

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

MAY 2017



**IT - THE AERO WAY**

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

issue 23





# Sacred Heart High School

Outstanding 2007 - Present

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## For your next step



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## FOREWORD

### Welcome to the May edition of Northern Insight

We are delighted to bring you another fantastic issue this month jam packed with features, content, exciting columnists and social photographs.

Our cover star is the family run Aero Networks, now into their eleventh year in business and moving into a new chapter of progression and development.

The second subject of our new Staying Power feature is Jamie Martin, Managing Partner of Ward Hadaway Solicitors who looks back at his illustrious career in Law.

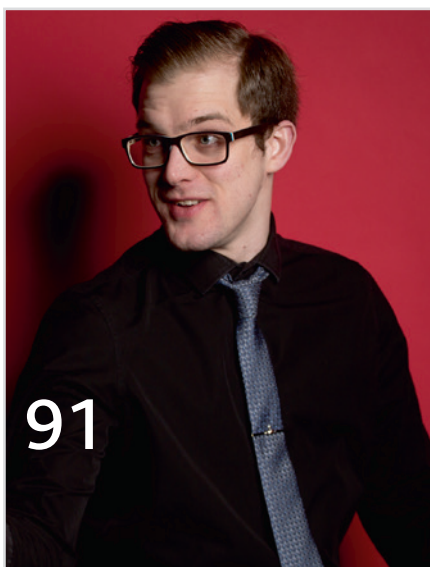
For business lunch we visit The Alchemist in Newcastle, a fantastic addition to the City's leisure scene and destined to become a true favourite.

Amongst some terrific social coverage, look out for the ITPS Golf Event at the wonderful Ramsdale Hall which acted as a great warm up for the season ahead.

All in all, a huge amount to enjoy and enthuse.

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

**Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher**



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

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

## BIG SINTONS WIN



Law firm Sinton's, known nationally for its expertise in healthcare, has been appointed to the panel of the North of England NHS Commercial Procurement Collaborative (NOE CPC), which works with more than 80 high-level NHS organisations across England.

The Newcastle-based firm has won a four-year contract with NOE CPC and will provide a range of advice to its members on commercial, estates and employment matters.

The specialist healthcare team at Sinton's gives a comprehensive service to a range of NHS and healthcare organisations. In the North East, Sinton's works with more GPs and dentists than any other regional law firm and is also a leading advisor to NHS Trusts.

Amanda Maskery, Partner in the Healthcare Team at Sinton's, said: "Our healthcare team has grown significantly in recent years in terms of our national reputation and capability. We are now regarded

among the go-to healthcare advisors in the North East and wider UK.

"Our appointment to the NOE CPC panel helps to demonstrate our capability. We are delighted to be awarded this contract. As specialist and highly experienced healthcare lawyers we understand the unique challenges and complexities of the NHS, so we are ideally placed to offer our expertise to NOE CPC and its members."

## NEWCASTLE ARCHITECTS GAIN PLANNING PERMISSION FOR ABERDEEN NEUROLOGICAL CENTRE

Newcastle-based architectural practice, JDDK Architects, has secured planning permission for the Sue Ryder Neurological Centre at Dee View Court in the Kincorth area of Aberdeen for a £4m new wing and extension.

Dee View Court, opened in 2003, is Scotland's only purpose-built neurological centre that provides care and support for patients with degenerative life-changing conditions affecting the brain and nervous system. However, with only 20 residential spaces in single rooms and a waiting list of over half that number, Sue Ryder were keen to develop the existing site by extending their facility.

The new building will contain six high dependency



en-suite bedrooms on the ground floor with a further six supported living units on the first floor, allowing independent living for residents with support from the centre if required. Large patio doors providing access into the gardens

and doubling as fire escapes will be fitted in each ground floor bedroom to create light airy spaces. The building will be set into the existing sloping bank and will appear as a single storey building from the surrounding residential properties.

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## NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT WELCOMES 2017'S ONE MILLIONTH PASSENGER

Newcastle International Airport continues to celebrate record numbers after welcoming its one millionth passenger in 2017.

The North-East's largest airport, which has now seen six years of positive year on year growth, reached the milestone as passengers checked in for Thomson's direct Dreamliner service to Orlando.

To mark the occasion, staff were on hand to greet Craig McLean, the airport's one millionth visitor in 2017, with £100 worth of World Duty Free Vouchers.

Craig and wife Kirsty were travelling with children Emily and Poppy on the flight. The party were also joined by Craig's parents, with dad Brian celebrating his retirement by taking the family on holiday.

John Irving, Business Development Director at Newcastle International Airport, said: "We are delighted to have already welcomed one million passengers through the terminal in 2017. It was wonderful to share the celebrations with the McLean family as they prepared to jet off on holiday to Florida."



## RGS STUDENTS WIN BIG AT NATIONAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING COMPETITION

Three talented engineers from the Royal Grammar School Newcastle (RGS) have won the first-ever JCB prize for innovation at the annual Big Bang Science and Engineering Fair held at the NEC, Birmingham.

Sixth Form students Chengyi (Simon) Zu, Eve Oakley, and Gregor Pearce designed a multi-stud insertion tool which can be used to secure car-wheels on the production line at Nissan, saving the company six seconds per car. The students took many visits to Nissan to find out what was currently used, how they could improve the efficiency in the production line and to test their working model.

Ian Green, Nissan Skills Foundation, said: "This is fantastic recognition for these talented students. We are delighted that our challenge set them in their winning direction. Their project idea was an excellent example of innovation. Congratulations to them all."



## BALDWIN'S EXPANDS NORTHERN PRESENCE FOLLOWING FOURTH ACQUISITION

Newcastle-based CTC Chartered Accountants has become the latest North East practice to be acquired by the Baldwin's Accountancy Group.

The latest acquisition brings Baldwin's total number of offices to 34 across the country, employing over 800 staff with an annual turnover of around £50m.

Peter Cole, Partner at CTC, will become a consultant of Baldwin's Jesmond Ltd, with fellow partners Andrew Twaddle and Lesley Stabler being made directors.

Andrew Little, Director at Baldwin's, said: "We are thrilled to welcome CTC to the Baldwin's Group in the North East. With more experts joining our existing offering, clients will have further access to the broad range of services the Baldwin's Group already offers. We are working hard to grow the Baldwin's proposition in the region, which will offer opportunities for existing team members to progress their careers, as well as the occasion to bring new employees on board."

## RYANAIR & MIDDLESBROUGH FC CELEBRATE NEW MADRID ROUTE FROM NEWCASTLE AIRPORT

Ryanair, Europe's No.1 airline, recently teamed up with Newcastle Airport and Middlesbrough FC to celebrate the start of its new Newcastle-Madrid service.

Two lucky Middlesbrough fans Paul Ovington and Joanne McCrum were presented with flights to Madrid at half-time during the recent Premier League game against Manchester United at the Riverside Stadium.

The new Madrid route, brings the number of sun, city and

football destinations served from Newcastle Airport this summer to 12 which also includes new routes to Faro, Girona and Palma.

Newcastle Airport's Business Development Director, John Irving said: "Madrid is the latest exciting new city destination available from Newcastle Airport and we were delighted to team up with Ryanair and Middlesbrough Football Club to offer Paul and Joanne their winning return flights."



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## IT - THE AERO WAY

Led by Father and Son, Aero Networks is now in its eleventh year of business. 2017 sees the next chapter of development and progression taking shape.

**Managing Director Paul Curry started the business back in 2006, whilst Ben Curry joined in 2014 and now holds the role of Commercial Director.**

Aero continues to provide dependable and reliable IT Solutions to the SME sector, in particular Legal and Financial Services. In addition to this, Aero has expanded the Cloud Service arm of the business and sees this as a major service enhancement for existing and prospective clients.

The ethos of the organisation is based firmly upon providing clients with a great level of service alongside an emphasis on a people-led friendly approach. Paul comments "We always try to progress by building relationships with clients, following that we will then design a solution around their own business needs." Ben adds "We appreciate that all clients are different, Aero enhances value by customising our service to align with the clients' IT requirements."

Client retention plays a major role in Aero's long term strategy. "We never view a potential client as a short-term opportunity. Some of our clients have been with us since year one. It's fantastic to look back and see how we have improved their IT Systems which in turn have allowed them to compete using leading-edge technology." Comments Paul.

"When we bring a new client on board we take the time to understand their

previous IT issues and challenges. We also make sure their IT Infrastructure is where it should be. This allows the client to move forward with confidence and more importantly, ensures that Aero's technical team are up to speed with the clients' network from the outset." Says Ben. "An assessment of a new client's current setup is taken which allows Aero to advise on Cloud Services that will provide a benefit. Quite often in just a short time, we can make dramatic improvements to a client's setup." Explains Paul.

Apprenticeships have proven a fantastic investment for the organisation over the past few years. Paul comments, "All of the apprentices I have employed are still with the business. Moving forward I wouldn't hesitate to explore this route again when strengthening my team." As Commercial Director and business co-owner, Ben adds "I came through the ranks starting as an apprentice after passing my A Levels. It was a great experience. I have gained vital skills to progress through the business which simply cannot be taught in a classroom. Good opportunities are always available for motivated individuals with positive attitudes and the willingness to progress.

The Cloud has become a fundamental part of any IT Strategy. "Enterprise Level Cloud Services are now readily available for the SME market and more importantly, now fit well within the

average SME's IT Budget." comments Paul. "We've seen a great uptake from both existing and new clients. These new, cutting-edge Cloud Technologies are adding flexibility to the way organisations can now function." adds Ben.

As an experienced service driven organisation, the Aero team understand the importance of providing a high level of service. "All of our clients are different and each one has their own set of objectives within their IT setup that they rate as the priority. Whether that be email, data or applications." comments Ben. "Across the board we always strive to deliver great service." says Paul.

Aero will continue to advance the Cloud Services platform throughout 2017 and beyond. "The Cloud is here and the benefits are available for organisations today. Over the coming years, businesses will rely less on traditional on-premise IT Infrastructure. It's a great time to get on board with Aero." comments Paul. "The exciting news is that as our client base grows, new job opportunities will be available for likeminded individuals to join our team." adds Ben.

"In terms of the future, I'm building firm foundations within Aero that will allow us to progress over the coming years. It's a long-term strategy that will see us continue to grow as an organisation and more importantly a family business." Paul Curry, Managing Director.





## THE ALCHEMIST WORKS ITS MAGIC IN NEWCASTLE

Around 400 people gathered to celebrate the opening of The Alchemist, Newcastle's hottest new bar and restaurant, which opened with a bang.

Showcasing its spectacular molecular mixology, alchemy and craftsmanship, guests were treated to welcome drinks, canapes and their pick of over 50 cocktails, some a twist on old favourites, some completely new to the public.

Changing colours, dry ice, hot and cold sensations, unusual drinking vessels, smoke, live music and readings with Zoltar all combined to add real theatre to the night.

Based on Nelson Street in the heart of town, The Alchemist is now open. For more information visit [www.thealchemist.uk.com](http://www.thealchemist.uk.com)









# NEW DATA RULES: THE FINAL COUNTDOWN



The clock's ticking to prepare for new regulations coming into force, says Calibre's Karen Nelson (right)

The countdown has started for North East businesses who have 12 months to prepare for new legislation that will significantly affect the way they manage information, says Karen Nelson, Managing Director at Calibre Secured Networks.

**The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force from May 2018 and will signal a change in the way SMEs manage and look after a whole range of data and information. Also coming into effect simultaneously will be the Network and Information Security Directive (NSID), also known as the Cyber Security Directive.**

So what is happening and how will companies be affected? And, importantly, what can they do about it in the coming months to get ready? In simple terms, GDPR is a new data protection regulation that will strengthen and unify the safety and security of the information held by an organisation. Its set to replace the Data Protection Act, making radical changes to many existing data protection rules and regulations that firms currently observe.

Failure to comply could see eye-watering fines of up to £20 million (or 4% of turnover, whichever is greater) for both the data controller and anyone else involved in the chain such as those with responsibility for data shredding and disposable.

This regulation coupled with Cyber Security Directive, will see a further requirement for compliance for all the UK businesses, forcing them

to adapt, or even adopt new approaches to the way they tackle both data and cyber security issues.

Although it remains to be seen exactly how the new legislation will pan out and its impact on the region's SME population, there are a few things that we already know will be certain. Data breaches will have to be reported if possible within 72 hours while the definition of personal data will be extended to cover location, IP address as well as medical information.

It will also be incumbent upon business owners and managers to make sure that personal data is reasonably protected and an individual's privacy protected. The Cyber Security Directive will require providers of 'critical' digital services such as energy and banking to instigate 'appropriate security measures' relating to the detection and reporting of search engine and cloud computing breaches.

It is essential SME owners and managers start planning their approach to compliance sooner rather than later, and that all those involved are not only made aware of but also understand, the changes and embrace them - it may involve implementing new procedures to deal with greater

transparency and individuals' rights provisions with wider budgetary, IT, personnel, governance and communications implications.

One way forward is to find a suitable partner who can help you manage all of that in a safe, secure and compliant way. There are a plethora of IT partners out there who can help and hold relevant accreditations such as ISO 27001 but when drawing up a shortlist consider factors beyond paper credentials and accreditations – experience in these matters always counts.

It's also important any supplier that works with you can plan for growth and change, as it's easy to forget that extra staff places increased demand on IT resources and capabilities. A good IT supplier should be able to help predict how your needs will change in line with your strategy.

There can be little doubt that the advent of GDPR and the Cyber Security Directive will have an impact and the clock is now ticking when it comes to action. SMEs need to be thinking about how it will impact on them before it's too late and find the resources that will help them leverage the technologies so that they're ready for a new dawn in May 2018.

More at [www.calibre-secured.net](http://www.calibre-secured.net)





### AWARD-WINNING LITIGATION TEAM ATTRACTS NEW TALENT

Square One Law's litigation team has attracted new lawyers Rachael Cooper and Ross Gordon to the team.

Gillian Tatt, Head of Litigation, said: "I am delighted to welcome Rachael and Ross to our team. A key part of our differentiation at Square One Law is our ongoing ability to recruit and retain high calibre people who understand how to use their commercial and legal knowledge to provide exceptional levels of client service."

"Rachael has already established herself as a key member of the team and has had several notable successes. It gives me great pleasure to announce that she is being promoted to the role of Senior Associate, along with other colleagues across the firm."

Ross said: "I was attracted to Square One Law because of Gillian's reputation. Having worked for Gillian before, I know I can learn a great deal from her and develop my career in this fast-moving firm."

### NAYLORS BOLSTER BUILDING CONSULTANCY TEAM

Newcastle-based commercial property specialist Naylor's has announced the appointment of new Associate Director David Straughan as part of its continued growth strategy. Together with existing Associate Director Dean Clark, David will be responsible for managing and developing the department.

David became a member of the RICS in 2013, before setting up his own consultancy Eriss Ltd, offering a range of building surveying services as well as laser scanning and 3D design.

David said: "I have worked with Naylor's a number of times over the years and have a good understanding of the ethos of the firm. When they approached me I felt it was too good an opportunity to turn down. I am excited about the move and the direction that Naylor's want to take with the department, which will allow me to continue to develop services such as digital surveying, 3D laser scanning and BIM."



### GATESHEAD COLLEGE PRINCIPAL RECEIVES NEW LEP BOARD APPOINTMENT

Gateshead College Principal and Chief Executive, Judith Doyle, has been appointed to the North East LEP's Business Growth Board to represent the further education sector.

Judith's appointment brings outstanding FE sector leadership and award-winning knowledge to the board, which is focused on helping regional businesses achieve and sustain high growth.

Judith took over leadership of Gateshead College four years ago, turning it from an institution judged by Ofsted as 'requiring improvement' to one rated as 'outstanding'. Gateshead College is now ranked third in the country for overall success rates.

Judith said: "I am delighted to join the Growth Board and welcome the opportunity to work with such a great team of people who all share a passion and drive to help businesses grow and thrive in our region. A strong infrastructure of education, training and skills aligned to the needs of industry is crucial if we are to achieve our collective ambitions."

### NEW RECRUITS GO FROM CARERS TO DIRECTORS

Two senior care specialists have joined leading regional care home provider St Martins Care as the company continues to develop its commitment to person-centred care.

