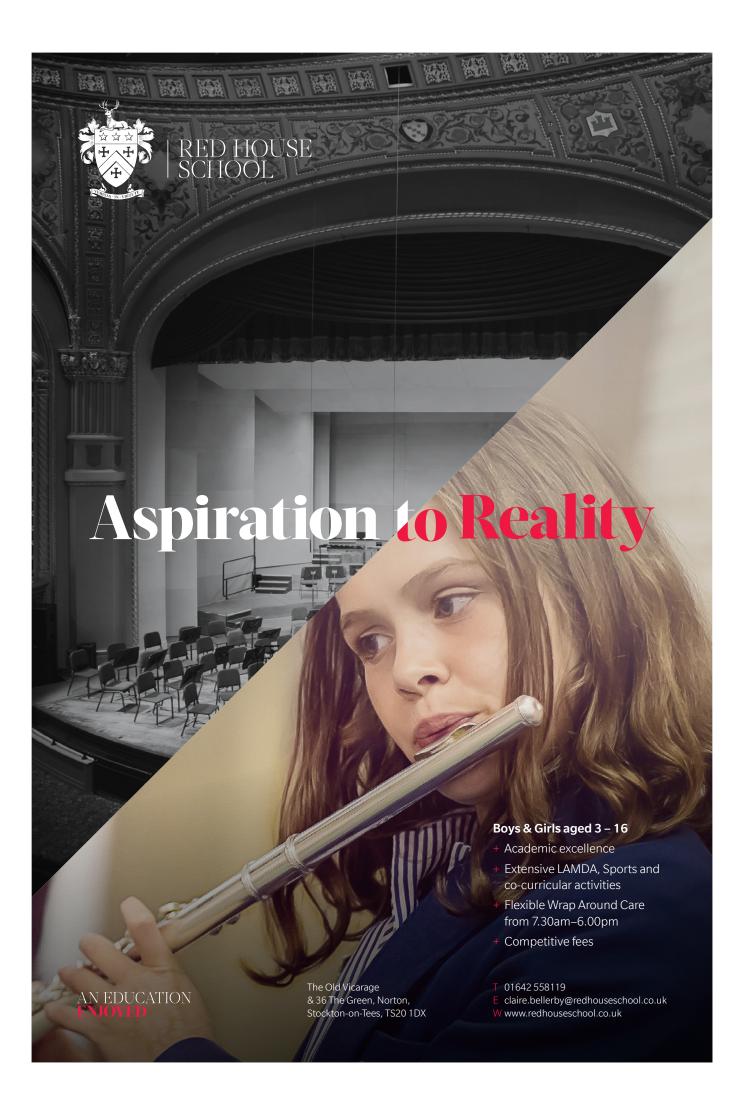
All students at RGS, from the lowest age of seven through to the top end of the senior school at 18, are encouraged to get involved with a wide range of activities, regardless of previous experience. The possibilities are endless and the students are encouraged to make suggestions and introduce new opportunities.

Student wellbeing is high on the school's agenda. Adopting a team around the child approach, we bring together a number of associated partners including; teachers, parents, counsellors and school nurses, to offer support

to students so they can continue to thrive while at RGS. We do all that we can to ensure children feel happy, supported and valued in school, making sure our role goes far beyond the academic achievement of a student.

We are able to combine all of this on one site, based in the heart of Jesmond. The school has been in its present location since 1906 and has some fine Edwardian buildings, yet we continue to invest to ensure we have first class facilities with the latest technologies. Our sports facility opened its doors in September 2015 and has a 25m pool, free-weights gym, fitness studio and a second sports hall. This sits alongside an impressive Performing Arts Centre which features a 300-seater theatre, recording studio, dance studio, individual teaching rooms and a keyboard lab. Together with well-equipped classrooms throughout the senior and junior school, RGS continues to provide exceptional education to the 1300 plus students who come here.

For more information please visit www.rgs.newcastle.sch.uk



# YOU GET AN OLOGY, YOU'RE A SCIENTIST ...!

By Ken James, Headmaster, Red House School

Many will recall the highly successful 1980s ad campaign for BT starring Maureen Lipman. Lipman, playing Beattie Bellman, was trying to be upbeat having just been told by her grandson Anthony that he'd flunked his exams, passing only pottery and sociology. Beattie most famous line was: "He gets an ology and he says he's failed... you get an ology, you're a scientist..." Just as an 'ology' became part of the vocabulary of schools in the 1980s, an education today should be defined by the 'ations': inspiration, aspiration and perspiration.

As an educator, I must provide inspirational teaching. Even now, having reached the dizzy heights of Headmaster, I still teach. I may have a lot of responsibilities that come with managing a school but being in the classroom is a must. It helps develop a true sense of collegiality with the other teachers and is also a reminder on a daily basis - to me and the children - why I entered the profession. As the person ultimately responsible for standards of teaching, I also need to be 'on point' and lead by example. To paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, I hope most of the pupils feel inspired in my lessons most of the time. If not inspired to love Maths, I hope they are at least inspired to do well in a subject which is so important. Inspirational teaching can inspire the children to be the very best they can be and we should be aiming for this each lesson.



We all want the children to be aspirational and to aim high. The children of today are preparing for the jobs of tomorrow, many of which do not exist yet. Technology is advancing so quickly that many jobs may seem the preserve of Sci-fi movies. But will they actually be jobs in 2040? I certainly did not expect to have high powered computer access on a mobile phone when, at the age of 16, I was only just mastering how to continuously scroll my name across the screen of a BBC computer. Times are changing - rapidly - and our children must be prepared for this.

is why the changes to the GCSE courses are even more perplexing!). Whilst facts might allow the children to become the next Egghead or Chaser, it will be their ability to apply, analyse, evaluate and create which will allow the children of today to navigate – or even invent – the jobs of tomorrow. This will only happen if we allow them to dream and aim high and being aspirational, for them and with them, is key.

And finally perspiration: success should not come easily and we encourage the children at Red House

To prepare the children we must ensure they have

developed their higher order thinking skills. Merely

filling their heads full of facts is not enough (which

And finally perspiration: success should not come easily and we encourage the children at Red House to approach everything with vigour. We expect them to want to learn, engage in the process and, perhaps, struggle a little. If they don't struggle, the work is too easy and we must ensure the children develop resilience and an ability to deal with challenge. Perspiring outside the classroom is also essential. An holistic education, with academia punctuated with physical activity, ensures the children become well-rounded adults.

So here's to the 'ations', all of which we require at Red House. Not only will they allow the children to succeed at school but they will ensure the children develop a love of life-long learning and a desire for success beyond their time here.

www.redhouseschool.co.uk

# Blagdon Gallery













Blagdon Gallery, Milkhope Centre, Berwick Hill Road, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6DA www.blagdongallery.co.uk ~ tel 01670 789 944

# INTERNATIONAL SPRING FAIR DEBUT









So often I hear people tell me they envy my 'idyllic' life. The image most people have of an artist wafting a paintbrush, waiting for the muse to settle couldn't be further from the truth at the moment!

We are only just getting through despatching the orders for prints and cards etc. which came in from the first ever Mary Ann Rogers stand at the International Spring Fair at Birmingham NEC, 5-9 February. The International Spring Fair is the biggest trade fair of its type in the UK, attracting buyers from shops, galleries, department stores, garden centres, online stores, overseas shops etc. After just a few days off in between Christmas and the New Year, the plans for our first ever Spring Fair continued, with the final design tweaks of the trade catalogue and order forms, also decisions about the colour to paint the stand, the flooring, the lighting, how best to display the prints and cards, and all the fiddly details that keep me awake, along with the anxiety about whether the weather would turn wintry in February and ruin everything!

The decision to take a stand at the biggest trade fair in the UK, with it's 20 halls, each larger than football pitches, with thousands of buyers from all over the UK as well as overseas, was made in spring 2016, when the Fine Art Distributors who sold my work for 20 years ceased trading. Until 2016 they represented me at the Spring Fair, and over the years did a wonderful job, ensuring my prints and cards were seen from one end of the country to the other in galleries and frame shops. A testimony their success is the fact that over the years I have

been voted 'Best newcomer' 'Best-selling selfpublished artist' 'Best-selling female artist' and in 2009 'Best-selling published artist' by the Fine Art Trade Guild. All of this without me ever setting foot outside my own studio!

Despite several offers from some of the better known fine art publishing houses, I took the decision to manage the trade side of the business in-house. Contracts with publishers vary, but on the whole, their aim is to make as much money out of an artist as possible, then, when sales drop or fashions change, move on to fresh artists. This does not necessarily mean the end of a career, but I have always taken the long view, and intend to have a sustained career as an artist for as many years as I am able to paint. Being independent means I can continue to allow the passion for the subject matter drive the work, rather than being influenced by current trends or pressure from outside.

2016 was the year of research. I visited Harrogate Home & Gift Fair in July, and the Autumn Fair at the NEC. I also consulted some of my more experienced card publisher friends for as much advice and information about taking part in the Spring Fair as possible, and am very grateful to the very successful and generous Alex Clarke for all her help. I also used various trade catalogues and pricelists for refence when designing my own.

With the weather in mind, I took the decision to drive my own 4x4 Hilux and trailer rather than hire a van, as I would manage better in the Hilux if it was snowy. Kate Buckingham came along to help, we have done other art fairs together in the past, and work extremely well as a team.

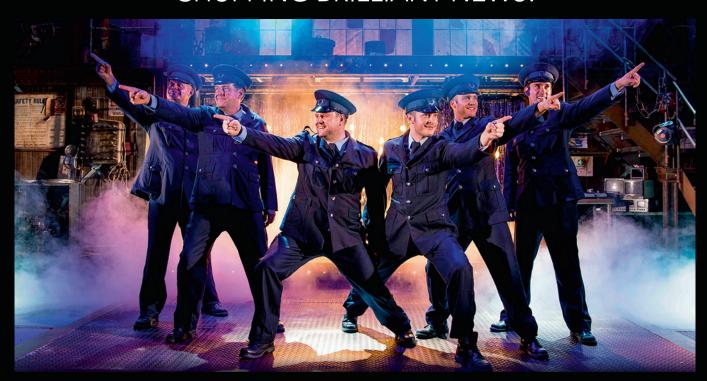
The 5am set off seemed ridiculously early, but after a clear run, we arrived at the NEC at 11ish, unloaded, then worked like demons until 10pm to get it ready for a 9am opening the next day, then into Birmingham on the train and found the canal on Gas Street and the narrowboat I had been loaned for the week.

Staying on a narrowboat seemed like a great idea, I am used to their quirks and challenges, but I wouldn't advise it for a February trade fair, when space for hanging clothes, mains electricity, hot water and central heating should be prerequisite! Twice we managed to trip the electricity, and one evening I forgot the key to the security gate and had a tricky climb over the high gate & railings into the yard to fetch the key from the boat.

All in all, the Spring Fair was extremely worthwhile. Lots of orders, lots of new buyers. So... the show is booked again for 2018, but I shall be booking a city centre apartment in good time this year!

www.marogers.com

# **CHUFFING BRILLIANT NEWS!**



Hold onto your hats! The Full Monty is back by popular demand at Sunderland Empire for one week only (20 - 25 March 2017). Directed by Jack Ryder, The Full Monty tour is led by Gary Lucy as Gaz, Andrew Dunn as Gerald, Louis Emerick as Horse, Chris Fountain as Guy, Anthony Lewis as Lomper and Kai Owen as Dave.

In 1997, a British film about six out-of-work Sheffield steelworkers with nothing to lose took the world by storm. Simon Beaufoy, the Oscar and BAFTA-winning writer of the film, has adapted his own hilarious and heartfelt stage production, which features the iconic songs from the film by Donna

Summer, Hot Chocolate and Tom Jones.

Gary Lucy is best known for his roles as Danny Pennant in EastEnders and was a past winner of Dancing on Ice. Andrew Dunn is best known as Tony in Dinnerladies whilst Louis Emerick played Mick Johnson in the long-running soap Brookside. Chris Fountain played Tommy Duckworth in Coronation Street, Anthony Lewis is best known as regular Marc Reynolds in Emmerdale and Kai Owen portrayed Rhys in Torchwood.

The Full Monty won the UK Theatre Award for Best Touring Production. The 2016/17 UK Tour began in

Bournemouth on 21 September 2016 and finishes at the Sheffield Lyceum on 15 April 2017.

Jack Ryder's other credits include national tours of Tm Firth's play Calendar Girls and the short film Act of Memory with Claire Skinner, Owen Teale and Anna Massey. As an actor, Jack is probably best known as Jamie Mitchell in EastEnders, a role he played for four years.

The Full Monty is Simon Beaufoy's first work for the theatre. His other screen credits include The Hunger Games: Catching Fire, Salmon Fishing in Yemen, 127 Hours and Slumdog Millionaire.

# ONCE UPON A SUMMER PARADE

South Tyneside's annual parade is set to celebrate the magic and wonder of children's storytelling this year in spectacular style.

Visitors to the town will be whisked away into a world of fantasy as Once Upon a Time forms the central theme of the Summer Parade in South Shields, a key highlight of the South Tyneside Summer Festival.

South Tyneside Council is launching the theme of this year's Summer Parade to coincide with National Storytelling Week. The theme was chosen to celebrate the opening of The Word, National Centre of the Written Word, the home for North East writers.

The parade will take visitors through South Shields on Saturday 1 July, embarking from the Town Hall along Fowler Street and Ocean Road to the seafront, where the magical entertainment will continue with live music and storytelling themed family friendly activities in Bents Park.

South Tyneside Council has enlisted local community interest company, Creative Seed to direct the parade. Creative Seed will be working with local schools, dance troupes and community groups to develop creative ideas and choreography as well as fabulous costumes and colourful decorations. Interested groups are invited to attend a meeting on Tuesday 14 March at The Word to find out more.



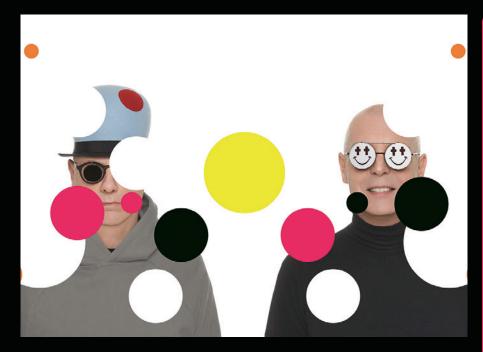


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# GLOBAL STARS TO RETURN TO NORTH EAST ROOTS

Northumberland has unveiled the line-up for its own major music festival launching this summer.

The Libertines and Pet Shop Boys will headline Festival on the Wall which is pitching up in a stunning countryside location near Hadrian's Wall (4-6 August 2017).

Pete Doherty, who hails from Hexham, will headline the main stage with The Libertines on Saturday night whilst the Pet Shop Boys will be the main stage act on Friday night, a homecoming gig for North Shields-born lead vocalist Neil Tennant.

The new festival will take place across 350 acres of privately-owned farmland, where for three days festival-goers will camp out and enjoy a variety of

unrivalled moments through music, dance, carnival, art and gastronomy.

Festival on the Wall aims to be 'the happiest festival in the UK' by giving visitors every option possible for an enjoyable weekend, from great food to easy ways to have a hot shower or camp in comfort with striking views.

Up to £10 from each ticket sale will go to Unicef UK to enable the world's leading children's organisation to continue their vital work.

Various camping options are available over the festival weekend, with early bird weekend camping tickets priced from £170.

# RECORD OF THE MONTH - ELBOW 'LITTLE FICTIONS'

The Elbow boys return with Little Fictions, their 7th album of new material. Following the departure of founding member and drummer Richard Jupp, Little Fictions marks the first line-up change in their illustrious 20 year career. In spite of this change in personnel though the band have released yet another strong collection of songs which were penned between log-fire sessions in Scotland and at lead singer Guy Garvey's home. The opening track Magnificent (She Says) is a real stand out featuring a neat configuration of guitar, drums and bass augmented by a wonderful sweeping string section. Other highlights include songs All Disco and Gentle Storm, not to mention the epic 8 minute title-track Little Fictions. Well versed in love and life, Garvey lends many a lyrical flourish with this being very much another Elbow album that stands up well to repeated listens.



#### WHAT'S ON THIS MARCH?

#### The Rock March 1-11

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234 www.customshouse.co.uk

#### Olly Murs March 6-7

Metroradio Arena T:(0844) 493 6666 www.metroradioarena.co.uk

#### Million Dollar Quartet March 6-11

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121 www.theatreroyal.co.uk

#### The Tempest March 7-11

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020 www.peoplestheatre.co.uk

# Mercury: The Ultimate Queen Tribute March 9

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040 www.atgtickets.com

#### Blood Brothers March 13- 18

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121 www.theatreroyal.co.uk

#### Not Dead Enough March 20-25

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121 www.theatreroyal.co.uk

#### The Full Monty March 20-25

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 566 1040 www.atgtickets.com

#### Roald Dahl's The Twits March 21-25

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151 www.northernstage.co.uk

#### Rick Astley March 24

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121 www.theatreroyal.co.uk

#### Marti Pellow March 24

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661 www.sagegateshead.com

#### 10cc

#### March 28

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661 www.sagegateshead.com

#### Craig David March 29

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666 www.metroradioarena.co.uk

#### The Searchers March 30

Whitley Bay Playhouse T: (0844) 248 1588 www.playhousewhitleybay.co.uk

### COMMISSION AN ARTIST EXPANDS...



Due to it's increasing success, Commission an Artist, has broadened its horizon on a global basis by hiring representatives in America and South Africa. This means that the offering of artists for your projects is even more diverse as artists are proactively recruited to join the firm and take advantage of the services on offer. Similarly, for UK artists, Commission an Artist serves as a way to reach global buyers who want to commission some bespoke artwork for themselves, their friends, or their business.

Global CEO, Helen Johnson, comments, "we are absolutely thrilled to have reached this point where we can proactively market UK artists to the rest of the world and bring artists from the rest of the world to UK consumers. There has been a lot of hard work involved and there will continue to be so, but we are very lucky to have some exceptional people on our team."