Mandy Postle and Gary Dixon, both with over 30 years' experience each in the care industry, have been appointed as Directors of the St Martins Care Group which has six care homes regionally spread from Park View, Newcastle, in the North to Guisborough Manor in the South.

The pair share a passion for delivering care specifically tailored to the individual resident. They have each developed their approach having both originally started as junior carers.

Gary said: "To deliver the highest quality care it is essential to have the best care staff, who are valued and respected. Mandy and I are really 'rolling up our sleeves' and working alongside our carers to ensure that we are motivating our staff and helping them to provide the highest levels of personalised care to our residents."



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# YOUNG DENTIST GRAHAM HEADS HOME TO ACQUIRE BROADWAY DENTAL PRACTICE



Maxine Pott RMT, Sarah Thompson – RBS, Denise Allan CF Dental, Middle is Graham Murphy CF Dental, Amanda Maskery – Sintons, Richard Humphreys – RMT, Victoria Armstrong – Sintons, Liam Kane – RBS

A young North Tyneside dentist has returned to his roots to acquire a first dental practice of his own.

**Graham Murphy grew up in the Cullercoats community in which the Broadway Dental Practice is located, and qualified as a dentist 11 years ago.**

After spending the last eight years working in South Shields, Graham has now become the owner of the popular family practice that has been owned and run by dentist Fin Godlington for the last 25 years.

All the members of the Broadway team will be continuing with the practice, with a new nurse being added to it, while Graham will be looking at introducing a number of new services along its existing provisions, such as adult orthodontics and teeth whitening.

Plans are also being put in place to set up links with an international dental charity and to carry out fundraising work on its behalf through the practice. RMT Healthcare, the specialist healthcare division of RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, and the Healthcare team at Sintons Law Firm worked with Graham Murphy to set up and complete the acquisition. Funding to support the purchase was structured by the Royal Bank of Scotland.

He says: "Owning my own practice has been a long-term ambition ever since I qualified, and being able to realise this ambition in the place that I grew up is especially pleasing.

"The Broadway practice is a well-established family surgery in a great area that's been very well managed over the last quarter of a century, and my aim is to continue to provide the excellent levels of care that local people have enjoyed from Fin while also expanding the services we can provide.

"Patients are demanding more and different services from their dentists, and we'll be looking to add new services over the coming months that will fit alongside the work that the practice team has always done, as well as growing the patient list by attracting more younger patients.

"I've worked with RMT right through my career, and having them and the Sintons team on board has taken the stress out of the acquisition process – their expert advice has enabled me to stay focused on the clinical side of practice operations, and I couldn't fault either of them.

"Royal Bank of Scotland has expressed real confidence in our plans through their support for the purchase, and I'm excited to get the chance to now take things forward."

Richard Humphreys, director at RMT Healthcare, adds: "Graham has always had a clear idea of what he wanted from his own surgery, an idea that he'll now be able to put into practice, and we're very pleased to have helped him make the move

back into his own community by completing this acquisition."

Amanda Maskery, partner in the Healthcare department at Sintons Law Firm, says: "This dental practice has enjoyed a strong reputation in the Cullercoats community for the past 25 years and it is apt that its future has been secured by someone who hails from this very place.

"Graham is committed to developing and investing in the practice, which is great news for patients, and will ensure that Broadway continues to thrive for years to come. We are very pleased to have supported him with this acquisition."

Sarah Thompson, Healthcare Manager at the Royal Bank of Scotland, adds: "Graham has a very exciting time ahead and we are delighted to help him achieve his ambition of acquiring his first dental practice.

"I have no doubt he will enhance the facilities available to patients at the Broadway Dental Practice and build on its already superb reputation.

"I have also been pleased to work with RMT Healthcare and Sintons Law Firm to combine all of our healthcare expertise to support Graham with this acquisition."



# The Coastal Accountants



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## 10 OUT OF 10 FOR UNW CORPORATE FINANCE TEAM

Newcastle-based business advisory firm UNW is toasting a busy year having delivered 10 transactions in just 10 months.

Working with local innovative businesses on finance raising projects, UNW's corporate finance team has helped secure six-figure investments for ROXOA Group, Fine EquinlTy Ltd and Orchidsoft Ltd, and recently helped Activ Technology secure a £500k investment from FW Capital.

UNW has also acted for clients on a national scale, supporting Healthpoint Limited through a £6.5m management buy-out by private equity house Maven Capital Partners. The Blackpool-based Healthcare product supplier, which provides personal care and beauty products to wholesalers, retailers and pharmacy chains, will use the capital from the buy-out to accelerate their new product

development and to support organic growth.

Meanwhile, the team has also advised on a variety of disposals, including the sale of Rook Matthew Sayer to Connells Group, Romag to Clayton Glass and ForSkills to national awarding organisation NCFE, whilst also assisting local marketing and creative agency Drummond Central during their acquisition of digital specialists CoalFace. UNW also recently provided support and advice to Sherburn Minerals through their sale to Breedon Group PLC, the UK's largest independent construction materials company, for an eight-figure sum.

The team was led on the 10 deals by UNW Corporate Finance Partners Paul Kaiser, Neville Bearpark and John Healey. Paul said: "We are

delighted at the success of our corporate finance offering over the last 10 months. The market remains active and we are confident that 2017 will be another busy year for the region.

"At UNW, we pride ourselves on a first-rate customer service and our distinct focus on people, which is reflected by our strong and growing reputation in the marketplace, both regionally and nationally.

"The strength in depth of our corporate finance team means we have the capacity to advise a broad and varied client base, ranging from innovative tech start-ups and owner managed businesses to large corporates."

For more information [www.unw.co.uk](http://www.unw.co.uk) or call 0191 243 6259



## CAVU DELIVERS FOR FASTFLOW

Cavu Corporate Finance has led and structured the private equity deal for Fastflow with London based private equity firm Elysian Capital. With its headquarters in Washington, the Fastflow Group provides maintenance services to the owners of critical assets in the water, gas and social housing sectors.

Fastflow is anticipated to top £75 million in revenue in the year to March 2017. It was founded in 2005 when Neil Armstrong bought Fastflow Pipeline Services (FPS) from Northumbrian Water and the business now has two further divisions, the gas transmission business, Fastflow Energy Services (FES) and social housing maintenance business DW Support Services (DWSS) that was acquired in 2014.

Commenting on the deal Shawn Bone said "The strength of the management team and the attractiveness of each of the markets that the business operates in was at the heart of the deal, which attracted considerable interest."

Whilst Neil Armstrong heads up the group, each of the divisions has a strong standalone management team and all divisions are positioned in attractive niches of large and expanding markets.

FES maintains high pressure gas transmission assets, as well as the high pressure end of distribution on critical assets for customers such as National Grid, for which there is a well-defined and significant



Neil Armstrong (right) and Shawn Bone after signing the deal

investment and renewal plan.

DWSS operates in a very specific sector of the housing maintenance market – serving registered providers of social and affordable housing in London and South East England, whilst Fastflow Pipeline Services provides critical maintenance to owners of clean water assets.

Neil Armstrong, founder and CEO of The Fastflow Group said, "We have been working with Cavu Corporate Finance for over 12 months getting the business in shape in the event we wanted to pursue a transaction. The business has been very close to

my heart for almost 22 years and in Elysian Capital, I have found a partner that understands what makes this company and its people special. With its support, we will continue to realise our ambitious growth targets, whilst maintaining the Fastflow Group as a great place to work for our people and a real value added partner to our customers. I am very grateful to the Cavu Corporate Finance team - they spent time understanding our business and listening to what we wanted from a deal and that was important to me."

Shawn Bone Managing Director of Cavu Corporate Finance, added: "We have enjoyed working with Neil and his team to help them set a new strategic direction for the business. It was clear from an early stage that the Elysian Capital team understood that Neil was looking for a partner who shared a common ambition for the business. We look forward to working with Fastflow on the next part of the journey."

Ken Terry, CEO of Elysian Capital said, "Neil Armstrong and his management teams at Fastflow have done a wonderful job in building the Group into a business where service, safety and quality of operation are at its very heart, creating a variety of compelling growth opportunities in the future. Neil and his management have demonstrated their continued hunger to take on these opportunities and we are very pleased to be able to support them in this."

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

## COMMERCE HOUSE FIRST PHASE COMPLETE

The first phase of works has been completed on an iconic Teesside building, leading to a flurry of bookings for the desks and office space released.

Commerce House in Middlesbrough is having life breathed back into its Grade II Listed structure by Commerce Chambers Limited. The business community is being built, thanks to a £1.2million injection, and aims to provide businesses with the perfect ambience and location.

The building was originally built in 1872 and is in the heart of Middlesbrough's soon to be thriving commercial district, right next to the train station, a stone's throw away from the A66.

The luxury setting now has a completed fully-furnished ground floor office space and a 43 square meter boardroom (aptly named The Chairman's Room), finished in a contemporary style with traditional touches, and boasting the highest of standards.

The Chairman's Room, complete with high-spec technology and total luxury is ideal for presentations, brainstorming or entertaining, and is available for tenants to book or for visitors to hire.

Work will now start on the top floor penthouse apartment, the Commerce Suite, and will be followed by the rest of the building, with all works expected to be completed by the end of the summer.

Christine Huntington, Facilities Manager at the building, said: "It is so exciting to see the first phase finished and have something to show prospective tenants. The transformation is unbelievable and the building is already proving that it will be incredibly popular."

"We are now taking enquiries and reservations and recommend anyone thinking of moving office space in the next year to get in touch and have a look around as soon as possible. We can accommodate immediately or reserve the



space until completion of works.

"As well as the permanent office space, we will also be offering a business lounge and hot desk facilities alongside a virtual office service. There are also plans underway to open a coffee shop meaning Commerce House really will be a one stop business shop!"

Viewings are now being taken on a choice of offices, split over three floors. Suitable for businesses of all sizes, the offices come complete with high-class facilities and high-speed broadband included.

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



# PLANNING AND ADAPTING TO CHANGE



I hope that you like the photograph. For the rugby enthusiasts, it is not a picture of the Leicester Tigers junior academy. In fact, they are my twin girls who are now seven months old.

**I have to confess that I have come to fatherhood rather late in life but truly could not be happier about it. This is even despite the noise, the smells, the tiredness and everything else that goes with parenthood.**

So why am I sharing this with you, dear reader? Is it just an opportunity for a proud father to show the world his daughters?

Clearly, I am proud of the little ones but the point is that their birth was a life changing event for me.

They arrived just before my 60th birthday when some of my pension plans were due to mature. I was looking forward to a comfortable semi-retirement (I do not expect to stop working any time soon) golfing and travelling with my good lady. Well they have put an end to that dream!

The point is I now have to completely reconsider my needs and objectives.

Most importantly I must ensure that they are financially secure in the event of my early demise. Clearly life assurance is the answer. I need to think

about whether a lump sum is needed or an income or both. If an income, how much and how long for and should it escalate?

I also need to consider how the little darlings will be catered for if illness or injury prevents me from working. I have my pensions but are they enough? If not, then income protection is required.

What about schooling? State or private education?

University fees are also an issue and how are they going to get on the housing ladder?

My most important need is for protection with savings and investments to follow. I have also changed from being at the stage of life where one decumulates to reverting to accumulating. It is a different mindset but essential for them.

I am not complaining (much) as I did have a small part in bringing them into the world. However, I am having to react to my new normal and take my own advice as to what I need to put in place for them.

This is an integral part of what financial advice is about; protection and not just investment although that is important too.

Finally, another picture of Gabriella and Annabella.

A proud father.



**Peter Rutherford is a Director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600 [peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com](mailto:peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com)**

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# MOTIVATION REQUIRES MOTIVE



Ammar Mirza  
pic: Peter Walton 2014

I find it amazing how many people I meet that live on "someday island". Someday I am going to quit smoking, someday I am going to have a healthier lifestyle, someday I will spend more time with the family and so the list goes on, and people give up before even trying.

Alternatively there are those that start something with the best intentions and then give up as they were simply unmotivated. Take for example New Year resolutions, hands up how many have tried and failed within a matter of weeks if not days of their new found focus.

I must admit that I was one of those individuals, that is, until I really started to question my motives. You see what a lot of us don't realise is that motivation, the power to remain focused and succeed, requires a motive. A compelling reason that resonates with you, the why you should do something and more importantly, being clear on what is in it for you.

Take for example Sir James Dyson, the inventor of the dual cyclone. Here was an individual that was absolutely motivated and was resolutely focused. So much so that he didn't give up, in fact he kept trying 5,127 times before he eventually succeeded in his invention. Crazy, some of you may think, but, I say amazing. What an incredible individual that demonstrated the ability of having desire, direction and discipline. Above all else Sir James Dyson had a goal and a plan.

Now here is statistic on planning and goals. For every one minute spent on planning you can save up to 10 minutes of action. Funny how many of us just simply get up in the morning and let our emails, telephone calls, social media and general activities dictate our day, getting to the end of the day and mistaking activity with achievement. Yet if we simply had a plan and were clear of our goals we could achieve so much more. Just try it, the night before each day start writing down what you would like to get done and then single-minded focus on that list until it is complete. Extend this planning longer term and your life will dramatically change for the better. Stop multi-tasking it doesn't work!

The last month has been an incredible one for me, speaking at various events including the amazing Durham Business Club Network about the importance of goal setting, (got to be one of the best networks I have come across, alongside ABC obviously), hosting the signing of the

Armed Forces Covenant by the Gainford Group and working with the Armed Forces on Cadet Apprenticeships. However, the highlight was the BIG PIE Challenge that delivered a Coding, Engineering and Enterprise challenge to 9, 10 and 11 year olds across the North East with over 1,600 pupils participating from 26 primary schools.

The next stage coincides with Newcastle Start-Up Week 15th – 19th May, where the young budding entrepreneurs get the chance to experience business first hand by making and selling something alongside connecting them with local businesses. It would be great if everyone could get behind this local charity, making a big difference, that critically helps our future generations develop a plan that will enable them to realise and raise their ambitions and aspirations. Something I am sure can motivate us all, investing in our future workforce and wider community?

*"I would like to end by wishing my wife Louise a happy anniversary on the 17th May. Louise is my Mrs Motivator and I am eternally grateful for all of her support."*



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\*Ethical Award Status achieved for 6th year in a row, from 2012 to 2017

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# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## CHRIS DIXON

Relationship Manager, Allied Irish Bank (GB)

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

It was clear early on that I would never be a footballer! I went to the University of Sunderland and did a Politics and Economics degree. Once I graduated it was a logical step to pursue a career in the financial world, as I was always good with numbers.

### Tell me about your career path so far?

I'm proud to say that I'm a 'lifer' with AIB (GB) and have just celebrated my 20th anniversary with the bank.

I joined the bank in 1997, and spent the first three years of my career here working in the customer services team. There is no better way to understand banking than to spend time with customers, and it was an excellent grounding for me.

I then spearheaded the opening of the satellite office in Tees Valley from 2004-2007, before returning to Newcastle to head up a team during the recession.

It was a difficult five-year period, which included the Irish banking crisis and subsequent bailout. It was a huge professional learning curve.

### What are AIB (GB)'s defining qualities?

We really aim to be at the heart of our customers' financial lives; it's not just a slogan, it's our bank's

culture. Our ethos is centred on client-driven relationships, and providing a personal service.

We are very much a niche business bank, with particularly strong expertise in the Healthcare, Manufacturing, Hotels and Professional Services sectors.

### What is the greatest challenge you have faced so far?

Undoubtedly getting through the financial crisis. Whilst we did our very best to look after all of our customers during that period, it wasn't an easy time for anyone. I am hugely proud of the work we did in looking after our customers and even more so of how we have come out the other side as focused as ever in supporting the North-East's vibrant business community.

### What is your greatest achievement to date?

It's difficult to single out one, but I am immensely proud of the resilience shown by the Bank in recent years. AIB (GB) is thriving and prospering; the first quarter in 2017 was one of our best in years.

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

Maintaining a close connection with customers is key throughout the good times as well as the bad. I think this is a tried and tested formula that works across all business sectors.

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

Be yourself and treat people how you would like to be treated yourself. Lead by example and do things your way.

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

In business, Andrew Walker of Sintons Law in Newcastle was a great friend and mentor, personally and professionally, until his untimely passing a few years ago. I worked with him a lot over the years and he was admired throughout the city, he was a great character.

Out of business, as a lifelong Sunderland fan, Gary Rowell, Marco Gabbiadini and Niall Quinn.

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

I escape the city to my home in Corbridge, which is a lovely part of the world. As well as regular trips to the Stadium of Light, which are not always necessarily relaxing, I also enjoy cycling.

### How would you like to be remembered?

Hopefully it's some time away, but when the time comes I'd like to be remembered as someone people respected and who did things the right way.







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## NORTH-EAST CASH SAVINGS COMPANY CREATES UNIQUE ONLINE PORTAL TO ENSURE FINANCIAL RETURN FOR UK'S BUSINESSES

A North-East based cash savings company has developed a groundbreaking service that will get companies with cash in the bank more than a little excited, as it offers a cash savings service offering businesses monetary returns like no other in the UK.



Dr. Emma Black

**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 businesses 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, with the company adding in excess of £25m of new cash into the service within the first few months alone, prior to launch.

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 the users 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 companies

that are cash rich with money sat in the bank, which should be getting returns on their 'savings'. Financial directors/controllers can access the online portal directly exporting reports detailing their holdings, particularly useful for reporting to company boards. Any actions such as better rate opportunities or approaching maturities will be notified to ensure the rates remain at the top of the market.

Dr Emma Black explains further: "Many companies have 'rainy day' money and high net worth cash investments of over £250,000 sat in one bank, or in tied in low yielding long term savings accounts. This is such a waste of potential return, with exposure to only one provider unnecessarily increasing risk.

"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 FD's 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. Corporate clients can layer the level of support they desire so that they are as involved as they wish to be."

Cascade has a team of ten experts, headed up by Dr Emma. The central administration support team is based in Newcastle, a hub for the savings administration for many financial institutions but the team cover the whole of the UK.



**CASCADE**  
CASH MANAGEMENT

More information on the service can be found on the brand new website [www.cascade.co.uk](http://www.cascade.co.uk). Anyone wanting a demonstration of the portal or a free bespoke cash illustration, please contact the team by requesting a call back on the website or by calling 0191 4813777.



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# APPRENTICESHIP LEVY – EMPLOYMENT TAX OR NEW WAY TO FUND YOUR BUSINESSES TRAINING NEEDS?



When the new Apprenticeship Levy was announced back in 2015 many employers grumbled that this was a tax by another name. There was also concern about smaller employers being disadvantaged under the new scheme. Whatever your views, the new scheme is now with us and by May 2017 most affected employers will have paid their first payment under the Apprenticeship Levy.

By way of reminder; the levy applies from 6 April 2017 and is payable alongside monthly payments of PAYE and Class 1 NIC at a rate of 0.5 per cent of the employer's pay bill. An annual allowance of £15,000 is available which means that employers only have to pay the levy when their annual pay bill is greater than £3 million per annum.

Many employers with smaller pay bills will however still pay the levy because of the connected employer's rules and it is important to understand, at the outset, how these work in order to avoid underpayments and potential penalties for non-compliance. Where employers are connected only one allowance is available which must be split between them. The definition of connected for this purpose is the same as that for the purpose of the Employment Allowance. Companies will be connected if one has control of the other or if both are under the control of the same person(s). Connected companies can choose how to share the allowance between them. It is important to ensure that the allowance is not over claimed but equally important to ensure that a system is in place to identify group companies and how the allowance can best be utilised across the group.

Employers can access funding for apprenticeships

through the new Digital Apprenticeship Service (DAS), to pay for training and assessment of apprentices in England (separate arrangements are in place in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland). Funds are available a few days after payment into the account and will be topped up by a 10 per cent contribution from the government. The funding can only be used on apprenticeship training by an approved training provider, must last for at least 12 months and the apprentice must spend at least 20 per cent of their time on off the job training.

What about employers that do not offer apprenticeship training? As the levy is payable regardless employers do need to consider carefully how they provide their staff training in future as funds will be lost if they are not used within 24 months. There may even be employers who are such large contributors that they are unable to use all their funds. In those scenarios the levy is indeed simply another form of taxation on employers. But almost all employers will have some training requirements and it makes sense to service these requirements through the DAS where possible, if the employer is paying the levy.

Smaller employers with pay bills under £3 million will not pay the levy so how will they fund

their apprenticeships following the introduction of the scheme? Although not required to use the DAS, they can use it if they wish to source training from approved suppliers. Such employers will have to make a 10 per cent contribution to the training costs with the government paying the rest up to the maximum funding available for that apprenticeship. This is a major change for those employers whose schemes were previously fully funded. It is hoped that such employers will not be put off from using apprenticeships in the future as this may lead to a poorly trained workforce that in turn could be detrimental to the future potential of that business.

What is clear is that all employers need to plan for the costs of the new levy or the additional costs of apprenticeships, and to maximise the benefits of the scheme.





# THINKING ABOUT TAKING CASH FROM A PENSION?

Changes to pension rules that came into play in April 2015 mean that there is now more flexibility with pensions than ever before. If you have a private pension fund and you're over the age of 55, you can now get access to as much of your pension pot as you like, when you like.

There are a number of different options available to people looking to do this. With help from a financial adviser, you can simply close your pension scheme altogether and withdraw all of the cash as a lump sum, although you should be mindful that this would leave you without a regular source of income for your retirement.

Alternatively, you can take smaller deposits from your pension pot to help subsidise some of those larger purchases like paying off a mortgage, or buying a car. This can be much more tax efficient than simply withdrawing your pension in one lump sum as the first 25% of any funds you withdraw from your pension pot will be tax-free, however, the remaining 75% will be subject to income tax at your highest marginal rate.

Before you decide to dip into your pension pot, there are lots of important factors to consider. The most commonly asked questions we hear from clients are: where should I invest my pension fund so it is in line with my views on risk? What happens to my pension fund when I die? Can I afford to live the kind of retirement I want to?



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## SHAPING THE FUTURE

Tim Mallon has recently joined Leathers LLP as Development Director. Here he talks about his background, what made him join Leathers and his thoughts for the future.



### Tell us about your background

I've worked in the North East for almost thirty years - returning home following six years working in London. During my time in the North East, I've worked in a number of chartered accountancy and advisory practices across the region although the majority of my time has been in and around Tyneside. I'm a Gateshead lad so that suits me fine.

### How has your career developed over that time?

I was fortunate to join Price Waterhouse when I came home, or should I say "rejoin" as I trained and qualified as a Chartered Accountant with PW in London in the 1980s. PW in the 1990s was a great place to work and develop as a tax advisor. I was surrounded by some of the best brains in the business and the firm was at the cutting edge not only in terms of IT but also in how they managed customer relationships and marketed to potential clients.

I left PW in 1995 as I wanted to get more involved as part of a team running our own business whilst continuing to develop my skills as a tax and business advisor.

I've been fortunate to have lead the tax teams in three of the region's firms over the last twenty years or so and I hope to use those combined experiences in my new role at Leathers LLP.

### How did your new role come about?

I knew Michael Leather from my days in PW, Michael held a senior role in the tax team in PW Newcastle and I was a couple of rungs down the ladder when he left to set up his own business. He offered me the chance to join him then but it

wasn't right for me at the time having come home and being recently married.

Michael called me late last year and when we met he outlined a chance to help him and his team develop his business. He described a business which had grown over the last 27 years but which could do so much more. The business had provided some fantastic advice over the years, particularly to high net worth individuals and leading entrepreneurs. I sensed that he had built a great base which was just waiting for the right opportunities to present themselves.

### What are your first impressions?

In these first few weeks, I have been hugely impressed by the nature of our client care and the quality and ingenuity of the advice we provide. Our clients are really well looked after and we act as a quasi "family office" for a number of our clients. What is really exciting for me is the potential for us to do more in a landscape where clients need imaginative advisors more than ever before.

### What is your role?

A couple of days before I joined the business, Michael and I agreed that my title would be Development Director. I am working with the team to help the business grow, to attract new clients and to enhance the superb team that we already have. In that regard we are already recruiting and, if successful, our staff numbers should increase by around 20% this year. It's a hard market to recruit in though when our standards are so high.

We are currently finalising our business plan and we have started a brand review project. I am still a tax advisor at heart though and I've contributed

to some of the tax advisory work we are doing for clients. The younger guys here certainly keep me on my toes when we are brainstorming solutions for clients' tax problems!

### And the future?

Our business plan has been driven by the challenges that our clients will face in the coming years. The nature of their relationship with HMRC will change as we move towards the digitalisation of tax returns and the like. The use of the cloud will enable financial information to be provided more quickly but that information won't generate good business decisions of itself. Without genuine business insight, you just make the same bad financial decisions but more quickly!

It's the combination of real time financial information, business experience and imagination which will deliver real value to clients. That's our aim.

More generally, we have just reopened our office in Durham and we'll be looking to build our client base even further in the county. We're not just accountants and tax advisors though and some of the team are raising money for the William Wates Memorial Trust by completing the Tour de France cycling course - not me I hasten to add!

We'll start to implement our ambitious business plan shortly and some of the developments we are working on will undoubtedly feature in later editions of Northern Insight. It's going to be exciting!



Should you wish to learn more about how we support business across the North East and beyond, please do get in touch at [canwehelp@LeathersLLP.co.uk](mailto:canwehelp@LeathersLLP.co.uk) or call 0191 224 6760



## THE BUY TO LET MORTGAGE MARKET HAS CHANGED



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

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 borrowers 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

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.

Independent mortgage advice is now more important than ever before!

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

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

## BOOKKEEPER LESLEY JOINS THE KP SIMPSON TEAM



Some people are numbers people, and others are more inclined towards words. KP Simpson's Lesley Johnston falls into the former.

With over a decade in working with accounts, Lesley has wasted no time at all becoming a well-liked, reliable member of the KP Simpson team, despite only having joined the firm in January 2017. With a head for numbers and a passion for accountancy, she is already enthusiastic about her new position as Bookkeeper.

It's maybe no surprise then that with such a love for numbers, prior to January, Lesley was the Financial Controller for a motor company. Starting in accounts in 2006, she steadily worked her way up the accountancy ladder and more than a decade later, the dedication has paid off.

Taking everything in her stride at KP Simpson, Lesley handles key roles such as balancing accounts, completing VAT returns, preparing cashflow statements and dealing with financial paperwork all with a cool head, despite the challenging nature of the job which Lesley says makes it that extra bit enjoyable.

Describing the working atmosphere of KP Simpson as challenging, fun and friendly Lesley has settled straight in to the young, well-trained team dedicated to changing the image of accountants.

Gone, Lesley says are the soulless grey suits, replaced with colourful people with personality and a vigour for the industry. Something KP Simpson's newest recruit sums up as being "your friend, not just someone who helps you with your accounts."

Constantly on top of changes in regulations from HMRC, Lesley feels the challenging, yet rewarding work she carries out with KP Simpson is only going to get tougher. But it's yet another challenge she will rise to in the pursuit of accounting perfection.

# THE DEMAND IS OUT THERE, YOU SHOULD BE TOO

By the Entrepreneurs' Forum



The North East is one of the UK's strongest exporting regions in terms of balance of trade in goods, bettered by only Scotland and Wales in 2016.

In the last twelve months, out of 64,000 businesses in our region who are registered for either VAT or PAYE, around 6% exported goods and services (4,200 companies). Out of the Entrepreneurs' Forum membership, that figure rises to almost 30%.

Ambitious SMEs are leading the way in terms of growth ambition and, now that Article 50 has been triggered, they are split with concern for future access to their European markets and intrigue about the new opportunities that China, India, the US and Commonwealth nations could bring.

The UK accounts for 4% of global GDP. That leaves 96% of the world to aim at and for ambitious entrepreneurs the British brand presents a significant global opportunity.

Clicktime is a Blyth-based company that produces branded, licensed and private-label time pieces. It is most famous for making Lego and Star Wars watches and sells its goods through retailers in 20 countries, across four continents, including more than 8,000 outlets in the United States. Founded by Jim Richardson in 1999 the company has maintained its headquarters in the North East, while expanding its operations to offices in Hong Kong and New Jersey.

Blue Kangaroo is another business from the region dealing with major international consumer brands,

though as a creative agency it exports services rather than goods. Founded in 2006 by former soldier Jason Knights, the company delivers design work for companies and brands around the world, including Disney, Warner Bros., Star Wars, Mattel and Amazon. The company uses the time difference between their office in Gateshead and companies in Los Angeles to its advantage, often delivering design changes before the start of the client's next working day.

Tharsus Group in Blyth, which designs and manufactures robots and automated systems, was started as a traditional metal bashing business in 1964 by a group of steel workers who had won the Football Pools. While the firm still has a steel fabrication division, its growth has been based on selling cutting-edge expertise and products, including to customers in Europe and around the globe. Under the leadership of CEO Brian Palmer it has seen its turnover hit more than £20 million, and its workforce grow to more than 200.

Wearside-based Wessington Cryogenics manufactures cryogenic vessels for clients around the world. Led by Entrepreneurs' Forum board member Gill Southern, it has exported cryogenic equipment for a host of prestigious clients, including NASA, Switzerland-based European nuclear research agency CERN and the United States Air Force.

While the prospect of exporting for the first time can seem daunting, the potential rewards are huge and you don't have to go it alone. The Department for International Trade (DIT), formerly known as UKTI, organises regular trade missions around the globe to help British businesses build contacts and learn more about different cultures and markets.

They have dedicated local advisers that want to help you build an export strategy; drawing upon reams of market research and country guides and offering subsidies of up to 60% of the cost of bespoke research.

The support the Forum provides for our members includes access to mentors who have been there and done it before. We also host events aimed at bolstering export activity: round table debates sharing experiences of doing business abroad; focus dinners with successful entrepreneurs who have global businesses; or our bi-annual conferences which feature inspirational speakers from the worlds of business, sport and beyond.

The UK market might seem big enough for your business, but thinking bigger pays off. Our borders needn't be blockers because with a little determination exporting could soon bring new profits. Whatever your reservations, when it comes to exporting, fortune really does favour the brave.

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](http://www.entrepreneursforum.net)



# IMPERATOR GROUP'S KEY SUMMER SIGNING



Imperator Group has underlined its ambitions with a big summer signing. The Group has persuaded Newcastle Thunder's Managing Director, Keith Christie, to join as Group Head of Marketing, after ten years with the rugby league club.

As well as his MD role with Newcastle Thunder, Keith worked on sales and marketing for Newcastle Falcons. He admits that leaving Kingston Park was difficult, but he will remain involved as a non-executive director of the Thunder.

"It's been a great journey with some fantastic people. While it's been a hard slog in some very testing times, the club is in the strongest position it has ever been. Going forward, Imperator Group offers me a great opportunity to take my skill set and implement it into a number of new sectors."

"I have joined the Group to further develop their growing portfolio of regional and national accounts across their businesses. I am excited to start a new challenge within Imperator Group and look forward to working with the team to further develop their already extensive services and projects."

"The Group has shown consistent and impressive growth since its beginnings in 2011. I'm looking forward to being part of its continuing growth and the strategy that will drive it."

Imperator Group's core expertise lies in utilities and civil engineering. Imperator's aggressive growth

strategy is based on organic growth combined with strategic acquisitions and investments.

M A Utilities (MAU) is the foundation block upon which the Group is built. MAU provides high-quality groundworks, utility installations and reinstatement services across the North East.

In 2016 the Group acquired G & B Civil Engineering Limited, and also took on the Gun-point brickwork repointing licence in the North East region. Imperator has also made investments in other sectors.

Complete Material Handling (CMH) acquires, services, sells and hires material handling equipment, predominantly forklift trucks. Formed in 2015, CMH has already established an excellent reputation in the region for its customer focused and straightforward approach to business.

Layers Studio is a digital branding studio based in Newcastle upon Tyne, but which works with national and international clients. Layers provides writing, design and development services as it brings brands to life for its customers.

Imperator is a joint venture partner in an online operational management system called Ctrl Hub –

Christie advises people to look out for Ctrl Hub, as it has "genuine potential to be a global brand within a year or two. We haven't yet taken the product to market, but are already talking to a number of blue chip organisations on a national level."

Imperator Group Managing Director, Simon Maughan, has no doubt that Christie will be a valuable addition: "We are delighted to have Keith on board. As we have grown, it became clear that we needed someone in full time to drive business development. Keith brings a wealth of marketing experience as well as a huge number of contacts in the North East market. We see Keith playing a key role across all of our Group companies."