The recently recruited team includes a newly appointed CEO from the United States, who has top level experience of growing start-up companies, along with a proven Sales Director with the knowledge and experience to drive sales in the USA and on social media platforms throughout the world. The South African team includes a well connected Managing Director who has connections throughout the local market, including Interior Design businesses, as well as Corporate Businesses. Furthermore, the company has also improved its

support team, where experienced project managers are on hand to make sure the commissions are completed within specifications, on time, and within budget. Through Commission an Artist artists throughout the world are proactively marketed to the growing number of happy customers and prospects on the database.

Helen comments further: "Things have changed a lot this year and I very much view the last few years as the old company, 2017 is the launch of Commission an Artist and we have some great things planned. We will be offering our usual 'Win A Pet Portrait' competition in May, and we are currently working on some very interesting commissions, including producing sculptures for an award in the health industry. It's all very exciting and I am incredibly proud of the team and their efforts

Commission an Artist offer full project management

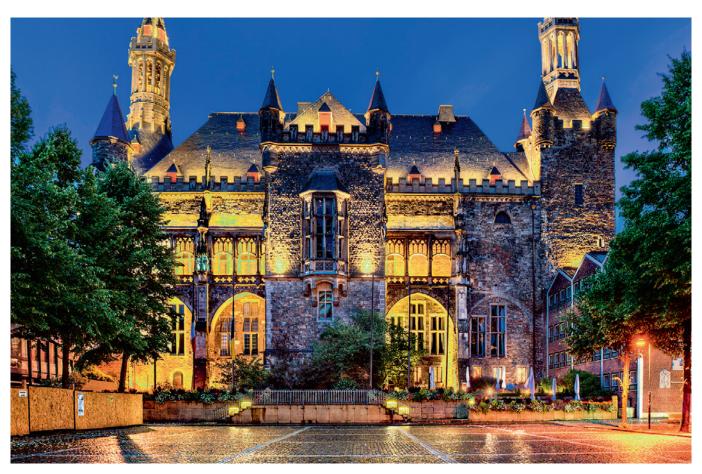
for art commissions. They find the artist(s) for you, work closely with you to ensure the project stays on track and delivers the artwork to you. They offer all ranges of artwork, Paintings, Drawings, Sculptures of Portraits, Animals, Landscapes, Fantasy, anything you like! You Think It. We Make It is their motto! The prices start from just £200 per piece of artwork and the selection of artists is global. You are therefore sure to find something you like, and all in the comfort of dealing with a reputable company, who looks after you and your money even stays in an escrow account until the artwork has been completed.



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

If you would like further details or if you would like to be included on our weekly mailing list please contact us now at info@commissionanartist.co.uk or telephone our friendly expert team on 01325 495639.

# **OUT & ABOUT - AACHEN**



Chester-le-Track, as well as being a leading retailer of domestic rail tickets, is also a member of AERA which is the Association of European Rail Agents. Every year, AERA members have an excursion by train into Europe, and for 2016 we went to Aachen. Firstly by Eurostar to Brussels and then onwards on the Deutsche Bahn ICE train to Aachen, which is an important stop on the route to Cologne (Köln).

Aachen, also known as Aix-la-Chapelle, is a spa and border city in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. Aachen was the preferred residence of Charlemagne c.742 – 814, and, from 936 to 1531, the place where 31 Holy Roman Emperors were crowned Kings of the Germans. Charlemagne was the first of the Holy Roman Emperors, and is buried in the Cathedral which was (like Durham) declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Aachen is the westernmost city in Germany, located near the borders with Belgium and the Netherlands: the tripoint is just west of the city. Aachen's industries include science, engineering and information technology.

In WW2, Aachen was the first German city to be captured by the Allies, and its residents welcomed the soldiers as liberators. The city was destroyed partially – and in some parts completely – during the fighting, mostly by American artillery fire and demolitions carried out by the Waffen-SS defenders. Damaged buildings included many medieval churches, although Aachen Cathedral was largely unscathed. Only 4,000 inhabitants remained in the city; the rest had followed evacuation orders. Its first Allied-appointed mayor, Franz Oppenhoff, was assassinated by an SS commando unit, for daring

to start the post-war reconstruction of his city whilst other parts of Germany were still fighting the Allies. But let's not mention the war.

We had a walk around the old town, visiting the Rathaus (City Hall) and the ancient Cathedral which is a Roman Catholic church. The Christmas markets were well under way with an intoxicating mix of goodies which as a practising diabetic were strictly off limits.

When the Eurostar service to Paris and Brussels started in 1994 out of Waterloo, it had to use crowded suburban lines south of London. Since 2007, the Eurostar has run from St. Pancras via HS1, right next door to King's Cross where the trains from the north-east come in. At one time is was envisaged there would be through trains into Europe from cities like Newcastle, and indeed there was for many years a train path at 09.57 from Newcastle into Waterloo. But it makes more sense to use any train via London, giving multiple journey opportunities instead of just one direct train a day. Eurostar is now carrying more passengers to Paris and Brussels than all the competing airlines added together. 68 UK stations (not including Chesterle-Street) have through fares, and Eurostar has

beyond, plus the leisure services to ski resorts and Disneyland.

Our partner in European and other foreign rail travel is Rail Tour Guide, a small business based in Pink Lane, Newcastle, just opposite Central Station. David Glover and his team are also AERA members and we refer business in both directions. Aachen in a day is perfectly doable (but expensive) if you stay overnight in London beforehand, but it's better to stay in Aachen for two nights (or more) and see the City properly. Why not go now before Brexit makes a visit more complex? If going by Eurostar, always ask for a CIV ticket to London International rather than the normal London Terminals ticket. It's cheaper, and under international rules you can travel on the next train out if you have been delayed.



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.

extended its tentacles to Lyons, Marseilles and





# IS 'DO IT YOURSELF' BUSINESS TRAVEL REALLY THE BEST WAY?

By Anne Bromley – Joint Managing Director Travel Bureau

We live in a 'Do it Yourself' age where we're all seemingly 'expert' at everything, with endless choices at our Google addicted fingertips. We crave instant gratification and ultimate control, not just in our personal lives but in business too.

And nowhere is this more evident than when we travel. We're constantly tempted with 'special offers' and how easy online comparison sites make it to find the 'best deal' available. Or do they?

There is much merit in the convenience and choice that being an internet 'DIY' booker brings However, whilst cost is a major factor for most businesses, it's not their only consideration - they have a duty of care to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their employees.

So, let me dispel some myths and offer some tips on how to get the most out of your business travel programme.

"Booking everything myself is more convenient": Perhaps, but is this best use of your time? Having employees organise their own trips – scouring the internet for the best deals, instead of concentrating on the tasks for which they are employed, can result in lost productivity and revenue. With the inability to measure sales, a business could miss supplier negotiated targets but, more concerningly, may not be able to locate their employees should something go wrong.

**Top tip:** If you want the flexibility of booking online, partnering with a travel management company to develop a customised 'self-service' booking tool could be the answer.

"I can book whatever I want": Personal preferences of an individual traveller can lead to inflated costs and take control away from the employer. If employees are making their own travel arrangements, are they following your company travel policy? In fact, do you have one? In a recent survey, 45% of North East Businesses said they didn't and, of those that did, only 21% had reviewed it in the last year.

Top tip: A travel management company will help you develop, update and implement a travel policy to deliver compliance in line with your company objectives. It's also a great way to obtain useful MI that might help you negotiate better rates and reduce overspend.

"Finding cheap fares is easy": Yes, it can be but does this ultimately represent the best value for your company? The nature of business is that things change, meetings are rescheduled or cancelled so it's important to minimise any penalties. The lowest fares may be totally inflexible with no changes and no refunds and the booker may not fully understand the implication of purchase. The travel industry is a dab hand at yield management and pricing is fluid, a travel company can often make a provisional booking guaranteeing the fare whilst approval to travel is sought.

**Top tip:** Travel management companies have access to a myriad of fares specifically for the business community and, if you're flying a specific route regularly or staying in the same hotels, they can negotiate direct with suppliers on your behalf.

"I don't have to pay any fees": The price you see is the price you pay but how many times have you reached that final screen, only to realise that the cost has increased? What about those hidden costs to your business - booking errors, cancellation and change fees plus loss of productivity, these all mount up.

**Top tip:** A professional travel management service doesn't come for free but working in partnership and agreeing a transparent pricing structure will give you a clear understanding of your overall business travel spend and save your finance team hours working through staff expense claims.

In a nutshell, business trips can be complex and, ensuring your travellers arrive fit for business and stay safe, is essential. A travel management company plans complete itineraries so travellers experience a seamless end-to-end journey, offering peace-of-mind 24/7 – now, that is something you won't find online!

Find out about Travel Bureau's corporate travel service, please call + 44 (0) 191 285 0346, email consulting@travelb.co.uk or visit www.travelbcorporate.com

# CRAFT ALE MICROPUB IN NE1

A new craft beer pub has recently opened in Newcastle city centre to help champion North East microbrewers and their unique beers.