IMPERATOR  
GROUP

For more information on Imperator Group, please visit [www.imperatorgroup.co.uk](http://www.imperatorgroup.co.uk) or contact Keith: [keith@imperatorgroup.co.uk](mailto:keith@imperatorgroup.co.uk)

# MIKE O'BRIEN

## OPENCAST SOFTWARE

### Tell me a bit about your background

My first job after graduating was at Whessoe Engineering, where they provided the opportunity to work with some very smart people and meet the customers and engineers working at the sharp end of the business.

I was never a great morning person, so getting up at 6am to drive from Newcastle to Darlington, in the snow, in a 1973 VW Beetle, taught me a lot about how to get up and get motivated. IT can be quite abstract at times, in terms of your final product, so working in a company that made physical things, in this case parts for nuclear reactors and huge pressure vessels, was really interesting.

I spent a year there before moving to the Prescription Pricing Authority (PPA), a specialist health authority within the NHS that processes huge amounts of data to price, pay and analyse the entire drugs bill for the UK.

After eight years a friend convinced me to take a year out to go travelling. A sabbatical wasn't an option so I had to just leap and leave my secure and well paid job. It was amazing how persuasive stories of huge mountains and beautiful oceans can be!

When I travelled through places like California and New Zealand I supported myself by taking different jobs, including working on a building site, but at the same time I was hit by how many people were starting or running their own businesses – from tech firms, construction business to snowboard companies. It certainly gave me the idea that you could really do anything if you want to.

When I returned to the UK, I went back to PPA to deal with my credit card bills and figure out what to do next. As often happens, good fortune arose when I spotted a job advert on my boss's desk. The company was Strategic System Solutions, a firm that builds software systems for investment banks; and they were working on some cutting-edge technology for companies in the London, on Wall Street and in Tokyo.

I saw this as a great opportunity, so in 1997 when they offered me a job I accepted it. The firm grew to 800 people and had offices all over the world. It was in this firm that I was allowed to flex my entrepreneurial muscles, as I was able to create a start-up within a start-up.

Fast-forward to 2010 when Strategic Software Solutions was bought out by Capgemini and, although I became a member of the global senior management team, it was clear that being part of a huge global corporate wasn't quite for me.

Instead I founded Opencast, which has its roots in a chance meeting with a fellow parent from my children's school, Charlie Hoult. As the children caused chaos in the Northumberland countryside, we chatted about starting a tech company. Following a 27 mile charity hike, eight hours of conversation and a few visits to countryside pubs, we started the business partnership that became our company.

### What was your first business premises?

Our first business premises were at Hoult's Yard in Newcastle, as is our current premises. Though I started out in a shared office space, now we have a dedicated space.

### How has the company grown?

Much like when I started my own initiative at Strategic Software Solutions, it started with just me sat at a desk. I hired four former colleagues from Capgemini, I knew they had the skills I needed, even if the work wasn't there to employ them, so Charlie and I took turns to pay their wages each month, until the business was in a position to do so.

Initially we were unlucky in bringing in clients, but we saw an opportunity in the Government changing its policy on small software providers. In the past, large organisations like the NHS brought in consultants and outsourced projects to huge providers like Accenture and Capgemini, a start-up like us wouldn't have had a look in. My knowledge of the public sector and experience building systems for investment banks meant we weren't the typical start up, we had credibility, and we were able to use this to start working with Government organisations.

We're now in the gap between micro-enterprises and the big four, which is a rare position to be in. This is a result of hard work and having good people, of whom there are now 65.

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

Working with investment banks at the time, I saw first-hand the result of the financial crash. Developers lost clients, some went down with their clients and some survived, but as a sector, the software industry learned to be more resourceful. Personally I wanted to ensure my new business didn't have too much exposure to one sector like banking for example. In Opencast we have clients across many sectors from banking, government, insurance, entertainment, gaming and renewable energy.

### How has the market changed since you started the company?

Enterprise IT is a competitive market, especially in terms of skills. The UK is reaching 'full employment' and there are now political factors that might limit our access to bright people from overseas. It used to be easy to recruit the people you needed; now there are fewer available, both in bigger companies and SMEs.

### What would you say is your unique selling point?

It's a bit of a cliché, but we're not like other consultancies. Software consultants have a reputation for going into an organisation, telling people what to do but not really listening. We have a large number of very experienced tech staff, and we're very keen to ensure we hire specialists to give our customers the best support. Our people are known for working in partnership with the organisations we're helping, they get out into the office and talk to people, which helps them get to the root of the problems they're working on. This might seem simple, but it is unique.

I'm a big believer in the theory of weak ties, I have a large network of people, as does my business partner Charlie, however they are different networks, which put us in a unique and advantageous position. I often connect people I know when it could be advantageous for them, regardless of what is in it for me.

### How do you keep the team motivated?

We have an interesting variety of work. Our team isn't just working for one client or in one sector, we could be working on things for companies in entertainment, renewable energy, insurance, banking, and the public sector.

### Are you involved in mentoring?

I haven't really had a formal mentor. My dad was a senior electrical engineer with Northern Electric, it was him that sparked my interest in computing. I've also had a lot of great advice from a former customer in Deutsche Bank. In terms of mentoring other people, I've always been happy to lend my advice to other people when needed.

### Any future plans you'd care to tell us about?

In short, keep growing. I'd like to see us grow to have hundreds of people in the company. I'd also like to see us recruit more graduates, to date we have mostly hired experienced people. It would also be interesting to see if opening offices in other locations would increase our access to talented people.





Mike O'Brien is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a unique group of like-minded people who come together through peer-to-peer mentoring and a series of inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and grow their business. For more information, visit [www.entrepreneursforum.net](http://www.entrepreneursforum.net)





## A BUSINESS BOOST FOR CALVERT TRUST KIELDER

Regional companies took part in Calvert Trust Kielder's annual corporate fundraiser to raise more than £7,000 to support services for disabled people and their families and carers.

Teams of six from HT Media & Friends, Gale and Phillipson, Primula Cheese, Uilitywise, TLW Solicitors and Bellway took part in the 'Kielder Quest' which involved physical and mental challenges over two days at its centre in Kielder Water & Forest Park.

If your business has what it takes, 'Kielder Quest 2018' is planned for 22nd-23rd February.

For more information visit:  
[www.calvert-trust.org.uk](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk) or call 01434 250232.









# JOOSE - THE BEST APPROACH TO COMMERCIAL ENERGY



Joose, Energy Consultants is fast becoming the go-to team of dedicated professionals in the field of commercial energy and water.

Commercial energy prices continue to rise in the modern age and that trend looks as though it will continue for the foreseeable future. For any business, it's good practice to address the costs and efficiencies of their energy provision in order to acquire the best deals on offer in the market place and to hand over the administration of day to day energy analysis to experts in the field.

Joose monitor a company's daily, monthly and yearly consumption in order to attain the best deals possible, while searching out ways to reduce consumption and tailor solutions for a company's energy and water requirements. Effectively they police costs which can sometimes get out of control.

Mark Emms, Managing Director of Joose has many years expertise in the field says, "Let's be honest, none of us like paying more for our energy or water than we need to, so it makes sense to hand over the administration of them to an expert third party, who can constantly scrutinise and offer advice. It takes out the tedious and time consuming aspect of self-checking and allows a business person to get

on with the job of running the main part of their business. It gives them peace of mind to know their energy and water consumption is economical for their specific business sector."

More importantly perhaps, is the fact Joose does not just take your business and run. Joose staff are constantly available and will regularly discuss with company Director's or owners the way forward, advising on regulatory changes and utility trends.

Based in the North East, the Joose team is working closely with respected commercial property experts in the region – with a strong focus on regional businesses.

Already Joose has some great local business as clients, from small sole-trader organisations, to some very large companies and organisations in their portfolio of customers, indicating the quality of work they do. In order to provide the best possible service, Joose provide each client with a dedicated account manager, whose sole job it is to efficiently administer the energy and water aspect of their business and to constantly update the client on their energy agreements.

Ninety percent of the company's business comes from referral which is another indicator of the confidence clients have in the services Joose provides. Mark and his team have already acquired a number of high profile and major clients, made savings and provided quality advice to those organisations which include trusts and multi hotel institutions. Of course, that does not mean to say, large organisations are all Joose are interested in, "We handle everything from the small retailer on the high street through to the large corporate companies, it's a comprehensive offering, small business will be handled in exactly the same way as any large client we have, and those services are available to clients nationwide, I often find myself travelling from London to Aberdeen in the same week" advises Mark.

Mark is on a fast expansion with the company and is already looking for new premises, where he can enhance his dedicated team to provide the company with the impetus to grow and support the demand for the company's valuable services.

For more information, or to arrange an appointment for Mark Emms to personally visit your business and review your energy needs, please contact Joose on: 0191 3371090 or visit their website [www.joose.co.uk](http://www.joose.co.uk)



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## A BUSINESS LUNCH WITH A BANG

Does Michael Grahamslaw approve of Newcastle's hottest new venue?

The Alchemist is gaining quite a following. With branches already firmly established in the likes of Manchester, London, Liverpool and Leeds, it's one of the most widely anticipated venues to arrive in Newcastle in recent times. Since opening just over a month ago, this newest addition to Grey's quarter has enjoyed buoyant trade with its creative food menu and niche in molecular mixology (more on that later). We pitched up recently to find out what all the fuss is about.

Inside it's cocktail bar turned science lab. The team have created a trendy, copper-hued interior which features many swanky fixtures and fittings. There's industrial girders, moody, ambient lighting and inked wall murals which provide a nod to the dark arts of alchemy. Indeed, the potion-master aesthetic pervades the whole offering which really enhances the sense of theatre. The dining area is well thought out with the large booths being tailor-made for cosy dining whilst the atmosphere is defined by a general feeling of easy-going bonhomie.

It didn't take us long to settle and what better way to begin than with one of the Alchemist's signature cocktails? Their selection is innovative and far-ranging with drinks arriving in all manners of different vessels. At the centre of everything is this notion of "molecular mixology" which combines inventive cocktail ingredients with dry ice, billowing smoke, changing colours and hot & cold sensations. I struggled



to pay attention in Chemistry class but my interest was piqued here!

Of course, being the Alchemist, the cocktail menu is presented in periodic table form and is divided into a number of different categories, notably; fruity, creamy, fresh & light, dark & smoky, new classics, serious spirits and non-alcoholic.

The staff are super-friendly and are also very well clued-up so our waitress was happy to suggest a livener based on our own personal preferences. In the end, we settled on the chemical symbols Mo (mojito) and s1 (smoky old fashioned) two classic cocktails given a modern twist. My mojito arrived in a bubbling test tube whilst my son Jack's old fashioned (he's been watching that Mad Men) was first "smoke-gunned" and then cooled by a huge cueball-sized ice cube. Hats off!

The Alchemist also serves food from morning til moon and boasts a fine menu which draws upon dishes from across the globe. Having worked up quite an appetite, we were happy to find an emphasis on comfort food.

Many of the starters (or tapatisers as they're called here) can be eaten with either forks or fingers and pair nicely with the drinks offering. We opened with the thai fish cakes lifted by a sweet chilli dip and the breaded coconut prawns. These were presented with élan on lollipop skewers and came accompanied by a katsu curry sauce which provided an eye-opening marriage between sweet and savoury flavours.

Similar diversity is available for main courses too. Diners can look forward to jerk chicken, Japanese ramen, fish & chips and blackened salmon in addition to a wide selection of gourmet burgers and sandwiches. For me and the boy wonder though it was to be the 7oz fillet steak with peppercorn sauce and the Cajun chicken fajitas loaded with extra chilli – my most favourite chemical reaction.

This had been a memorable meal and one befitting of a grand finale. Once more following our Waitress' recommendation, we rounded off with a "Lightbulb Moment" – a gin-based cocktail which gurgled over a tripod before being served up in a chemical flask. A real coup de grace.

The Alchemist is a venue which really offers something different. In addition to all the little touches they've also mastered the not-so-dark arts of food, service and atmosphere. It's nice to see the clever concept executed so well here on Tyneside and it's a venue which deserves to slot right into the fabric of the city. I urge you to try it.







# WHY THE BEST PEOPLE AREN'T APPLYING FOR YOUR JOBS



Bryony Gibson, Managing Director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on what could be stopping top talent from coming to work with you.

In PwC's latest survey of global CEO's, as well as being the most likely to grow their workforce, UK business leaders were the most worried about finding the skills they need to drive growth.

Rising from second place to top spot in 2017's ranking of business threats, the UK's apprehension points to a significant lack of the skills CEOs believe their staff need in order to flourish in the future.

Adaptability, problem-solving, leadership and collaboration were the most highly prized skills for new employees; but it's these softer, more people-orientated talents that are often the hardest to recruit.

Described as the 'skills gap' - the difference between expertise employers want and the skills available from workers looking for a job - this is something that has been hampering business growth for several years.

In truth, great people are difficult to find in any competitive industry, as the very best people vanish from the job market as quickly as they appear. So are these skills really in short supply, or do companies simply not know how to attract the right people to their vacancies?

## Advertising your job

The perfect people are usually working in jobs they enjoy so when advertising a vacancy it's your responsibility to excite them about the opportunity.

All too often adverts have a lack of clarity and that means anyone with a number of options simply won't apply. Common mistakes are being unclear on the job title, not offering enough information about the day-to-day role, or failing to explain why you're such a great company to work for.

While it's not always about the money, not specifying a salary is also very off-putting. If you have a figure in mind write it down, as it will save time for everyone concerned in the long-run.

Jargon filled job posts are my pet hate. Keep things simple and never use any gender biased language, as this will immediately switch people off.

## The recruitment process

I've never understood why so many people insist on making it difficult for busy people to apply for a new job.

Think carefully about who you are trying to reach before you plan your recruitment strategy. Ask yourself if an application deadline is necessary? Do you definitely need an application form completing at the first stage?

Recruitment is two-way process, so if you're clear about who you're looking for, you don't have to fear making the application process flexible and simple, because shortlisting should always be comparatively easy.

## Attractiveness of the role

There's nothing worse than going through a lengthy recruitment process where you find your dream candidate, only for them to turn your job offer down. If this is happening regularly, try stepping backwards and asking yourself some honest questions: What is your competition doing? Do you have a clear employer brand? Are there blockages and changes needed in your recruitment process?

If your organisation is ambitious and has a desire to be the best, then you're looking for someone who not only brings expertise and performs at the very highest level, but who also matches your organisation's core values; so make sure they're clearly defined and communicated.

As Jim Collins famously said, "Great vision without great people is irrelevant". Competition for the best people is going to continue to increase in the coming years and factors like office location, job security and salary will always play a big part, but these can be addressed through flexible working conditions, building a strong reputation as an honest and fair employer and monitoring industry salary levels.

If your 'skills gap' is slowing progress, then avoiding some of these mistakes could be the most important thing you ever do.

Contact Bryony for career advice and for help finding the right tax & accountancy role or recruits on (0191) 375 9983.

Alternatively, visit [www.bryonygibson.com](http://www.bryonygibson.com), connect on LinkedIn or follow @bryonygibson.

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# PUBLIC TRANSPORT?...

## NOT FOR ME, I HAVE MY OWN PLANE!



We must confess the inspiration for this particular topic was a very nice article by Ian Robson of the Chronicle on what we personally think is a genius way to reduce the cost of travel and we will definitely be exploring as well as encouraging the others to take full advantage of it!

One way or another, commuting around the country whether for business or pleasure hits us all hard in time and money, driving is miserable, train fares are extortionate, bus journeys are suicidal, taxis are costly and unpredictable as more drivers depend on a 'sat-liar system' and transiting through an airport for even the shortest domestic flight is a time sapping nightmare as we are all intensively scrutinized because of those pesky terrorists! So amongst all this misery and pessimism, we have stumbled across a potentially morale boosting way to save time and a bit of cash whilst feeling like the proverbial Donald Trump in your own private Air Force 1.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority in the UK we have around 43,000 private pilots, amongst these quite a few subsidize their passion through charging people to join them on their flights as a 'passenger' by selling the free seats in their aircraft, some of these flights are recreational round trip sight-seeing jaunts and others are point to point transits utilizing local airfields and airports

which is where our interest was sparked. Allow us introduce you to 'Wingly' (en.wingly.io), think of it like an Airbnb of the plane world, it is a flight sharing platform that brings pilots and prospective passengers together in a secure and safe manner. Cost wise it is comparable and admittedly a little more expensive than commercial alternatives (especially as Easyjet are highly competitive price wise), but this depends on the pilot and route although, where you lose a little in cost you save significantly in time as there is no security and check-in process to suffer. In addition, you will normally be the only passenger which I equate to as 'my own private plane'...personal chauffeur? Pah! That's so last year I've got a personal pilot!