The Town Mouse Ale House, which has room for a maximum of 50 people, opened recently in a basement unit on St Mary's Place. The venue, previously a coffee shop near Haymarket, also has an outdoor pavement area.

The micropub, the first venture for entrepreneur Jon Sibley and his newly-formed Sibley Brewing Company, offers four keg and four cask ales, six of which from small independent local brewers.

The Town Mouse opened following a five-figure investment in the premises. The interior takes inspiration from the traditional ale houses of Belgium and basement pubs from Ireland and Berlin. The venue is proudly dog-friendly with even a special 'dog brew' on offer.

The venture was a lifelong goal for Jon. He said: "I am a keen home brewer and a beer enthusiast so to open my own traditional ale house has long been a dream. When I left university last year, it seemed an ideal time to give it a try and it's all very exciting."

Newcastle law firm Sintons has supported Jon with the opening. Real estate specialist Tom Wills handled the negotiation of the commercial lease on the premises. He said: "The North East is well known for its many independent breweries and their array of locally-produced ales. The Town Mouse promises



to be another gem in the growing portfolio of pubs that showcase them.

"Jon is combining traditional alehouse interior

design and his array of handpicked ales with a quirky basement location and memorable brand name. The hallmarks of a successful stand-out venue are all there and we wish him the best of luck with it."

# DEAL MAKERS BEHIND PURCHASE OF NEWCASTLE UNION ROOMS

The successful purchase of Newcastle's popular Union Rooms pub was a team effort between a Durham entrepreneur, property specialists Bradley Hall and commercial law firm Square One Law.

The five-storey Union Rooms, at the bottom of Westgate Road, dates back to 1877 and was put on the market for sale by its present owner JD Wetherspoon last summer.

Property agent Bradley Hall, on behalf of Durham businessman Andrew Ward, is constantly monitoring the market for commercial and investment opportunities.

Peter Bartley, Director at Bradley Hall, said: "The Union Rooms is a prize leisure asset that doesn't often become available in the centre of Newcastle. It's an attractive Grade II building and a profitable leisure site. There will be further investment in the Union Rooms with additional plans to develop the upper parts of the building."

Andrew Ward has acquired the building through a newly launched company, Union Rooms Newcastle Management Ltd. Andrew already owns five pubs in Durham, The John Duck, The Angel, The Elm Tree, The New Inn and The William Hedley. He also owns Workwear Express, employing more than 130 people in Belmont, Durham.



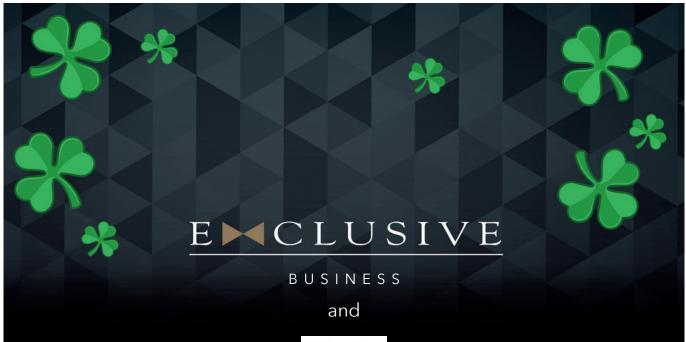


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# Celebrate St. Patrick's Day at Newcastle Racecourse **Cheltenham Gold Cup Live** Friday 17th March 2017 from 12 noon

A fun filled afternoon of Irish entertainment, Doddie Weir as MC, tipster and tote in the room and lively entertainment from "Twangling Jack and his Rascal Fiddlers", three course lunch and live racing action from Cheltenham.

> To book a place contact Linda@exclusive.co.com Tables of 10 @ £750.00 Individual places bookable too.



ROCKLIFFE HALL



























# TWO UNIQUE VENUES

Debbie Harvey, Events Supervisor at Civic Centre Banqueting and Mansion House Jesmond talks us through the various events packages available at each of the iconic venues.



#### YOUR MANSION FOR THE DAY

Located in the leafy suburb of Jesmond, The Mansion House provides an ideal backdrop to any occasion. With great transport links, we're available to hire for a number of special occasions including weddings, birthday celebrations, Christmas parties, business functions and much more. We take great pride in planning events and are more than happy to cater for any individual requirements. We want your event to be a smooth and memorable one so we're always happy to talk through any itineraries and even suggest some of our own ideas where appropriate.

#### **LUNCH/DINNER EVENTS**

The Mansion House also lends itself as the perfect setting for lunches and dinners. We specialise in a host of different occasions such as retirements, birthdays, christenings, anniversaries and also private business meetings. Our team of highly-skilled chefs are happy to accommodate wherever possible and all our menus are carefully prepared with your preferences and dietary requirements in mind. Large functions are also welcomed as we can accommodate up to 82 guests for dinner or up to 120 guests for a casual function with a hot/cold buffet of your choice. We even cater for outdoor events including BBQ's, albeit weather permitting! Packages are also available for

smaller parties which can be tailored to suit your individual needs.

#### ACCOMMODATION

Offering a truly unique experience, The Mansion House has been welcoming travellers to Newcastle for over 150 years. The venue extends a warm welcome to all visitors and boasts five beautifully appointed bedrooms each in keeping with the historic charm of the property. In addition to this, all guest rooms come complete with LCD TV's, hairdryers, telephones, tea & coffee making facilities and deluxe bedding. Use of the 5 bedrooms is included in the Exclusive Wedding Hire of the Mansion House along with a full English breakfast the following morning



#### NEWCASTLE CIVIC CENTRE

With its combination of our rich history, long lasting tradition, and authentic modernist architecture, The Civic Centre brings any function to life and is a venue quite unlike any other.



#### **MEETINGS/CONFERENCES**

There's something very different about holding a meeting in The Civic Centre. Aside from the unsurpassable level of service that our clients have come to expect as standard, the rooms themselves each boast an individual style that are second to none. The very epitome of modernism, all rooms are characterised by carved, African walnut wood panelling set against authentic raw silk-lined walls,

whilst each piece of furniture is original, and of authentic, Scandinavian design. The site comprises 12 rooms of varying sizes and each is named after a famous son of the local area. We can cater for meetings anywhere between 12 and 50 people and, as ever, our rooms are always fully customisable to meet your requirements. Whether it be a whole multimedia wall fit for presentations, or simply a whiteboard or flop chart, we pride ourselves on being able to offer anything you could possibly need. We also cater for any food and beverage requests. A selection of sandwiches and cold refreshments can be brought to you table, or our own personal gourmet chef can cook up a menu of your choice. Like always. All you have to do is ask. Call us today if you'd like to make your next meeting both highly professional and remarkably stylish.

#### **WEDDINGS**

With over 40 years of experience, nobody knows quite how to make a wedding reception as special as we do. Both you and your guests can't fail to



be impressed by our outstanding level of service and opulent surroundings yet the true beauty of our weddings, as with all of our functions, lies in the flexibility of the service we provide. From the welcome drinks on our Grand Staircase right through to the last dance on our fully-sprung dance floor in the banqueting Hall, nothing in our wedding packages is set in stone, and nothing is ever too much trouble.

To contact the Mansion House to speak to an event organiser or to book an appointment/show round, please call 0191 277 7222 or email enquiries@theciviccentre.co.uk



Hospitality Services, Civic Centre, Barras Bridge, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 8QH

Telephone: 0191 277 7222 | Email: enquiries@theciviccentre.co.uk www.newcastle.gov.uk/weddings | www.newcastle.gov.uk/conferences



# NE1 NEWCASTLE RESTAURANT WEEK SMASHES ALL PREVIOUS RECORDS

It was a bumper January for restaurants in Newcastle city centre thanks to NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week, which delivered a major boost to business worth over £1/2 million.

As soon as the dates were announced back in December, things got off to a fantastic start with over 100 restaurants signing up to take part, the biggest number ever to register for the event, which is now a firm fixture in the city's events calendar.

As well as the highest number of participating restaurants, other records were broken during the week, which ran from 16 – 22 January. Nearly 45,000 people dined out over the course of the event, 10,000 more than in 2016, and restaurants also reported a huge rise in sales, with an average increase of nearly 20% year on year.

NE1's Get into Newcastle website, which publishes details of all participating venues and their Restaurant Week offers, also reported a huge spike in activity, recording its highest ever number of unique visitors, beating all previous records, with over 1.7 million Restaurant Week page views by the time the event was over.

January was the 13th NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week held since the event was first launched in 2011, and the original idea came from New York,



where twice a year diners get the chance to eat out at some of the city's top restaurants for a fraction of the normal price. The formula translated well to Newcastle with its vibrant restaurant scene and has now quickly grown in stature. When the event was first held, 13 restaurants took part and now six years later, over 100 celebrated NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week this January with more still expected in August this year. Venues devise showstopping menus to attract new diners, many of whom are keen to try out venues for the first time,

encouraged by the NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week offer of dining out for only £10 or £15 per head

Ben Whitfield NE1 Marketing and Events Manager said: "We are absolutely delighted that this January's NE1 Newcastle Restaurant Week broke all previous records. The event continues to go from strength to strength reflecting the growth of the city's restaurant scene. Newcastle is now the culinary capital of the North with more restaurants per square mile than any Northern city and Restaurant Week is a great way to celebrate this.

It is such a simple formula that is easy to understand and well received by diners and restaurants alike. We're confident that we'll keep breaking these records and are already gearing up for August."



2017 SPECIAL OFFER - LIMITED NUMBER of dates available\*

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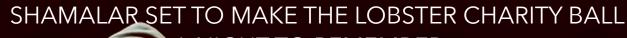
- Extra Guests for Day and Evening £35.00 per guest
- Extra Guest for Evening only £10.00 per guest
- Wedding guest's special accommodation rate, £41.00 per double or twin including breakfast Children sharing with adults charged extra £10.00 each includes breakfast
- Starlit Backdrop Curtain and Top Table Skirt £130.00
- Organza sash to compliment your chair cover 35 pence each
- Balloon table cluster (3 balloons) £3.50 per table
- Fully stocked sweetie table £60.00
- Pre booked bottles Prosecco, for welcome or toast, discounted by 25%
- Arrival canapés, Chefs Selections of 5, £3.00 per person

# Keepsake Wedding Box

...yours to keep and treasure, contains Something Old, Something, New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue along with a few other special gifts from Holiday Inn, Washington

\*Excludes some Saturdays. Terms and conditions apply.







Hardwick Hall Hotel in County Durham will play host to its 12th Lobster Ball on April 21, to help raise funds for Stockton-based charity Daisy Chain

Leading 1980s soul stars Shalamar - who have sold more than 25 million albums worldwide - will be headlining the event, while guests can look forward to a four course gourmet dinner in a night which has become one of the biggest on the social calendar.

But while eating, drinking and being merry may be on the menu, the event is really all about raising as much money as possible for charity.

Over the years, the Lobster Ball has raised tens of thousands of pounds for a variety of charities and good causes, thanks to the fundraising commitment of John Adamson who owns Hardwick Hall and Ramside Hall Hotel, Golf and Spa.

"While the ball itself is all about giving guests a fantastic night out, we are also committed to

raising as much money as possible for the charity," he explained. "To all of us here Hardwick Hall, doing what we can to support good causes close to us is vital, and that's the reason we host the Lobster Ball.

"This year we have decided to support Daisy Chain for the third time. It's a charity which supports children with autism and is an ever-growing project which relies on donations."

Daisy Chain is based in Norton, Stockton-on-Tees, and helps some 1700 families across the Tees Valley by proving around 600 hours of respite care to more than 580 children every week.

"Supporting charities like Daisy Chain is, I feel, our way of putting something back and it's something I've always felt passionate about. The Lobster Ball is a great night out, enjoyed by many guests but it's all about digging deep and giving generously."

Guests at this year's ball will enjoy a delicious surf and turf dinner prepared by the award-winning chefs from The Rib Room Steakhouse and Grill, along with complimentary wine, lager and beer throughout the night.

And they will also get the chance to dance the night away to the sounds of Shalamar this year. The band had a string of hits during the 1970s and 80s, including A Night to Remember, I Can Make You Feel Good, Friends and There It Is.

They follow a list of stars who have performed in previous years, including Heather Small of M People fame, 80s pop favourites Go West and R&B diva Jocelyn Brown.

Also taking to the stage this year will be the sensational six-piece band, Sally Army and Shakedown who will be performing a swing set, while the night will be compered by lovable North comic, Steve Walls.

Adding to the entertainment will be a fashion show featuring clothes from Durham's Woven Gentlemen's Outfitters and Love Niche of Newcastle.

The black tie event will begin at 7pm with reception drinks and canapés and continue on until midnight.

Tickets for the 12th Lobster Ball cost £145 plus VAT per person are available by contacting the venue's events team on 01740 620253

or by emailing events@hardwickhallhotel.co.uk.





# Friday 21st April 2017







An evening of first-class entertainment with headline performance from

# **SHALAMAR**

Featuring Howard Hewett, Jeffrey Daniel & Carolyn Griffey
Full band performing hits including A Night To Remember,
Make That Move, I Owe You One plus many more.

# Sally Army

**Shakedown band** 

A Fabulous Six Piece Band

Sensational Swing Set

### **Compére Steve Walls**

# Fashion show by Woven, Gent's Outfitters & Love Niche, Women's Wear

Reception drinks and canapés from 7.00pm • Four course gourmet Lobster Surf and Turf menu created by the award winning chefs from the Rib Room Steakhouse & Grill Taittinger Champagne Bar • Complimentary wine, lager and beer all night.

Dress Code - Black Tie • Carriages 12.30am

£145.00+VAT per person. To book your place please contact the events team on 01740 620253 or email events@hardwickhallhotel.co.uk

Hardwick Hall Hotel, Sedgefield, Co. Durham. TS21 2EH





















### SHIRLYNN LIM

Radisson Blu Hotel, Durham

In the latest in a series of features
Northern Insight's Michael
Grahamslaw meets seasoned
hotelier Shirlynn Lim of the
Radisson Blu in Durham and asks
about her path to the top, her
proudest acheivements to date
and what lies ahead.

# Whilst growing up did you always envision yourself working within the Hotel industry?

Initially I toyed with PR and Marketing but I met a General Manager at a career day in High School who provided me some Summer work experience within his Hotel. It was here that I fell in love with the industry and saw that it presented a great passport to see the world.

#### Can you briefly outline for the readers your career path to date?

Truly cosmopolitan I suppose. After the traditional Hotel School in Switzerland I went on to University in America and subsequently worked for the Westin brand, part of Starwood, before becoming a Rooms Division Manager in Rio de Janeiro. I then had a spell as a Front Office Manager with Radisson Blu in the Middle East before a short project in the idyllic Maldives with another company. Reality called and I rejoined Radisson and had time in London, Manchester, Russia before my move to Durham. All very different life experiences, meeting wonderful people along the way and tremendous fun.

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

You only get 1 chance to make an authentic and memorable impression. Our CEO spoke recently about Radisson Blu moving from good to great and that is behind everything we do. We try and make every moment matter.

#### What do you feel is The Radissons greatest asset?

We have a wonderful team of staff including a lot of Durham born people who are very proud of sharing their City. This is a fabulous place which is so proactive in promoting itself. Events such as Kyren and the Lumiere Festival are only enhancing the visitor experience.

#### Can you summarise your greatest acheivements to date?

Hitting goals within each building I have worked. Also juggling the complexities of family life whilst building a very busy career at the same time.

#### Which ideas are you currently working on?

We are launching a new restaurant concept in the Summer called Collage which is terribly exciting and will provide the diner with a great visual experience and new play on classic British dishes.

# With new hotels emerging all the time can you outline how you aim to keep the Radisson as a leading light in the region?

It is important to recognise our strengths and focus on what what we are good at. We have a great identity in Durham and I think if remain true to our values and beliefs then the Hotel will continue to prosper.

#### Who are your heroes in and out of business?

Sheryl Sandburg, COO of Facebook is truly inspirational and a great champion in getting the uncomfortable issues out in the open about balanced leadership. A very strong lady.

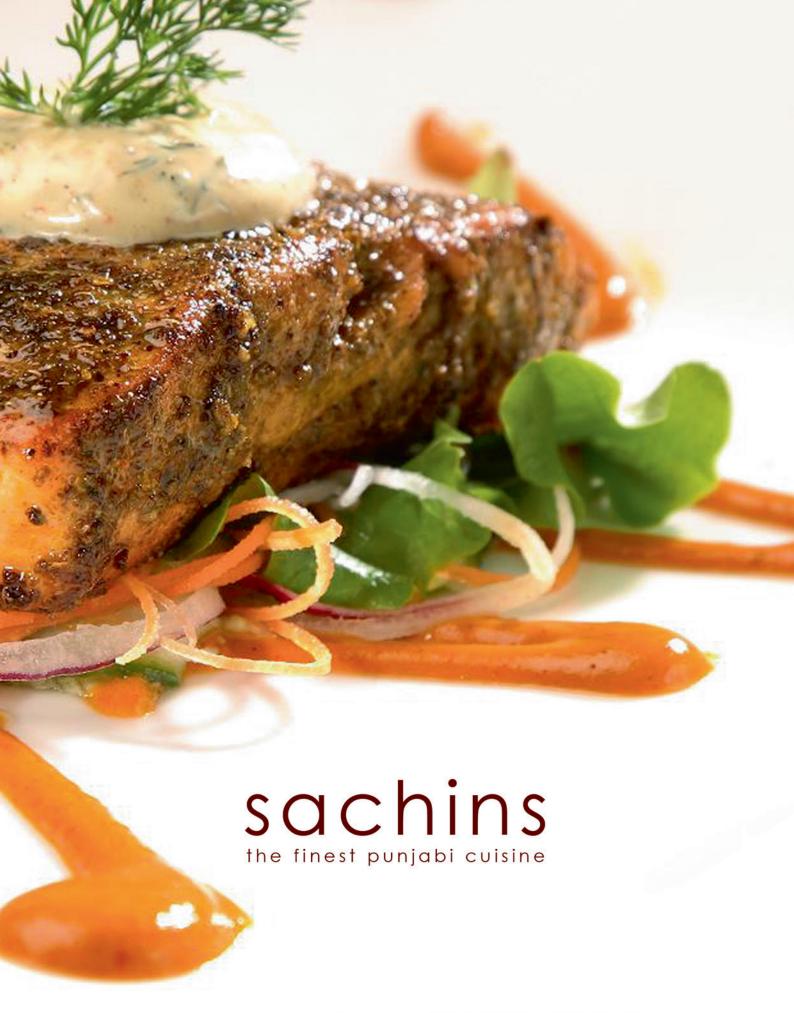
#### How do you relax after hours?