Feeling suitably 'Presidential' yet? Before you start contacting Athena for your own private security detail (yes we can deliver that too) there are some minor considerations worth noting here. The aircraft available are classed as 'light aircraft' so are more susceptible to the weather which means several things, it is down to the pilot's discretion whether to fly so unlike a large commercial aircraft there is

a higher probability of cancellation if conditions are not just right. Also, small aircraft can be terrifying to fly in, having been lucky enough to experience several hours in a microlight at the very capable hands of Christian Buttery out of Eshott airfield we can attest to the fact that being strapped into a flying bath tub really makes the term 'sensory overload' a complete understatement, we have never viewed turbulence the same since! That said, we would do it again in a shot as it was an amazing experience.

Having had a good look at what this service has to offer we think it definitely offers a positive and somewhat of a unique alternative to more traditional means of moving from point A to B. With a little prudent planning and thinking out of the box you could easily reduce your travel budget, have flights fit your schedule rather than your schedule fit your flights, save time and stress (I'm all for stress free) and have a very personal, unique experience in the process. Thanks to Wingly, Athena Risk are now officially part of the jet set with our own fleet of private planes!



# TECH SECTOR GROWTH POTENTIAL

BY JAMES BLACKWELL, CEO, RONALD JAMES



From Tech Nation's 2017 key findings, it is encouraging to see that the UK's digital turnover has reached almost £100 billion - a 10% increase in just five years.

This tremendous achievement for the UK has been recognised by Theresa May, who has described the technology industry as a "great British success story". In relation to this, reports from The Telegraph state that the digital economy is now growing at twice the rate of the wider economy, opening endless amounts of potential. The common trend that stems from this information, is the growth potential of the UK's Tech Sector.

Growth potential is a key factor to any industry - as entering an unstable sector is arguably one of the largest concerns for both business owners and employees. This post evaluates what growth potential means for the UK, and discusses the opportunities that develop as a result.

## Employment Opportunities

A growing environment can naturally result in a rise of available jobs. As the digital industry is expanding into new avenues every day, the number of employment opportunities available is rapidly

increasing. In Middlesbrough alone, there are 6,970 digital jobs on offer, which is an incredible figure for a newly recognised digital cluster. When factoring in the thousands of additional digital jobs available across the UK, it is clear to see the potential of this trend. For those looking for a career in the digital sector, particularly students and graduates, this is an extremely promising trend, that will encourage fresh, newly trained employees into the industry. This rise in employment opportunities not only provides benefits to individuals but will also assist in the reduction of unemployment rates, in turn boosting the overall performance of the UK's economy.

## Dynamic Environment

A growing tech industry provides a dynamic environment for start-up businesses looking to digitally establish themselves. With continuous developments, and new digital revolutions being discovered daily, the sector as whole acts as an incredible 'sandbox' for new businesses. Without growth potential, many sectors fail to recognise

the importance of developing new ideas and experimenting with possible trends. As the UK has one of the fastest growing digital economies, businesses should feel empowered and reassured that the area provides the necessary surroundings to equip them and help them thrive in the digital environment.

## Expansion Potential

The importance of operating on a digital level is indisputable for any business, and with the tech sector only going one way it is now more crucial than ever for businesses to get online. The digital environment has reached a certain level, and so now acts as a stable business platform for organisations to expand onto. Operating on a digital level not only diversifies the business but can also increase profits, raise the company's profile and allow for more effective business operations. With more businesses entering the UK's tech sector, we can expect to maintain our fantastic digital status and can anticipate continued digital economic growth.

james@ronaldjamesgroup.com or call 0191 3006501

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Tyneside Cinema apprentice Ryan Peebles

## CREATIVE APPRENTICESHIPS PROVIDE TALENT TO GROWING SECTOR

The success of the North East's colourful mix of creative and cultural organisations is continuing to build, making it a big business in the region.

Collectively these organisations employ 8,000 people and generate an estimated £866m for the North East economy; experts predict that the latter figure will rise to £1.1bn by 2020.

Some of these organisations, including Sage Gateshead, have benefited from Gateshead College, which has been supporting the sector for more than a decade.

This assistance will be needed in the future, too, as the North East's creative and cultural industry recruits more skilled workers ahead of its predicted growth.

As businesses build, job opportunities grow, along with the need for new skills and bespoke training to meet the needs of creative employers across the region. The recently implemented apprenticeship levy is set to support and encourage this, with businesses who have a payroll of more than £3m charged 0.5 percent of payroll costs towards training apprentices.

Ivan Jepson, director of business development at

Gateshead College, said: "The North East arts and culture scene is booming and we're delighted to be helping creative organisations build a talented workforce for the future.

"We are currently providing businesses in the sector with advice and guidance on the apprenticeship levy. We know that through our partnership with the Entrepreneurs' Forum and the North East England Chamber of Commerce that many employers still don't really know how it will impact their business. It is vital for us to spread the message and help local businesses take advantage of the levy and its development and financial opportunities."

Gateshead College has a track record of working with high-profile creative and cultural employers from Dance City to Centre for Life, developing apprenticeships and supporting businesses. The college is a founder member of The National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural Skills, and was one of the first in the region to deliver creative apprenticeships to meet employers' needs.

A recent example of the college's success

in providing bespoke creative and cultural apprenticeships includes a specially designed programme with the iconic Tyneside Cinema. The college worked closely with the cinema to design its new creative and digital media programme, which was put in place to provide more skilled workers for the business.

Ryan Peebles, 22, from Durham, is the first digital and media apprentice at Tyneside Cinema. His mentor, Helen Moore, learning and participation manager at Tyneside Cinema, said: "We are working with Gateshead College to ensure the future of digital and creative careers in the North East. We want to support the growth of the sector as well as train potential employees with the best knowledge and skills.

"Ryan has been an asset to the team and his enthusiasm and willingness to get involved is exceptional. We would definitely recommend apprenticeships with Gateshead College to other local businesses; it's a great opportunity for both the individual and for the company."

To find out more about Gateshead College and the courses on offer, visit [www.gateshead.ac.uk](http://www.gateshead.ac.uk)

## ERASMUS FURNISHES BUSINESS IDEAS

The North East Business and Innovation Centre (BIC) continues to build on its success with the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme as it welcomes back Francesca, the latest exchange entrepreneur.

The Erasmus programme is a cross border exchange programme which offers those in the early stages of starting a business the opportunity to spend three to four months with a business in Europe.

Francesca Birch spent time with Ultra Studio based in Amsterdam to develop and gain new skills in preparation for the launch of her new business. Francesca is in the process of starting a consultancy business that offers innovative and sustainable design solutions and has spent time working on lighting and product design. She explains: "Through the Erasmus programme I was able to travel to Amsterdam and spend time in a well-established business, not only as a designer but as a student. The company acted as a mentor and together we worked on targeted goals each week. I learned about aspects of the business in which I lacked experience, including financial planning, customer relations and how the running of a studio works on a day to day basis.

"I also contributed to the host business and was involved in the design of an innovative lighting product.

"I would most definitely recommend the Erasmus programme to aspiring or newly established businesses. It's been an excellent experience and the support I have received from the BIC has been brilliant."

The BIC is a UK contact for anyone wishing to take part in the Erasmus programme. The Programme aims to place new entrepreneurs within an established business in Europe, and also to recruit UK based companies who are willing to host an entrepreneur from overseas. The placements, on average, run for 3 to 4 months.

Louise Hardy, business development manager and head of the programme at the BIC explains: "This is



Entrepreneur Francesca Birch

a fantastic opportunity for both the Entrepreneurs and the Host companies. The Host can welcome an entrepreneur into their business to complete a project which they themselves set, allowing the entrepreneur to acquire skills they may not otherwise have the opportunity to experience. In return the host will be able to benefit from the fresh ideas and skill set that the entrepreneur

brings and exchange first-hand knowledge of international markets.

"I am delighted that Francesca benefited so much from participating in the programme and I am confident she will go on to use the skills she has acquired in her own business venture." Louise concluded.

### Programme criteria

#### You can participate in the programme as a new entrepreneur if:

- You are firmly planning to start a business and have a concrete project or business idea based on a viable business plan
- You have started your own business within the last 3 years
- Be motivated and prepared to contribute to the development of the host entrepreneur's business and make your skills and competences available

#### As a host entrepreneur you can participate in the programme if:

- You are a permanent resident in one of the participating countries
- You are the owner of a small or medium enterprise
- You have been running a company for more than 3 years
- You are willing to share your knowledge and experience with a new entrepreneur and act as a mentor



# A TIN OF QUALITY, RIGHT UP YOUR STREET

Propelled by 86 years of brand heritage, and over 1,000 recipes to perfect, the new AkzoNobel facility in Ashington has the task of making sure every item leaves the factory filled with quality products. Each tin, proudly emblazoned with one of the flagship brands; Dulux, Dulux Trade, Armstead, Cuprinol or Polycell, brings with it a promise of bringing colour to people's lives.

"It's a big responsibility," explains Jeff Hope, Head of Manufacturing at Ashington. "At AkzoNobel we do so much research into how colour can make people feel and act and to know that the products we make here can have an impact on people's lives is really fulfilling. We strive to make sure that every batch of paint leaves here in perfect condition so it's ready for when you crack open the tin and grab your paint brush."

This dedication to delivering quality products and services sits right at the very heart of AkzoNobel explains David Shields, Quality Manager at AkzoNobel Ashington. "All of our products need to be the right quality - inside and outside the can - before they're allowed to leave site. Nothing is made available to our customers that we wouldn't purchase ourselves."

"As part of our commitment to the creation of an unrivalled customer experience, we have also created an internal quality network which allows us to consistently monitor and evaluate our customer requirements in order to continuously improve our products and service."



AkzoNobel's high-quality paint products bring colour to people's lives.

AkzoNobel operates an integrated quality management system across the organisation that meets all of the relevant ISO quality accreditations, so our customers can be assured that whenever they purchase an AkzoNobel product, they are purchasing a quality product manufactured to fulfil their requirements.

From our ground-breaking sustainable manufacturing technologies, to the work that we do within local communities to help bring colour to people's lives, at AkzoNobel, delivering quality is not just about creating world-class products, it's about striving for perfection in everything that we do.

To find out more about AkzoNobel, visit: [www.akzonobel.com](http://www.akzonobel.com)

## BUSINESS BOOST FOR VIBRANT COUNTY DURHAM ECONOMY

**County Durham is different to almost any other place in the region, and consequently has a very different dynamic in terms of doing business there.**

With its wide catchment area and in the varying types of businesses that County Durham boasts, there is also a different dimension in terms of the attitude which makes for a real vibrancy in the marketplace. For those with a progressive and professional mindset, there are some great development opportunities for people wishing to strike out on their own, find new opportunities or expand their business activities.

Business Durham, the economic development company for County Durham, has set up a new £20m fund to help businesses to grow sustainably. This is creating a different dynamic in the county, and we are already starting to see changes and notice different things going on, but the pace will really start to pick up when the first loans are made in the next few months.

As more firms locate, start up and grow across the county, and as businesses scale up and create new jobs, there is no doubt that this will generate prosperity for the local and regional economies.

Access to finance has historically been a real issue for businesses, but the new fund has been designed in such a way as to link in with other investment pots and be accessible for businesses of all sizes and across all sectors. The fund has already been hailed as innovative and transformational, and we can only expect that the already vibrant marketplace is set to strengthen over the next few years.

However, it remains important that we keep an eye on the wider picture when it comes to gaining an advantage through a period of change. Business people from across the region need to be aware of the changes that are happening in County Durham. For business leaders within the county, it's important that they are talking to advisers about a whole range of issues, from upskilling to finance options, from brokering deals to managing growth. Ultimately, these are exciting times for County Durham and North East economies which present opportunities for us all. By building up our intelligence and fostering more prospects and deals, we can ensure the vibrancy of the County Durham business scene not only continues, but accelerates, for many years to come.



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## CARDIFF BASED AI SOFTWARE FIRM SET FOR FURTHER GROWTH WITH THE HELP OF MINCOFFS

AMPLIFYI Ltd, a start-up specialising in Artificial Intelligence software has announced it has closed a £800,000 (\$1.0m) equity funding round.

Finance Wales, one of the UK's largest regional SME investment companies led the round, with additional private investment from some of the UK's most successful investors including Ashley Cooper, co-founder and director of Catalyst Growth Partners. This brings the total funding secured by the start-up in the last 4 months to £1,200,000 (\$1.5m).

AMPLIFYI's flagship product, DataVoyant™, is the first to combine Surface and Deep Web harvesting, Artificial Intelligence and data visualisation within a single, user-friendly platform. As a tool specifically designed to support strategic decision-making, DataVoyant™ has delivered infinitely repeatable, unbiased insight whilst significantly reducing intelligence acquisition costs. Its worth has been proven in areas such as competitor intelligence, investment optimisation and M&A targeting, by some of the world's largest companies in sectors

spanning aerospace and defence, banking, energy, insurance, private equity and professional services.

This second equity round follows an initial investment from Finance Wales in August 2016 and a recent £400,000 (\$500,000) unsecured loan from the Welsh Government, which is enabling AMPLYFI to expand their highly-skilled programming team.

Chris Ganje (CEO) and Mark Woods (CTO) have both been named in The Sunday Times 2017 Maserati 100 – the top 100 list of British disruptor entrepreneurs. AMPLYFI was also recently featured in the Tech Nation 2017 report and identified as a top 100 Artificial Intelligence firm globally by AI Business.

Chris said "The future of business intelligence lies in delivering high performance, easy to use solutions driven by the most advanced Artificial Intelligence capability. AMPLYFI's next generation

architecture has been purpose-built to address this challenge. This latest round of funding will allow us to continue our exponential growth to meet the needs of our rapidly growing client base."

"AMPLIFYI is a superbly managed company, with a team of high-class Artificial Intelligence and strategy experts" said Philip Barnes, Investment Executive for Finance Wales' Technology Venture Investments. "AMPLIFYI's strong potential for significant growth and profitability made it a perfect fit for our portfolio."

The Corporate Team at Newcastle Law Firm Mincoffs Solicitors, led by Partner John Nicholson, provided advice and support to AMPLYFI on the round of investment. John said "It has been a pleasure to act for AMPLYFI. We look forward to watching them expand further and wish them all the best for the future".



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## NEW PARTNER FOR KYLES



Kyles Legal are delighted to announce that David Parish, having been with the firm for 2 years, has been made a Partner.

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David, who originates from Seaton Delaval, qualified with an undergraduate degree in Modern History at Hertford College, University of Oxford, going on to complete a Masters at the same institution.

He then went on to do a conversion course in law at Northumbria University completing his training contract period at Brennans in North Tyneside before working for a small Wallsend firm. Since leaving that firm he has gone from strength to strength and is now a regular face at police stations, magistrates courts and Crown Courts in the North of England.

David has a specialism in crime and road traffic law, and has obtained his duty solicitor qualification. He is qualified as a higher rights advocate and also represents clients in the Crown Court.

In his spare time, David is an avid Newcastle United fan and regularly travels the country watching his home town team. David's appointment is thoroughly deserved and his addition to the partnership is another big step forward for the company.

For an initial chat, or to make an appointment to see us telephone 0191 2571051. For more information go to [www.kyleslegalpractice.co.uk](http://www.kyleslegalpractice.co.uk)



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## EXTRA RELIEF FOR NORTH EAST SMALL BUSINESSES

Last month saw some major changes come into play with regards to business rates. Gordon Brown, consultant at Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP's corporate and commercial team, explains the changes and exactly what they mean for businesses in the region.

### What has changed?

Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) has been permanently doubled from 50 percent to 100 percent, and the thresholds have been increased to benefit a greater number of businesses.

Businesses with a property with a rateable value of £12,000 and below will now receive 100 percent relief, while businesses with a property with a rateable value between £12,000 and £15,000 will receive tapered relief. This means that 600,000 small businesses, who occupy a third of all properties, will pay no business rates at all – a saving worth up to £5,900 in 2017-18 alone. An additional 50,000 businesses will benefit from tapered relief.

The changes have also increased the threshold for the standard business rates multiplier to a rateable value of £51,000, taking 250,000 smaller properties out of the higher rate. This will reduce business rates for many, mostly small, businesses.

### What do businesses need to do?

If a company occupies business premises it will most likely have been inundated recently with speculative approaches from surveyors and other professionals claiming expertise in the reduction of business rates and promising significant reductions in rates liability in return for a cut of the saving.

On the whole in the North East our business rates will come down, significantly. That's the benefit of our commercial properties being less valuable in rating terms than other parts of England and Wales, particularly the South East.

So, can North East businesses sit back and enjoy? Well, certainly that's all some of us will have to do. However, if a firm is still left with a business rates liability after the changes, it may still be tempted into visiting a "rating specialist". A quick search of that term will reveal a bewildering array of businesses vying for business – and many stories of scammers operating in that field.

If my business property was valued for tax, especially if within 20 percent above any threshold, it is certainly worth engaging a rating specialist. Make sure to contact a trusted advisor, such as a solicitor, accountant or banker, for a recommendation of a local business, because local businesses have more intimate knowledge of local values.

Always ask for "no reduction, no fee" terms, and a business shouldn't be paying any more than 15 percent of any tax saving as a fee.

However, don't automatically follow their advice. What many do not say is that a rating valuation appeal could actually result in an increase in the rateable value of a business' premises, and so its rates liability. If a possible reduction is marginal, and this increase could have a punitive result, the best option could be to do nothing. At least then the firm's decision would be an informed one and the decision to do anything should remain that of the business owners.

# HOW UNREASONABLE DOES 'UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR' HAVE TO BE?



Securing a 'no fault' divorce may sound like the best option for many couples, but a recent case has flagged up the pitfalls. Ward Hadaway Family Law Associate Sarah Crilly looks at the case.

**"Unreasonable behaviour" is one of the grounds on which a court may grant a divorce.**

However, a number of recent court judgments have refused petitions on the basis that the behaviour cited in the cases is not unreasonable. This has some important implications for divorcing couples.

In one of these recent cases - *Owens v Owens* - the Court of Appeal dismissed the Wife's appeal against the dismissal of her petition.

The Wife petitioned the Court for divorce on the basis of the Husband's "unreasonable behaviour". The Husband defended the petition.

The Court at first instance found that the Husband had not behaved in such a way that the Wife could not reasonably be expected to live with him and dismissed the petition.

The Wife appealed but the Court of Appeal upheld the original Court's finding.

In doing so, the Court of Appeal noted that petitions which aim to be as conciliatory as possible may mean that the criteria to satisfy the test for unreasonable behaviour are not met.

So where does this ruling leave divorcing couples?

Many couples who have found that their marriage has ended may not necessarily be able to point blame at the other party as to why things have broken down.

In those circumstances, the law provides that they will have to wait for at least two years before they may dissolve their marriage.

If behaviour is not unreasonable to the extent that the petitioner could not reasonably be expected to live with the respondent, the Court may refuse the petition.

Understandably, in difficult circumstances, parties don't want to cause further friction in what may be

a civil relationship with their spouse.

However, this Court ruling has made it clear that a divorce will only be granted on the grounds of "unreasonable behavior" if that behaviour is clearly unreasonable and is reflected in the language used in the petition.

The statute that governs this came into force in 1973 and hasn't been reviewed for over 40 years.

There is lobbying to invite change to legislation to reflect modern society but for now, if a divorcing couple is unwilling to wait for their marriage to be dissolved, the petition presented to the Court must assert blame to the extent of the statute.

This has clear implications for couples looking to dissolve their marriages as soon as possible – and needs to be taken into account when deciding on the route to eventual divorce.

For more information on the issues raised by this article, please contact [sarah.crilly@wardhadaway.com](mailto:sarah.crilly@wardhadaway.com) or on 0191 204 4463.



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# STAYING POWER...

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

This month we chat to...

## JAMIE MARTIN

Managing Partner, Ward Hadaway

### Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

No I really wanted to be a RAF Pilot like my father but unfortunately failed air crew selection at RAF Biggin Hill on the first day because of a lack of coordination!

### What is your favourite aspect of the job?

Playing a part in the building of Ward Hadaway as a major commercial law firm, regionally and nationally has been great fun and during that process I have made some tremendous friends both within and outside the firm. I enjoy interaction with the business community and I have been able to build up some tremendously rewarding relationships with clients over the years. It is also a delight to see the careers blossom within the firm.

### What has been your career-defining moment?

Without the doubt the merger between my old firm Weldon Houlby and Scott and Ward Hadaway in 1996. This brought to us a tremendous opportunity to create a powerhouse Northern law firm based in Newcastle which I am proud to say we have achieved as a result of a lot of hard work from everyone involved.

### How do you measure success?

Simply by the continued growth of the firm both in terms of size and profitability. Profit is not a dirty word; we need profit to ensure that we can recruit the best possible people and make the appropriate investments that are required to develop modern business.

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

Where do I start?! There has been a

tremendous increase in regulation which has led to a significant requirement for compliance personnel, the law is continually changing and developing so the skills that the firm has to muster are continually changing and developing and keeping on top of those changes is a challenge. Client demands of their lawyers have grown significantly over the last 20 years and so the investment that we have to make in training our people to ensure that they can meet those client demands has increased dramatically. The expectation that lawyers have of their career has also changed significantly and again has required an increase in investment in training and equipping our people to meet the needs of the profession and the clients.

### How has your skills set developed accordingly?

My job is about managing people whether it is within the firm or externally. I would like to think I have always been able to get on with people, which has been a great help. It is trite but it is an important element of leadership to ensure that you are surrounded by people who are better than you and I am pleased to say I have been able to do that at Ward Hadaway in spades.

### Are you a risk taker by nature or are you more conservative?

There has always been an entrepreneurial spirit at Ward Hadaway since it was founded in 1988. We have tried to retain that entrepreneurial spirit but as the firm has become bigger and more established that has been a challenge. So I would describe myself as a cautious risk taker and I hope that will not cause my partners too much concern!

### To what would you attribute your success?

Great support from my wife Michaela and my children, my wider family and the healthy cynicism and independent spirit that I developed as a result of a public school education. I have also had tremendous support from my partners, from clients and friends – no man is an island.

### What is your biggest weakness and how have you managed this?

My biggest weakness is not being able to say no to new opportunities and I have managed this by ensuring that I have a strong right hand man in Martin Hulls our Head of Corporate who has done a tremendous job over many years as the finance partner of the firm. Not many decisions are made at Ward Hadaway without ensuring that Martin has cast his commercial eye over the numbers.

### How do you remain motivated?

Whilst we have achieved a lot, there is still more to achieve and my desire to ensure a stable and sustainable business across our three offices continues to motivate me as does the need to deliver top quality legal services to our clients in an ever-changing business environment.

### Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Everyone likes to be liked and I am no exception – but as far as business is concerned then I would prefer to be respected.

### I'll retire when...

I run out of steam – which I hope will not be for a few years yet!





## THE SUNSHINE SICKIE

With the May bank holidays upon us and the weather looking to be on our side, employees may see this as a welcome opportunity to enjoy the sun and let off some steam. Employers, however, may not see the three day weekend as quite so much of a ray of sunshine.



### Sunshine Sickie/Sun-induced Sickie

Under certain circumstances, they may be quite right to be pessimistic with the temptation for employees to over-indulge being rife. Figures from The Independent suggest that approximately 350,000 of us pulled sickies during the working year, with the cost in productivity being £45 million and some outrageous(-ly unbelievable) excuses can add insult to injury!

Some of the typical issues employers may face in the lead up to and following the much anticipated bank holidays, including how to deal with these effectively, are discussed below.

### Holiday requests

Employers are likely to see an influx of annual leave requests surrounding the bank holiday weekends for those wishing to maximise their time off. These requests should be dealt with by using your annual leave policy. Employers may want to be flexible around annual leave requests, providing that employees understand that this must be pre-arranged depending on the needs of the business.

The most important point to note is that all requests should be dealt with fairly. Overall, a considered and consistent approach should be taken and there should be no preference given to some requests over others.

### Early finishes

Heading off on a long weekend away could mean that employers can also expect requests for early finishes or flexibility in working hours.

Again, flexibility by both employers and employees is the best approach. It may be a good time to harness the high morale and improve employee engagement by authorising some lieu time, allowing employees to come in earlier and finish earlier, allow shift swaps or agree when the employee will make up the time – all depending on operational needs.

Again, the most important part being that all employees should be treated equally.

### Sickness absence

Following an extended period of lapping up the rays in a local beer garden, some employees may have felt that the sky is the limit but may not be feeling too bright and breezy the following morning.

It is extremely important that employers have a sickness absence policy in place. If various employees do overindulge and call in sick, it could result in a significant strain on the rest of the team to pick up the slack and effectively deal with business needs.

Sickness absence policies will still apply and employers should monitor levels of attendance during this period. Employers should remind employees that any unauthorised absence or pattern in absence will be closely scrutinised and could lead to formal disciplinary proceedings.

Taking a lax approach towards absence management may encourage an absence culture to flourish. However, even if someone does call in sick prior to or following the bank holiday, remember not to jump to conclusions and assume that an absence is not genuine. It is always essential to

consider the evidence and undertake appropriate investigations before commencing any disciplinary action.

### Social media

With social media becoming second nature in today's society, some employees may fall into the trap of calling in sick but then posting on Facebook about 'death by alcohol'. Suggestions of potential dishonesty may be drawn from the employee's behaviour and could play a contributing factor to disciplinary action but only from being evaluated as part of a properly conducted disciplinary investigation.

### Hangovers and being under the influence

Many people will have an extravagant social calendar over the bank holiday weekend and may enjoy partaking in a couple of drinks with friends. However, anyone caught drinking or under the influence at work could be subject to disciplinary proceedings. Employees should be reminded of any 'no alcohol' policy and the risks of disciplinary action associated with attending work in an unfit state.

### Overall

Overall, working together, clear communication and forward planning will be key to maintaining a productive business and a happy workforce throughout any bank holiday period. A reminder of the company's policies and procedures surrounding absence management at work may be beneficial to encourage employees to enjoy the sun sensibly.

If you would benefit from help or advice regarding your sickness absence policy or managing a situation regarding employee absences, please feel free to contact [paul.mcgowan@collingwoodlegal.com](mailto:paul.mcgowan@collingwoodlegal.com)



# STATUTORY MATERNITY PAY IN BRIEF

By Claire Rolston, Solicitor, Director, CLR Law

Last month, the TUC alleged that the rate of UK statutory maternity pay ("SMP") was the worst in Europe and called for it to be "decently" paid.

## How much is SMP?

SMP is paid over 39 weeks. The rate is:

- 90% of the woman's weekly pay for the first 6 weeks of maternity leave; and
- £140.98 (this tax year) for the remaining 33 weeks (or 90% of pay, if lower).

## Are all employees entitled to SMP?

A woman will be entitled to SMP if she:

- earns above the lower earnings limit (£113 for the 2017/2018 tax year);
- has been employed for at least 26 weeks by the end of the Qualifying Week (which is the 15th week before the expected week of childbirth ("EWC") (put simply – if she becomes pregnant after starting work for you);
- is still pregnant (or has given birth) 11 weeks before the EWC;
- has given 28 days' notice of the date

she intends SMP to start (if reasonably practicable to do so); and has stopped work.

## Are women on maternity leave entitled to anything else?

From a statutory point of view, women continue to be entitled to all their terms and conditions during maternity leave, other than those that relate to remuneration (wages or salary). Therefore, entitlement to holiday accrual, the use of a company car (if personal use is permitted) and any other non-cash benefits continues.

Women are only entitled to more maternity pay if the contract provides for this. You should:

- consider the benefits of paying contractual maternity pay (potentially increased loyalty and a higher likelihood of the employee returning to work so skills are retained and recruitment costs saved);
- consider what is affordable and whether there is a usual or standard rate for your business; and
- include a repayment clause in the event that the woman does not return to work for, say, at least 6 months.



CLR Law is a specialist firm of employment solicitors in Gateshead, dealing with all employment law and HR related queries. Contact us on [hello@clrlaw.co.uk](mailto:hello@clrlaw.co.uk) or 0191 6030061.

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## GENTOO GIVEN THE GO-AHEAD



Gentoo, the biggest provider of new homes in Sunderland, has been given the go-ahead to build 312 new homes across the city.

Sunderland City Council's Planning Committee has granted Gentoo planning permission for three developments, allowing the group to start work on sites in High Usworth in Washington, Coaley Lane in Houghton-le-Spring and Broomhill in Hetton-le-Hole.

At the new development in High Usworth, Gentoo will be building 56 new homes for sale, with a combination of semi-detached and detached three and four bedroomed homes.

At its new Coaley Lane development, Gentoo will be extending its existing popular Meadow View scheme with 128 new homes being built in addition to the 136 already under construction.

At its Broomhill site, Gentoo will be building 128

new homes consisting of two, three and four bedroomed homes, with a combination of homes for sale and for rent.

Gentoo's Chairman, Ian Self, said: "We are delighted to have been given the go-ahead. On top of our significant existing development programme in the city, it shows that we are committed to delivering high quality new homes in sought after locations, across a variety of tenures, for the people of Sunderland."

## SIZE IS EVERYTHING AT LONGHIRST

Many factors have attracted buyers to Dere Street Homes' prestigious Longhirst Hall development. For one visitor, however, the main attraction was clear... the size of the master bedroom!

Dere Street Homes' Development Sales Manager, Yvonne Wilson, commented: "We've had a fantastic reaction to our three-bedroom townhouse showhome since it opened. Whilst we were obviously aware that the huge master bedroom at 7.5m by 5.8m was very appealing, we didn't think it would be a tie-breaker until one of our visitors was sold on Longhirst because of it!"

The three-bedroom townhouse showhome features an expansive open plan kitchen, dining and lounge area with superb floor-to ceiling Bi-fold doors which open fully onto the individual rear gardens. A separate family room, fully plumbed utility room and WC complete the ground floor with stairs leading to the first-floor landing. The spacious master bedroom comes with full en-suite facilities and superb views over the rear gardens, whilst the two front-facing bedrooms share the large family bathroom.



## NEW LUXURY HOMES SET FOR ROTHBURY



Plans for a development of new luxury homes in a traditional Northumberland market town have been announced.

Cragside Gardens, based in Rothbury, has attracted the interest of established housebuilder Robertson Homes. The company has 50 years of experience in building award winning homes in Scotland and is now set to bring more quality homes to the North of England.

The three, four and five bedroomed homes are set to be marketed by leading chartered surveyors and

estate agents Bradley Hall.

Construction on the exclusive development will begin late spring with completion set for Winter 2019. A show home and marketing suite is anticipated from Early Autumn 2017 and buyers will be able to reserve plots from May 2017.

Matt Hoy, Director of Estate Agency at Bradley Hall, said: "We are delighted to have been appointed to work with Robertson Homes in marketing Cragside Gardens. The company has a fantastic reputation in creating impressive and affluent homes."



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## HALTON GRANGE, WALL, HEXHAM



### PRICE GUIDE: £3.25 MILLION

Halton Grange was constructed in 1913 and has been renovated to provide a superb country home with equestrian facilities and stunning views. This magnificent five bedroomed family house has extensive accommodation with three principal reception rooms, a garden room, a superb kitchen/breakfasting room by Mark Wilkinson, a games room and a substantial leisure suite with swimming pool, Jacuzzi, changing rooms, shower, solarium, steam room and mezzanine cocktail bar with lounge area. The property is situated within impressive grounds extending to 12.5 acres which include magnificent gardens, private sitting areas, water feature and pond, all weather tennis court, orchard, two grazing paddocks and stables. There is also a one bedroom annexe apartment, ideal for independent relatives and live in staff. Halton Grange is a very special property indeed, within a beautiful part of Northumberland.



Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 2233500 [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk) [www.sandersonyoung.co.uk](http://www.sandersonyoung.co.uk)





## Lindisfarne Road Jesmond

A highly individual, luxurious and unique home, located in the heart of Jesmond, representing one of Newcastle's finest town mansions. This very elegant, four storey, detached house is set in approx. 1 acre of south facing landscaped gardens and has a leisure suite with pool.