Yoga, a good book and a TV box set never fail!

#### How would you like to be remembered?

As a person with a positive impact on people.

www.radissonblu.com/en/hotel-durham



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# THE COQUETVALE IS A CLASS ACT









Michael Grahamslaw enjoys a memorable stay & play golf experience in the heart of Rothbury.

Feeling a touch of the old executive burnout after really hitting the ground running in 2017, I afforded myself a few days of rest & recuperation. Mini-breaks are good for the soul and it had been a little while since my son Jack and I had played golf together so I decided to reacquaint him with how the game should be played. Our travels led us to Rothbury, a picturesque market village in Northumberland which proved a pleasant release from the muck and bullets of the media game. Our home for the night was The Coquetvale Hotel, a handsome 19th century town house complete with 14 well-appointed bedrooms and a swish bar & restaurant.

The Northern Insight boys spluttered into town and we were soon warmly received by the hotel's General Manager Alison Walklett. Alison is a dynamic operator with a wealth of experience who is keen to widen the Coquetvale's sphere of awareness beyond its burgeoning local reputation. After a brief inspection of our rooms, it was clear that this hotel merits just that. Following an elegant refurbishment, guest rooms are now a picture of luxury and come characterised by stylish splashes of colour, plush bedding and soft ambient lighting. They're also equipped with every conceivable mod con whilst the highly-prized rooms at the front of the building offer an idyllic rural vista over the River Coquet. They even exhibit the paintings of local

creative virtuosos Dave Pickard and David Tallberg. A lovely touch.

Now that we'd settled in, what were we to do with all this precious time on our hands? Well, The Coquetvale actually acts as the perfect base from which to explore all of the surroundings have to offer. In such a close proximity to Northumberland National Park, there's numerous country walks/ hikes available alongside clean trout fishing rivers and heart-stopping stargazing opportunities. Not to mention popular nearby attractions like the Cragside Estate, Brinkburn Priory and Alnwick Castle. For two technically-bereft-yet-frightfullykeen golfers such as ourselves though there was to be only one backdrop to our afternoon of leisure.

Nestled amongst the rolling hillsides of the Coquet Valley, Rothbury Golf Club occupies a quite breathtaking plot of land. Recently in-post is Club Manager Paul Stancliffe, a PGA professional of rich golfing pedigree. Paul recognises the enormous potential of the site and works proactively to attain the best experiences for his members and visitors. Despite its staunch membership following, Rothbury GC is perhaps somewhat overlooked by the wider golfing community which is a pity considering it boasts 18 holes of challenging golf (they're all challenging for me) and immaculate green-keeping. There's also a club shop, extensive practice facilities and a clubhouse which is one of the friendliest we have encountered in some time. With Paul at the helm. I'm convinced the place will really establish itself and I urge you to take advantage of some of the highly competitive green fees/society packages available in the months ahead.

Jack - The Bandit - took the golfing honours yet a great afternoon was had by us both as we returned to the Coquetvale in a buoyant mood. This was followed by a brisk "Cannon Ball Run" of the local fleshpots before taking dinner at the hotel's in-house eatery. All in the name of investigative journalism, you must understand.

The Coquetvale offers sumptuous food in refined surroundings. Sounds of chatter and glass-clinking pervade the air as diners bask in the afterglow of their daytime outdoor pursuits. Jack kicked off with the winter-warming Roasted Pepper Soup whilst I went for the Prawn & avocado cocktailfresh, delicate and a delight to eat. This wasn't just simple fayre however as for mains Jack boldly went for the Seasonal Breast of Pheasant with black pudding and apple mash. I meanwhile - with a few calories banked- tucked away the Pizza Diavolo. Sagely recommended by our waiter Matt, a bottle of Valpolicella set this off exquisitely.

Now into the springtime, the clearer weather lends itself nicely to a countryside retreat and The Coquetvale will be of prime consideration for us going forward. A hardy annual? I think so!

www.coquetvale.co.uk www.rothburygolfclub.com





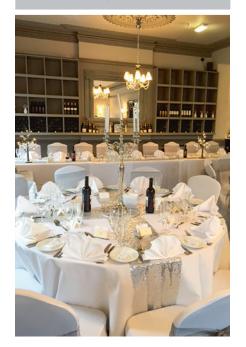




#### **CONTACT US**

THE COQUETVALE
STATION ROAD
ROTHBURY
NORTHUMBERLAND
NE65 7QH
01669 622900

www.coquetvale.co.uk stay@coquetvale.co.uk



# E COQUETVALE HOTEL | RESTAURANT | BAR

Perfectly located on the edge of the Northumberland National Park in the scenic and tranquil village of Rothbury, this 19th century town house is an ideal setting for an intimate wedding celebration.

#### YOUR PERFECT DAY -PERSONALISED TO YOU

The Coquetvale combines elegance and grandeur with a picturesque location, making it the perfect venue for your intimate wedding. Fully licenced for civil ceremony the wedding suite with a beautifully panelled walls in pastel hues and mood lighting, is where you will come together as one. Wedding breakfast takes place in the grand restaurant which boast 10 windows offering amazing views over the Coquet Valley. You are guaranteed that your wedding album will be stunning, especially with some wonderful and quirky settings within walking distance of the hotel.

The Bride and Groom take the lead when planning their day, and an experience and dedicated wedding team are here to guide, advise and follow through delivering to perfection on the day.

#### **EXCLUSIVELY YOURS**

With exclusive use of the hotel including wedding suites and bedrooms, the Bride and Groom can relax with family and friends from start to finish, enjoying the splendour of the beautiful surroundings.

#### PERFECTLY PACKAGED

The most popular Platinum Package, based upon 50 day and 60 evening guests includes full room hire, red carpet treatment, fizz and canapés reception, pianist, 3 course wedding breakfast, welcome fizz for evening guests, evening buffet, disco, accommodation and much more...From only £4,500.

### PINOT NOIR

Pinot Noir is one of the finest red grape varieties of them all and after decades of being in the background it is now starting to make a significant impact on the wine world.

The origins of Pinot Noir are in France, particularly in the vineyards of the Côte d'Or of Burgundy where the region's finest red wines are produced; wines such as Nuits-St-Georges, Beaune and Gevrey-Chambertin – all 100% Pinot Noir. The other very important area in France for Pinot Noir is the Champagne region where, along with Chardonnay and Pinot Meunier, it is an intrinsic component in arguably the world's most famous wine.

So why then has it taken so long for this wonderful variety to achieve success in other parts of the world?

Pinot Noir is a notoriously difficult grape to grow. It is very particular about the soil it is planted in and climate is critical — it is a variety that needs cool conditions. It is susceptible to a host of diseases and the only way to produce good Pinot Noir is to keep yields extremely low. Additionally, even if you manage to successfully produce good grapes this fickle variety is difficult to turn into wine; its thin skin usually gives wine that is relatively light both in colour and body with low tannins that can result in unpredictable ageing. Pinot Noir tends to produce wines that are elegant rather than huge fruit driven styles — wines that you have to go and look for

rather than blockbusters that leap out at you.

If, however, you are able to find the right vineyard conditions and you have the skill to vinify the wine well then the results can be breathtaking. When young the wine from Pinot Noir tends to be reminiscent of juicy red fruits – cherries, raspberries and strawberries. As it ages the wine will often take on fuller, meatier characteristics with earthier, vegetal notes adding depth and complexity. Whatever the age of the wine, Pinot Noir tends to have an excellent structure based on a backbone of firm, elegant acidity. This characteristic makes it a wine ideally suited to partner rich or fatty dishes – duck, goose or lamb are an excellent match, the acidity of the wine cutting through the richness of the food.

Outside of France the some of the finest example of Pinot Noir can be found in New Zealand, especially in Central Otago, Marlborough and Martinborough. Here the cooler climate is perfect for the grape and it is New Zealand's most widely grown red grape and second only to Sauvignon Blanc in overall plantings. Many of the New Zealand Pinot Noirs are superb and when one considers that most of the vines are still relatively young the future for the variety is extremely exciting.