**Price Guide: £3.995 Million**

6 4 6 C



**rare!** From Sanderson Young

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







## Lomond House Tranwell Woods, Morpeth

Lomond House is an impressive detached mansion offering luxurious accommodation in a highly sought after rural setting with stunning views. This magnificent property is beautifully presented with modern fixtures and fittings, and a triple garage block with annex above.

**Price Guide: £2.85 Million**

5 5 5 E



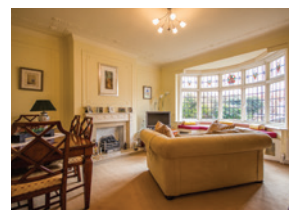
**rare!** From Sanderson Young

**Ashleigh Sundin**  
ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk

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## Graham Park Road Gosforth

A fabulous, three storey, semi detached home on this sought after road with generous rear garden and double width driveway. The property has versatile and generous family accommodation with a superb kitchen opening to the garden and a large loft conversion ideal as a teenage pad.

**Price Guide: £879,950**

4/5 3 2 D



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# YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

## DAMIANO REA

Managing Director, Heaton Property Ltd.

### Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here later in life?

I was born in Denton Burn and at the age of two moved all the way to Heaton. For four years in my late teens I travelled the world working as a musician then I returned to Heaton where I still work and live with my family.

### What challenges do you think business in the North East faces?

In the property sector, policy and law making tends to focus upon London and the South East. The North East is a very different market where we have to work harder for our money. People demand a higher level of service because we do not suffer the over demand prevalent in the South East.

### What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?

Take a short car ride in any direction. You could be walking our stunning beaches or countryside, in a Michelin starred restaurant or at a shopping centre complete with Imax cinema. The list goes on with historic castles and monuments, fantastic outdoor opportunities and a vibrant arts culture with world class galleries and theatres. Plus we do not suffer the M25 Ring of Hell. If I am returning to the office on a Friday afternoon and crawling along the Western Bypass I will be gritting my teeth. Until the national traffic report comes on the radio. Every motorway south of Leeds congested, the M25 at a standstill for miles, diversions, road closures and general mayhem. So, I relax, smile and thank heaven I will be home in about half an hour. The cost of living here in the North East is a factor too.

### Do you have a favourite hot spot for a business meeting?

My office has Italian biscuits, Lavazza coffee and free parking. I find that hard to beat.

### Where do you like to eat out in the North East?

Our region has a fantastic diversity of excellent restaurants. We recently went to a Mexican themed pop-up tapas restaurant on Newcastle Quayside which is about as left-field as it gets. In my opinion '21' still leads the pack. My parents were restaurateurs so I grew up around Terry Laybourne but we have new challengers like House of Tides keeping Terry on his toes. A firm family favourite is Cal's Own on Holly Avenue West. Calvin started out just up the road renting a shopfront in Heaton, built the business and relocated to Jesmond. Ingredients are mainly sourced from the Campania region of Italy certified by the DOP - Denominazione di Origine Protetta (literally "Protected Designation of Origin") supplemented with fresh local produce. This is food to warm the heart of anyone of Italian descent and those unlucky enough not to be.

### Where do you like to unwind in the North East?

With two children aged seven and three 'unwind' is a relative term. Practically all my leisure time is family oriented and the North East has more than enough activities to keep us happy. Theme days in country houses, ice skating, walking, cultural events and of course, shopping. Being of Italian descent big long family meals with lots of red wine are an essential element in the mix.

### Are the people really friendlier?

Yes. Travel the tube in London and watch everyone wrapped in their earphone cocoon? I find I can strike up a conversation with a stranger in the North East far easier than I can in London where the reaction tends to be "What's he after?". Our reputation as a friendly region is well deserved. Here in the North East you might actually get to know your neighbours.

### What do you think is the best view in the North East?

Locking the office door at 5.00pm on Friday then heading home to my family? Other than that, we manage a block of flats near Tynemouth Priory. One flat has a turret where you can view the Priory, all the way out to sea, the mouth of the Tyne then over North Shields and up the river. It is a view I never tire of. The view from Steel Rig along the Roman Wall is pretty spectacular and in winter puts me in mind of Roman soldiers arriving at the wall in December and wondering who they had offended to get posted there. It is almost impossible to list all the stunning views in our region. Dunstanburgh Castle, the countryside around Ford and Etal, the Tyne Valley, Durham Cathedral...our region is not short of spectacular views.

### Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?

I think I have answered the advantages of living in the North East already? As for working in the region, for anyone with entrepreneurial spirit I think we offer fantastic opportunities. It is far easier to start out then build a successful business here because of lower rent, rates and logistics costs. The North East Chamber of Commerce offers excellent support to start-ups and growing businesses plus there are a number of active business support networks. The North East survived the loss of coal mining, ship building and much of our heavy industry. Ironically I feel this has generated a culture of survival, with people eager to take a chance on something new rather than look back to the past.

### Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?

As a younger man I travelled the world working as a musician and had many opportunities to settle in other parts of the world or elsewhere in the UK but I chose to live and work in Heaton which pretty well says it all. I hope my previous answers demonstrate that for me at least, our region comes out top.



# URBAN Base



Cresswell Home Farm, Morpeth



Level One, Quayside



Sunningdale, Ramside Park, Durham



Woodacre Apartments, Newcastle

**urban base** is a dynamic estate agency specialising in sales and marketing in the land and new homes sector across the region. Established in 2005 by Jan Dale, an experienced property professional, and with offices in both Newcastle and Durham City, the urban base Land & New Homes department has been chosen to act for many prestigious developers on award winning schemes from Quayside luxury apartments to idyllic farmstead stone barn conversions to traditional new-home estates.

**CONTACT JAN DALE** and learn more about the bespoke range of services.

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## A GREAT LOCATION TO ENJOY THE OUTDOORS

One of the benefits of living in the countryside is the freedom it offers for outdoor pursuits. Rather than relying on four wheels, residents of Stannington Park in Northumberland have been taking to two wheels.

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"At this time of year the Northumberland countryside is spectacular and one of the best ways to see it is from the saddle of a bike," confirmed Rob Armstrong, Bellway's Sales Director. "Stannington is ideally placed for access to a number of cycling routes which take you through some of the picturesque local villages of Mitford and Whalton with each offering attractive and friendly country pubs to re-charge the batteries before heading home."

As well as cycling opportunities, Stannington Park is also well placed for walkers who can either take advantage of the wonders of the Wansbeck Valley or head to the stunning Northumberland coast. Locally, in Morpeth just four miles away there is a gym and swimming pool as well as Morpeth Rugby Club and golf course.

If you are looking for an outdoor life in a sought-after new development then Bellway is offering a range of properties at Stannington Park which start in price from £132,995.

Starter homes such as the Cherry provide 795sqft of living space. The ground floor offers an open plan kitchen dining area and a separate lounge whilst the first floor comprises a master bedroom with ensuite and two further bedrooms served by a family bathroom.

Other homes that Bellway is offering at Stannington Park include the three bedroom detached Willow priced from £234,995 and the four bedroom detached Juniper priced from £239,995.

Bellway's executive housing range features the Goodwood which provides nearly 1,500sqft of living space and starts in price from £389,995. Continuing up the ladder, Bellway's Worcester at £524,995 offers 2,170sqft of living space and features two ensuite bedrooms, a utility room and study in addition to a separate dining room and lounge which is complemented by an open plan kitchen diner whilst externally there is a double garage.

For buyers at Stannington Park, Bellway can offer a range of incentives to help with the move. People with a home to sell can take advantage of their free of charge Express Mover service, where Bellway will employ an estate agent on your behalf to manage the sale of your old home to ensure a speedy and satisfactory sale leaving you free to focus on your new home. Alternatively, they will also consider part exchange arrangements.

Bellway is also offering the Help to Buy scheme at Stannington Park, where buyers can take advantage of a five year 20% interest free Government loan which reduces monthly mortgage repayments during the first 5 years of ownership.

For commuters, Stannington Park is only 4 miles from Morpeth town centre, Newcastle is also just 14 miles away, allowing you to be in the city centre in around 20 minutes.



For more information about Stannington Park, visit [www.bellway.co.uk](http://www.bellway.co.uk) or call Alex at the sales centre Tel 01670 789572 opening hours 7 days a week



# BUT IT'S NOT MY PROPERTY!

By Philip Bowe, Managing Director of BIV Bowes



This is a cry I frequently hear, when tenants of commercial property are served with a Schedule of Dilapidations. You rent the property from somebody else, you pay them rent, then when it needs repair, they want you to pay for it! Even though it's not your property, the landlord says you have to pay to put it into good repair.

So is that true? Well, in most cases, the answer is YES. There is a Law called the Law of Property Act 1925 and Section 146 of that Act says that for any breach of the lease covenants, a landlord can serve a notice requiring that the breach is rectified within "a reasonable time thereafter." It is to enforce repair covenants in your lease that your landlord will most commonly serve you with such a notice. The first sting is that the landlord will need a surveyor (someone like me) to prepare the repair schedule and a solicitor to serve it on you. And you're responsible for their costs as well.

The second sting is that the landlord may come along and insist the property is repaired and put back into good condition, even though it was a bomb site when you took over.

So what can you do about it? There are basically three things you can do to minimise the impact.

- Firstly, and pretty obviously, keep the property in good condition. It won't stop the notice being served, but as most surveyors charge for the notices by time spent on the case, the less they find, the less time they will take, the less it will cost. It's common sense anyway.
- Secondly, there is a cap on the amount of dilapidations a landlord can charge, called a 'section 18 valuation'. (This is section 18 of the

Landlord and Tenant Act 1927). A landlord cannot claim costs that are more than the diminution in value of the property. For example, if the upper floors of a shop are in poor condition and worth say £5,000 per annum in that condition, but would be worth £7,000 per annum in good condition, the difference is clearly £2,000 pa. Were this to be capitalised at 8% say, this means the difference in Capital value would be £25,000. Even if repairs were to cost £40,000, then the landlord cannot claim more than this cap.

- Lastly, think ahead! The antithesis to a Schedule of Dilapidations is a Schedule of Condition, instigated by the Tenant. If you are signing a new lease, get the landlord to agree to such a schedule before you sign the lease. If you are taking an assignment, have a surveyor undertake a survey to draw up a schedule and either have the outgoing tenant attend to the work, or make sure you are given payment (by whatever means) to undertake the work yourself.

So there you go. You thought all you had to do was pay the rent and the landlord would be sweet. Unfortunately not, some landlords (and if you're in a pub this seems particularly prevalent), will want to see you recognising your repairing responsibilities and carry it to the 'n'th degree.

Don't try and duck them, get in touch with a surveyor such as [www.bivbowes.com](http://www.bivbowes.com)

## LOCAL HOUSEBUILDER REPORTS STRONG SALES FOLLOWING PART EXCHANGE EVENTS IN COUNTY DURHAM

Local housebuilder David Wilson Homes North East has reported strong sales in County Durham, as a result of the popularity of Part Exchange weekends held at its Mount Oswald and Elba Park developments. The events secured eight sales in total, with four at each development, highlighting the buoyancy of the housing market in the region.

David Wilson Homes' expert sales teams were on hand to offer prospective buyers advice on how they can purchase a new home using the innovative Part Exchange scheme. This buying method has increased in popularity over the past 12 months and means that buyers are left with no estate agent fees at the end of the sale and no chain to slow down the moving process. By taking advantage of Part Exchange, buyers are able to move into their new David Wilson home sooner than usual, stress and hassle free.

Mount Oswald, which is now in the final phase of its luxurious homes, offers a collection of beautiful properties just two miles from Durham city centre. Built on the land of the former Lambton coke works, Elba Park sits in a newly created 52-hectare park surrounded by country walks and trails.

Fenton Hewitt, Sales Director at Barratt Developments North East, said: "The Part Exchange events in County Durham were a real success with buyers in the region, so we're delighted to have seen such strong sales off the back of these. The Part Exchange process is so simple and is proving extremely popular, so I would encourage anyone that is interested in using it to buy a new home to contact their local sales office."



For more information, please visit [www.dwh.co.uk](http://www.dwh.co.uk)



# MAXIMISING LAND VALUE

BY CHRIS PIPE, DIRECTOR, PLANNING HOUSE



Unless you're au fait with the planning system and land markets you should seek professional help in maximising land value. I wouldn't re-wire my house, or carry out medical procedures – that's what experts are for! However, I am fortunate to have worked in both planning and land and appreciate the expertise required for the creation and maximising of value through the planning and land process.

In the first instance, I would recommend a development appraisal for the site which is a good way to ascertain development potential, these appraisals generally consider the planning policy position, local circumstances, planning history and recommend a clear planning strategy to achieve the sites planning potential.

Whilst Planning House can advise on a site's planning potential through a development appraisal engaging with the relevant local planning authority is a good way of gauging the informal views on your proposal, you do not need to have detailed plans drawn up at this stage. There are many benefits of seeking pre-application advice as well as potentially saving you money in abortive professional fees if development is not feasible. These discussions can flush out any site specific issues and potentially speed up the decision making process. However, be aware local authorities sometimes charge for these discussions.

I would recommend that anyone who wants to maximise land value to speak to a land agent, who are different to estate agents as they specialise in sourcing and disposing of land taking into account build costs and constraints of the site, they can advise initially on existing values and offer guidance in terms of potential values should planning permission be secured. However, a site with development potential will only realise its value once planning permission has been secured. A site marketed as 'development potential' will not achieve its true value as this is speculatively based on 'hope value'. Some people assume that if a site has development potential its existing value can be inflated without securing planning permission, which is why one of the issues faced by land agents is vendor expectation. Whilst land is an asset the value of it must be offset by the costs of the development itself this will ultimately affect land value, for a development to be realistic it must be viable.

The cost, timescale and resources needed for a planning application depend on the site and proposal. In some cases, it may not be prudent to secure planning consent yourself when weighed against the cost of the planning process, timescales and particulars of your site, however this is very much dependant on the existing and potential difference in value, scale of the site and personal circumstance. Land agents can explore options with you such as land assembly, overage clauses, promotional and option agreements. They will also take into account any covenants, existing tenant or access issues the site may have.

In a nutshell planning permission generally increases land value when there is potential for a viable development, however realising the value must be weighed against the investment needed and timescale to achieve it. If you have a potential development site and are looking to maximise land value contact Planning House to discuss how we can help.



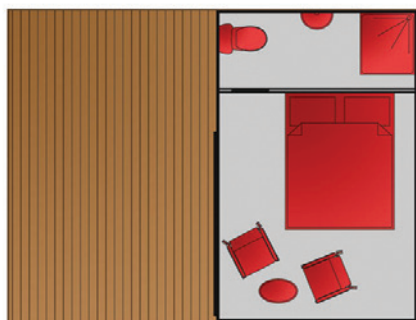
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# MILESTONE ANNIVERSARY FOR BH MORTGAGES REVEALS IMPRESSIVE FIGURES

Leading mortgage brokerage BH Mortgages is celebrating its first anniversary milestone and a successful year for the business.



**BH Mortgages, which operates under BH Group alongside Bradley Hall, BH Financial and BH Planning and Design, has announced that over the past 12 months the business has organised gross lending of almost £23 million to hundreds of home buyers.**

Head broker for the company, Lewis Chambers, said: "We are delighted with what we have achieved in our first year of BH Mortgages. We have helped hundreds of buyers and dozens of first time buyers purchase a home, offering them impartial and sound advice and most importantly getting them the best deal which is right for them.

"We have brought more lending partners to our business, partnering with companies which historically don't work with brokers, providing more choice and opportunity for clients. Similarly, we have also secured exclusive products and deals which clients can't find anywhere else.

"Due to our success the business has also expanded in a very short time frame, and we are now able to offer protection and general insurance, covering

building, contents and landlord cover. For the past three months, we have been the leading business in the north for insurance."

The success behind the company has been put down to the fact that BH Mortgages charges no fees to arrange a mortgage. Most other mortgage brokers take both a fee and a commission from the lender.

Neil Hart, Group Managing Director of Bradley Hall and BH Group, said: "BH Mortgages has been an excellent addition to BH Group. The business was one of the first subsidiaries to launch under Bradley Hall, paving the way for others to follow.