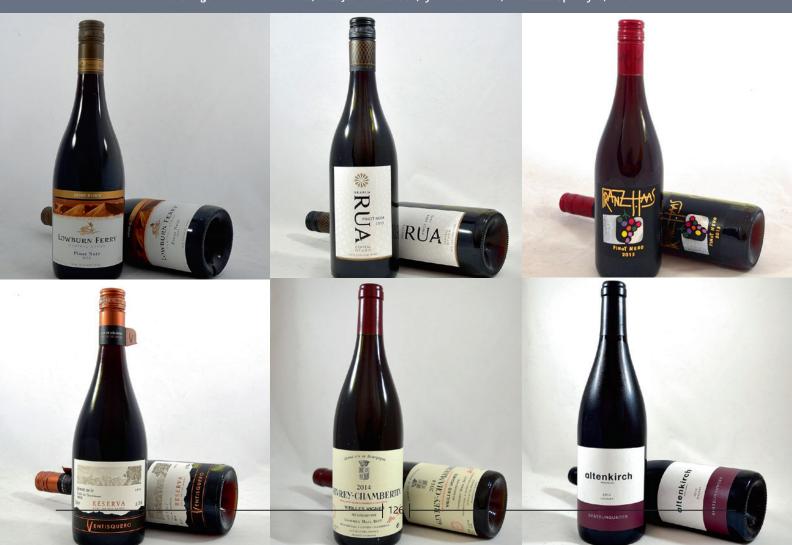
Australia has significant plantings of Pinot Noir especially in the Yarra Valley, Mornington Peninsula and Geelong regions of Victoria State, Tasmania, the Adelaide Hills area of South Australia and the Great Southern region of Western Australia. Again the key is cool climate.

North America produces some excellent Pinot with California and Oregon leading the way. Here the cooling effect of the Pacific Ocean in areas like California's Russian River, Carneros and Anderson Valley make for the perfect Pinot Noir conditions.

South America, particularly Chile, can produce fine Pinot Noir. Here the cool climate conditions are often achieved by siting the vineyards at altitude – the foothills and valleys of the Andes provide wonderful conditions perfect for the grape.

In Europe, aside from France, Pinot Noir can do well in northern Italy where it is known as the Pinot Nero, and more and more good Pinot is being grown in Germany where it is known as the Spätburgunder. Finally, if you get the chance to taste Pinot from Austria you will not be disappointed. The vineyards of Burgenland, Austria's most easterly state, can produce brilliant wines, so good that sadly virtually none is exported.

Further information about the aforementioned wine can be found at www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk or instore at Richard Granger Fine Wine Merchants, West Jesmond Station, Lyndhurst Avenue, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 3HH













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Photography: Browns Photography



### SARDINIAN SUNSHINE IN THE GEORDIE DRIZZLE

This chic Italian eatery has been a permanent fixture on Newcastle's Quayside for over 20 years.

Michael Grahamslaw checks out whether Sabatini's has still got it.

Torn between re-runs of Columbo and a Foyle's War triple bill, I decided to take the family out for some impromptu Saturday afternoon fun at Sabatini. Just a stone's throw away from the Tyne Bridge, this riverside restaurant occupies an enviable location and has been dazzling diners for decades with its own unique branch of Italian cuising

Inside, the dining area exudes swank and sophistication and comes complete with floor to ceiling mirrors, polished wooden tabletops, parquet flooring and some authentic, Roman ceiling murals. Tyneside's answer to the Sistine Chapel? Boasting a warm and convivial atmosphere, it was filled with customers too, I clearly wasn't the only one unenthused by that weekend's TV listings.

It had been a little while since my previous visit although one thing that hadn't changed was the cheery welcome on arrival. The staff at the restaurant are friendly and attentive and appear to take genuine pride in what they do. We soon settled in and grew acquainted with an excellent bottle of Chianti.

Owned and managed by restranteur Fabrizio Saba and his family, Sabatini's is the big brother of fellow Italian frontrunners Prima (Dean Street) and Fratelli (Ponteland). It's little surprise

then that the menu champions the cooking of his homeland in Sardinia and offers up a number of rustic specialities. There's a myriad of choice available and a few dishes which wouldn't appear out of place in the Sardinian hills, see the Sardinian broth with shell fish, tomato and fregola or the Sardinian pork sausage with garlic, black pepper and chilli. Naturally ingredients such as pecorino, abundance as everything is done with trademark Sardinian energy and flair. There's even the traditional suckling pig, a prevailing dish of the island which can to 14 persons. Sadly our little Saturday afternoon sojourn didn't quite merit that occasion but it's definitely one for the to-do list!

We instead kicked off with starters of Pizza Garlic Bread, Garlic King Prawns, Bruschetta Sarda and good old Bucce Di Patate. All starters were mopped up emphatically with the Bruschetta Sarda being a real stand out. This consisted of toasted bread enlivened by extra virgin olive oil, sea salt and a large helping of the aforementioned spicy pecorino cheese — this came stylishly presented and was a great way to begin.

Our main courses were a similar blend of Italian restaurant staples and a la carte options. My daughter Holly, tucked into

Pizza Del Campo; topped off with grilled aubergine, courgette, artichokes and red onion. My wife Lisa meanwhile fancied the Pan fried Salmon accompanied by green olives, capers and some plump little vine tomatoes. I procured my weekly chilli fix from the Chicken Supreme dressed in a devilish arrabiata sauce, whilst my son Jack went for the signature Tournedo Rossini alla Sabatini; an 8oz fillet steak wrapped in pancetta and doused in an intensely rich Madeira sauce. This was embellished further with a smooth scoop of home made pate and proved a welcome departure from his usual peppercorn sauce. All of this was flavoursome, smile-inducing food and needless to say we all exchanged samples of each others meals. Much like being in the old country eh?

Sadly we were all staring defeat in the face so we settled on coffees over desserts although when (not if) we return we'll definitely be trying out the tiramisu and the Italian style bread & butter pudding.

With the emergence of so much competition in recent years it's a real testament to Fabrizio and his team that this place remains one of the cities premier Italian restaurants whether it be for culinary expertise or fun happy hour fayre. It was a joy to be back. I'm just so glad I bodyswerved Columbo!



# NO ORDINARY EVENT VENUE















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What better way to experience a memorable day (we're only 30 minutes from Newcastle) than by participating in a fun, action packed outdoor team building activity? Teamwork for Everyone's SUCCESS.

We have 7 conference and meeting rooms and can accommodate anything from 10-300 delegates.

We offer complimentary Wi-Fi and parking and have 141 bedrooms so you and your team can make a night of it.



Book a meeting with us in 2017 for 10 or more and receive 15% discount on outdoor activities if you quote NIMarch

Call us today on 01434 676 512 or email slaley events@qhotels.co.uk for more information.

# MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE - OF THE TIGER...



Tiger Tiger Newcastle may be well-known as one of the city's biggest party venues, but few know it's about so much more than that, until now!

That's not to say its reputation as a weekend hot-spot isn't well deserved. Located next door to The Gate, featuring seven separately themed rooms, with everything from the throwback of the Groovy Wonderland, to the Jewel Bar, there's something for everyone to ensure a night to remember.

But it's more than that. The lucky voice karaoke pods add to the experience of an unforgettable night, but yet again, there's more to Tiger Tiger than you might think.

The recent additions and improvements to the venue's restaurant all mean Tiger Tiger is as great a place to eat as it is when the sun goes down and the revellers come out to play.

A new chef has entered the jungle, new items are on the menu and the offers are constant and changing - meaning in terms of dining out, not only will Tiger Tiger Newcastle tame even the most vicious of hungers, but it won't tear into your wallet in the process.

It's an approach which is paying off in spades for Tiger Tiger who are quickly earning their stripes as



the place to be for any occasion.

Newcastle as a city is well known for its eclectic mix of cultures, proven by its contendership for the 2008 European City of Culture. Sport, theatres and shopping combine to make it one of the country's most popular places to visit, but it's perhaps the nightlife which sets the northern jewel apart from the rest.

Regularly seen as the party capital of the north,

Newcastle certainly knows how to have a good time. But what many underestimate about the city and the surrounding areas is its rich food heritage.

It's something which hasn't gone unnoticed with the Tiger Tiger team, with a move to reposition itself as much a successful restaurant as it is a party spot

Jen Shepherd, Tiger Tiger's sales manager is among those leading the charge, and says it's a logical step for the venue to take.

"We're already well-known for being at the centre of the city's nightlife, so why not aim to become the go to place during the day. Be it business lunches, casual diners or even family meals, we really want people to know that there's a lot more to Tiger Tiger than just a great night out."

It now means that as well as serving up a range of cocktails on a night, Tiger Tiger now offers as much variation on the food front.

Be it a quick snack, a swift bite or a full three course meal, Tiger Tiger has you covered. Tiger Tiger is open from 4pm Sunday to Thursday and from 12 noon Friday and Saturday.

To find out more on the range of menu options on offer, visit www.tigertiger.co.uk/newcastle

# GETTING MARRIED? HERE ARE 10 REASONS YOU SHOULD CONSIDER AN 'EXCLUSIVE USE' WEDDING







Take over an entire stately home - without the fear of bumping into another bride or groom at Crathorne Hall Hotel...

Imagine taking over an entire stately home for just you, your family and friends to enjoy.

Often favoured by celebrities hankering after privacy, exclusive use weddings mean guests can relax and concentrate on the day without other hotel guests or wedding parties around to interfere or intrude.

From the vows through to the evening reception and even flopping into a luxurious bed for the evening after your dream day: everything is catered for

#### And there are so many benefits...

Rather than worrying about directions, parking and costly travel arrangements, once you arrive at an exclusive use venue your big day can just naturally unfold.

Crathorne Hall Hotel in Yarm is a stunning, deluxe four star venue offering this type of bespoke package.

Here are just a few of the many benefits of booking an exclusive use package at Crathorne Hall;

With no other guests around, you can make your wedding your own and personalise every aspect of your day. There are just so many ways to bring that special touch to weddings at Crathorne Hall, with dedicated staff doing just that for countless happy couples

There will be no worries about your guests being confused about where to be or where to go - it's a lot easier to keep everyone together at an exclusive use venue.

The staff at Crathorne Hall are completely dedicated to your wedding day - there's no other private parties competing for their attention, and they won't be distracted by other hotel guests.

Enjoy the use of the venue and grounds for a private wedding photography session. There are extensive grounds at Crathorne Hall with captivating views of the Leven Valley – with no other guests popping up in your photos!

You won't have to worry about people strolling into your wedding reception uninvited - the entire venue will be all about you and your loved ones enjoying the most important of days.

You won't need to travel anywhere at the end of the night - and guests can even meet up again come morning for breakfast, without any other guests around, to recap special moments.

Everything can be held in one place. This means you needn't worry about guests having to find their way after your vows.

You won't need to consider costly wedding transport if you don't wish.

The bride or groom have the option of staying at the hotel the night before the wedding at Crathorne Hall - once again enjoying the relaxation of already being at the venue.

There's no chance for boredom. Throughout the day you will spend time in different parts of the hotel. You may choose to hold your wedding ceremony in the Edwardian Room, have the drinks reception on the terrace and your wedding breakfast in the Drawing Room.

#### What's included?

With the Exclusive Use package at Crathorne Hall you have the freedom to have your day, your way in this idyllic setting.

The Exclusive Use Package includes:

- Complete exclusivity of Crathorne Hall but you are only required to take 20 bedrooms.
- Exclusive use of the hotel from 1pm on the day of your wedding until 9am the next morning
- Reception drink
- Your choice of three course wedding breakfast
- Half a bottle of house wine per person
- Glass of sparkling wine to toast the wedding couple
- Tea, coffee and petits fours
- Evening buffet

Available all year, prices start from £7,500.

If you would like your guests to pay for their own accommodation then this can be arranged. For example, if your guests each paid £150 per room you would see a reduction of £3000 off the overall cost.

There are a range of other options available too, aside from exclusive use packages. There is currently a special offer available for brides and grooms wishing to get married on a Friday or Sunday in 2017 – the Edwardian Elegance package. This package starts from just £3995.

For more information visit www.handpickedhotels.co.uk/crathornehall or contact 0845 072 7440.



City Dental, your local dental practice at 39 Coach Lane, Hazlerigg, NE13 7AS



# **BUNDLES OF JOY**



After getting married, Claire McGawley was desperate to start a family. However her weight and health issues meant that sadly, her chances of conceiving naturally were very slim. After going to a variety of slimming clubs and following fad diets, Claire decided it was time to do something about it. She shares her story here:

"I had been trying to lose weight for 24 years. I tried everything from weight watching clubs to fad diets. I would lose weight but could never get passed a certain point, then because my weight plateaued I became disheartened and the weight piled on again. It was a vicious circle.

"In 2015 and after six years of trying for a baby, my husband and I were told that our chances of having children naturally were very slim - I was devastated. This is what pushed me to look into weight loss surgery so I did my research into having it done privately.

"I came across Spire Washington Hospital online and made a phone call to their team. I was passed onto a lovely Customer Service Adviser, who guided me on who I needed to see and gave me all the vital information. I booked a free ten minute appointment with Mr Balupuri, one of their weight loss surgeons.

"Following this, I booked in for a full consultation, where Mr Balupuri explained which procedure was best for me – a gastric bypass. He went into detail about the operation; what would happen before, during, after and how my life would change."

"On the day of surgery I arrived at the hospital and was shown to my own private room. It was comfortable, light and spacious with its own bathroom. The anaesthetist visited me straight away and explained everything. I was nervous as I was taken down to theatre but all the staff were so reassuring and never left my side.

"I stayed two nights in hospital and it was fantastic - nothing was too much trouble – the nurses encouraged me to get up and move and always checked to see if I was OK. The catering staff even made sure my husband was topped up with teas and coffees.

"Before I was discharged I had a visit from the dietician, who chatted through the process of eating properly, time scales and what my body would and wouldn't tolerate. She was also on call should I have any queries when I got home - which I did - and she answered quickly and reassuringly.

"I was settling in to life after surgery and looking forward to the future with my husband. Due to having surgery I was advised not to get pregnant within two years — we didn't think it would ever be possible as we were told for so long that it wasn't. We were absolutely ecstatic when we found out I

was pregnant! We never dreamed it would happen, especially naturally! We're expecting a little boy in February. Mr Balupuri and my obstetrician have liaised throughout my pregnancy and everything has been great.

"I cannot thank Mr Balupuri and Spire Washington Hospital enough for what they have done, the care of Mr Balupuri and the rest of the team at has been outstanding from day one and my life has changed so much and for the better and my dream of becoming a mother has come true."

Mr Balupuri said: "Obesity is associated with decreased fertility. Such patients have difficulty in conceiving, but after weight loss the fertility dramatically improves. However it is strongly advised to our patients in the childbearing age to avoid pregnancy for at least two years especially after gastric bypass. This is predominantly due to the unknown malabsorptive effect on the foetus.

"In the case of Claire and a few others where pregnancy inadvertently does occur, a close follow-up and team approach with obstetricians is essential. I wish all the best to Claire and her family in the future."

For more information on weight loss surgery at Spire Washington Hospital, speak to one of their friendly Customer Service Advisers by calling 0191 448 9514.



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# WELCOME TO THE FOOTBALL SHOW

Fronted by the trio of Les Langley, Steve Wraith and Anthony Rutherford, and with the ever-reliable Nathan Clark behind the camera, the North-East Football Show, continues to go from strength-to-strength.

The lads all have their own stories, but the show is not merely about them but more so the region's booming football scene, professional or amateur and even charity and dinner events. They have also covered the Football Writers Awards at Ramside Hall Hotel for the second year running and were present at the Entertainers Game at Kingston Park (Les and Anth even donned their boots for the Manchester Select).

Now into their second season it's been a strong showing from the boys with Les and Anth being the forefathers. Having initially met on a film set, they discussed in the subsequent weeks the certain aspects of the beautiful game were 'lacking in coverage' throughout the region.

Put to Made in Tyne & Wear, the 'pilot' show was done with Martin Gray at Darlington 1883 before trips to Ashington with Stephen Harmison and MP Ian Lavery got the television debut. It was the second show though, at Langley's former club Crook Town that really got the show up-and-running.

Since then they've had a host of names from across the region on camera, and that was before Wraith brought himself into the camera's line (he was initially down as a guest presenter but things progressed better than expected). Following this extra addition, the show has taken things up

another level this season and involvement with Gutierrez's Spiderman Ball, and the Entertainers game has brought continued success.

The show now affords people like Wraith to give lesser-known local clubs a chance in the spotlight. He also interviews close friends whilst gaining topical views on the beautiful game from across the region.

Even behind the scenes, cameraman Nathan Clark is a vital, valued member of the team and without his knowledge and expertise the show would have taken a little longer to come to fruition. As a Sports Journalism student at the University of Sunderland, his time can sometimes be limited with the Football Show being a voluntary, side-project alongside his studies, working and other commitments.

With a turnaround of up to a couple of hours, and the guidance afforded by the lads front of camera, Nathan is still able to work his magic to get the finished product to Made in Tyne & Wear on a Thursday morning. Timing is of relevance with the lads out at the start of the week for an hour or two here and there and Nathan behind the camera filming.

Going forward, they'll take footballing matters season by season and will see what can be done to both improve and progress the show.





Catch the lads on Made in Tyne & Wear (Sky Channel 117) every Friday from 7:30pm; follow their exploits on Facebook @NorthEastFootballShow & Twitter @nefstv.



### 4 COURSE MEAL £12.95 SUNDAY TO THURSDAY 5.30 TO 7PM

#### PRE STARTER

Plain or Spiced Popadom

#### **STARTERS**

Chicken Tikka, Lamb Tikka, Meat or Vegetable Samosa, Vegetable Pakora, Bhuna Prawn on Puri, Chicken Bhuna on Puri, Bhuna Keema on Puri, Aloo Chana Puri, Garlic Mushroom Puri, Onion Bhaji, Sheek Kebab, Shami Kebab

#### Main Courses

Curry, Madras, Vindaloo, Bhuna, Dupiaza, Ceylon, Karahi, Jalfrezi, Mushori, Kashari, Sag, Chana, Garlic, Methi, Rogan, Dansak, Kurma, Malyan, Kashmiri, Balti, Pathia

#### Rice

Pilau Rice/Boiled Rice Chips/Plain Nan

Any main course change £2 • King Prawn £3 • Rice £1 • Nan Bread Change £1

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