"This is a perfect example of the success we have grown to expect from our companies and services. Lewis has been a fantastic addition to the team, and his expertise and professionalism has been the driving force behind the impressive first year figures. We look forward to continuing this and growing the business further in the coming months and years."

Within its first year, demand for BH Mortgages grew steadily, and the company welcomed its first apprentice to the team.

The team is based in the new 4,000 sq ft Bradley Hall head office on the upper floor of 1 Hood Street, near Grey's Monument, Newcastle. The company relocated its flagship commercial operation, investing around £150,000 in moving company from its Grey Street site.

The move and relocation reflects an impressive year of growth and change but also further ambitions in the coming 12 months. BH Group intends to increase its team of staff from 35 to 50 across its operations within the next couple of years and is currently recruiting for several posts.

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

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





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## Michael Grahamslaw meets ROB HUGHES

Managing Director, McGovern & Co Ltd

### Did you always envisage a career in the property/construction industry?

No, I've moved sector a number of times in my career from Aerospace/Defence to Financial Services and then into Software so although this move is new for me, changing industry and the challenges that go along with it is something I'm familiar with. I think it's key to inject fresh ideas into any industry and bringing in people from other industries is a great way of expediting this. The three people we've hired since the company was acquired in 2015 are all from outside the brick industry.

**Tell me about your current role?** I'm the Managing Director and a shareholder of McGovern's Bricks the oldest brick factor in the North East. We've been providing bricks to the housebuilding and construction industry since 1949 and currently sell around 8 million bricks a year. The business is based in Felling, Gateshead and we have a team of 11 people involved in sales, financial and operational roles.

**What services do you provide?** We are a brick factor so as per our strapline 'We Get Bricks'. The excellent sales team we employ have decades of brick matching experience and with around 10,000 bricks in use across the UK, most of which are no-longer in production, our service revolves around getting the right brick for the job. This can be for anything from five or six bricks for Mr & Mrs Smith to patch up their garden wall right up to two million bricks on a new build housing project that will build over three years.

**What's your fondest career memory to date?** I've really enjoyed leading the turnaround of the business and getting hands-on with everything from the website, brand and IT systems to revitalising the office space and reception area. We've also been focusing heavily on business development so getting out and acquiring new customers has been great and our first full year results are up 25% since acquiring the business.

**What challenges have you encountered?** The brick industry is not the most progressive and managing the pace of change has sometimes been challenging.

As much as there was a need to change the way we were working as a business, it needed to be a balanced approach and managed in line with the existing ways of operating.

**Tell me about your team?** I've got an excellent team who all have 10+ years with the company and therefore a wealth of experience doing what they do. Steve is our Operations Manager and runs the service counter, yard and transport operations – consisting of George our foreman and Davey our wagon driver. Joanne, Maureen and Audrey (who have almost 80 years of service with McGovern's between them!) run the office and our sales guys are Grant, Paul and Neil who can identify any brick in the UK...often from the smallest brick fragment or grainy photo.

**Established in 1949, McGovern is a company with a rich heritage. Is there a certain pressure that comes with this?** Yes there is and through the modernisation of the business there was a big emphasis on preserving the heritage and service-led ethos of the business, especially when changing things like the brand. We have done what we do best for almost 70 years and I'd like to think that the business will still be here and thriving 70 years from now.

**What does the future hold for yourself and the company?** We've laid the foundations for growth by modernising the business and hiring new people and the first full year's results have been encouraging. We now need to build on this success and continue the growth trajectory, remaining focused in order to reap the rewards of the hard work that has gone in to date. The timescales involved with large scale construction projects mean that sales efforts now may take two years to generate revenue.

**When not working, how do you like to relax?** I've got three young children so they keep me busy and I enjoy spending time with them playing in the garden or on the beach. I'm not originally from the North East so having an amazing coastline on the doorstep is still a novelty! I also like to run, ride and swim to keep fit and do the odd Triathlon when I get time.



# THE UNSOCIAL SIDE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Ruth Shepherd

With another pre-planning commission completed, feedback analysed and our Statement of Community Involvement report ready for submission with the planning application, we have been reflecting on the role social media plays in community consultation and stakeholder engagement.

Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, QQ, WeChat, QZone, Tumblr, Twitter, Google+, Skype, Viber, Line, Snapchat, Pinterest, LinkedIn... These are just a few of the somewhat bewildering list of platforms currently available to allow, encourage and request people to like, follow, poke, post, suggest, check-in, network, market products and services, connect with family and friends, and – well, just be social.

Just this week I read a blog listing the 60+ social networking sites you need to know about in 2017 (source: [www.makeawebsitehub.com/social-media-sites/](http://www.makeawebsitehub.com/social-media-sites/)). That's just the 60 known about, and not including those that have failed to make the cut and were aborted, or those in development and about to become that app we didn't even know we needed.

As a communications and engagement consultancy, we have very few social media platforms we use, but each one has its purpose, and each is embedded within our Business Marketing Strategy as well as our Client Engagement Strategy.

For those of us who use these sites, the availability of these platforms creates opportunities to reach out to people, places and opportunities we otherwise would spend longer looking for. They allow us to create groups of like-minded individuals, organise events and update our friends, connections, followers, groups about what we are doing, and about what our clients are doing, or planning to do.

But – isn't there always a but? – for all of the positive points these sites have, there has to be a downside. We recognize the value these platforms have, and the many ways they allow us as communicators and engagers, and our clients as the protagonist in our stories, to reach out and in to communities where we are bringing forward development proposals. We are equally aware of the way these platforms can be used to generate a campaign against change, and mobilise a not insignificant army of 'informed' individuals keen to spread the truth. In some cases, that keenness has more importance than knowing which version of what is being publicised is the truth.

We've seen the growth of social media use in engagement move at an incredible pace in the last eight years – and the speed with which a campaign – positive or negative – can grow can quite often leave project teams floundering in the wake of new 'truths'. It's almost a full-time job to keep abreast of what's being said by who, what's true, what can be countered and what is worth addressing. 'Better conversations' are the objective of every community and stakeholder engagement project we undertake, and knowing what is happening on social media is fundamental to achieving this. I'm reminded of a particularly volatile consultation we recently completed, with elected public officers using social media to harass, harangue and generally be offensive about the project team – after taking a pop at them in person. This is the unsocial side of engagement,

but it is worth cautioning not only that the laws of defamation apply to social media, but that with the increased audiences now accessible it will be harder to defend. Take care out there – it's a social media minefield.

In summary, my top five social community engagement tips are:

## 1 Be Strategic

Establish a Social Media Strategy from the outset. Place it front and centre of your project; identify which platforms will be used, how and who is controlling them.

## 2 Be visible

Create an audit trail. Record every social interaction and engage with those engaging.

## 3 Be engaged and engaging

Ensure every contact (inward and outward) is logged separately and any action points registered and actioned.

## 4 Be truthful

Don't conceal information, and do not be afraid to challenge a falsehood or attempt at misinformation if the situation requires it.

## 5 Learn

Evaluate the activity. Analyse the interaction, actions and reactions. Make improvements and take the learnings to the next project.

Results Communications delivers bespoke and strategic community and stakeholder engagement through marketing and bid writing solutions to public and private sector clients regionally and nationally. To find out how we can help you engage more effectively and have better conversations with your audiences call us on 01434 603205 or email [hello@resultscommunications.co.uk](mailto:hello@resultscommunications.co.uk)





Colin Wood and Anthony Lowther

## GENTOO HOMES GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH WITH A STRONG YEAR OF SALES AND PROFIT GROWTH

Gentoo Homes is fast becoming one of the region's leading housing developers after it announced an outstanding year for 2016/17.

The company, which is the residential development arm of Gentoo Group, delivered 233 new homes across the North East and has reported an increased turnover of £44 million, with an operating profit of 10% on its regional sales programme.

Of the 233 new homes delivered, 164 were built for sale and a further 64 homes of affordable tenure were completed.

This success reflects the buoyant mood at Gentoo Homes who also successfully delivered 452 plots through the North East's planning systems during 2016/17.

The housing firm currently has eight live sites outside of Sunderland across the North East where construction work is taking place, all with homes for sale. Gentoo is reporting high levels of interest across all of these developments, which include:

**Cottier Grange, Tyne Valley**  
**Hedley Meadows, Wylam**  
**Lansdowne Terrace, Gosforth**  
**St Bartholomews, Benton**  
**Calderstone, Fenham**  
**Orwell Grange, Carlton Village**  
**Foxdale, Guisborough**  
**Hart Village, Hartlepool**

Colin Wood, Managing Director of Gentoo Homes commented on the announcement: "I'm immensely proud of our staff and what they have achieved over the past year. We build high quality, spacious homes in desirable locations across the North East and based on consumer demand the business is on track to increase property sales by 25% in the coming financial year."

"We have an exciting forward programme for 2017 and 2018, with a number of show homes launching this month. All in all I'm delighted with the progress we have made over the last 18 months and feel we are really meeting the diverse housing needs of the North East."

In Sunderland, Gentoo's most recent schemes to have received planning permission will provide a total of 312 new homes, this includes homes for sale and for rent. The 312 new homes are located across three developments, one at Coaley Lane in Houghton-

le-Spring, one at High Usworth in Washington and the other at Broomhill in Hetton-le-Hole.

Gentoo Homes, which is a profit for purpose business that reinvests its surplus back into its Affordable Homes Programme, has delivered more than 1900 new homes for Sunderland since it was founded in 2001. It is currently building a further 570 new homes across five developments in Sunderland, all consisting of homes for sale and for affordable rent, including:

**155 homes at Thurcroft in Doxford Park**  
**88 homes at Castle Rise in Downhill**  
**132 homes at Hillcrag in High Ford**  
**59 homes in Glebe, Washington**  
**136 homes at Meadow View in Houghton-le-Spring**

Colin Blakey, a well-known and respected housing figure, was recently appointed as the new Gentoo Homes chair and the person tasked with helping Colin Wood take the company forward. Mr Blakey was formerly the Director of Affordable Housing at Bellway and Chair of the Bellway Housing Trust and until 2015 he was Chief Executive of Asset Housing Association. Prior to that he was Executive Director and subsequently Chair of Northern Coalfields Property Company and Northumbria Enterprise (now ARCH).

The firm recently launched a major regional TV advertising campaign as part of a brand awareness project. Last year the development arm of Gentoo Group moved away from its traditional orange branding to a distinct and attractive purple, aiming to distinguish Gentoo Homes as a house building brand of choice in the North East.









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## THERE IS NO FREE LUNCH



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

This month I shall be the lone voice railing against the recently released consultation on banning letting agent fees paid by tenants. A letting agent professional opposed to a cut in fees? No shock there but I hope to be the voice of reason rather than a carping vested interest.

There is no doubt this is a hugely populist move by the Government. Social media is awash with gleeful tenants looking forward to no agency fees. No surprise since estate agents regularly feature in polls of the least liked professions. But in the face of this overwhelming joy there has been little attempt to justify letting fees from our side of the fence.

A major gripe is the so called 'double billing' practice where agents charge both tenant and landlord. Leaving aside the fact that this is common business practice in other sectors as well as supermarkets who charge for the goods then levy a fee from manufacturers for prominent placement, these are two different fees.

The tenant is charged because we need to present the landlord with a vetted tenant who has adequate references, is able to afford the rent and who does not pose a significant risk. Aside from the time this process takes we must train all staffs in compliance including assuring ourselves the tenant has the right to reside in the UK.

The landlord fee is charged because we have a responsibility to protect our landlords interest under law and to protect the property. This is cost share not

'double billing'. These costs will still be incurred if letting fees are banned.

In preparing this consultation the Government surveyed fifty estate agents. A minute sample of the estimated 26,000 agents in the UK but their findings indicate agency fees of between £120 and £750. Guess where they are charging £750? It certainly is not Heaton or anywhere outside the overheated M25 bubble but it makes a nice headline. Anything you buy in Knightsbridge will reflect the eye watering rent, rates and overheads necessary to operate in that Borough. The reality for the rest of the UK is very different.

Finally, I would suggest we have adequate consumer protection with existing legislation. Legislation demands that we must advertise our letting fee and we do. But this legislation is not enforced so the small minority of rogue agents can ignore it with impunity.

The general consensus among tenants is, this is fantastic news. As if our business overheads are going to vanish overnight. Clearly, they are not and there is only one way in which these overheads can be recouped and that is through increased rent. Legislation to encourage fluidity in the market will in fact, hit the very people the legislation purports to protect – the tenant.

So, in the face of almost universal joy at the prospect of abolishing letting agent fees, I would quote American Congresswoman Grace Napolitano who said "We must explain the truth: There is no free lunch".

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# GLOBAL SUCCESS FOR AWARD-WINNING CREATIVE AGENCY DRUMMOND CENTRAL



Drummond Central, a Newcastle-based creative and advertising agency, triumphed at the prestigious World Media Awards ceremony recently held at London's Ham Yard Hotel.

Its winning award in the 'Technology and Telecoms' category recognised Drummond Central's pioneering work as the force behind bringing bet365's live odds format to the global stage.

Drummond Central wowed judges at the event with its ads which stream the latest live odds to customers during top sporting events such as Premier League, Serie A and La Liga football games.

The agency worked with the online gambling giant to allow data from bet365 to be streamed to its television ads just seconds before they went on air during big matches, capturing the excitement of the game and making betting odds relevant to customers.

The World Media Awards celebrate the very best cross-platform advertising across the globe. 2017's entries were drawn from places as diverse as the Faroe Islands, Germany, the US and India.

## PR PROFESSIONALS EXPAND CIPR NORTH EAST COMMITTEE



CIPR members in the North East have elected a number of the region's professionals from a cross-section of industries after an election.

The move sees the voluntary committee expand to include 14 members, who are planning a number of professional events on a variety of topics over the next 12 months.

Seven local CIPR members officially put themselves forward for the few spots available, which meant a full election was required for all non-executive positions. Four new members were then confirmed.

Gill Stephenson-Russell, Head of National Communications and Customer Services at the Marine Management Organisation, was joined by Laura Ball, Communications Assistant at the Diocese of Newcastle, Tudor Tamas, Head of Social Media and PR for Factory51Media, and Becky Beaumont, Media and PR Executive at the NewcastleGateshead Initiative.

Following the AGM, the new committee met and voted to co-opt another new member, Laura Richards, completing the line-up and bringing the North East committee to maximum capacity.

## RAMARKETING SECURES US LIFE SCIENCE BUSINESS

Two significant US-based contract wins have further positioned ramarketing as a leading expert in the field of life science and pharmaceutical marketing.

The Newcastle-based creative, digital and PR agency has added global-scale organisations The Regulatory Affairs Professionals Society (RAPS), based in Washington DC, and Tracelink, based in Massachusetts, to its books.

Matthew Clark, Vice President of Brand Management at RAPS, said: "We were so impressed by ramarketing's track record, approach and knowledge of the life science space and felt it was the stand-out agency of the several we approached. ramarketing will play a pivotal role in building our media profile and supporting several events we are hosting across Europe in 2017."

Lindsay Baldry, Head of Pharma PR at ramarketing, said: "The addition of these North American companies to our existing client portfolio of over 30 firms in the life science, pharmaceutical and manufacturing sector is a landmark moment for ramarketing."



## NORTH EAST PR AGENCY FILAMENT PR, WHICH SPECIALISES IN BRAND LICENSING FOR CLIENTS ACROSS THE UK AND BEYOND, WILL BE WORKING WITH IFL SCIENCE ON A CONSUMER OUTREACH PROGRAMME TO PRODUCE EXCLUSIVE SLOGAN TEES AS PART OF THE BRAND'S 'STAND FOR SCIENCE' CAMPAIGN.

Tracey McCay, Merchandise Manager at IFL Science, explained: "There's been a lot in the media recently about alternative facts in a bid to bury the scientifically proven truth about many environmental issues. Our campaign is all about speaking up against the truth-deniers. I'm delighted Filament PR is supporting us. We're all standing for science together."

All profits from the sales of the t-shirts will be donated to a charity. Facebook fans of IFL Science are being asked to provide suggestions for charities relating to science that they would like to receive the funds.

IFL Science's 'Stand for Science' tees are available to purchase online from the US e-tailer, Represent.



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# WEBSITE KEEPS NORTH EAST JOB HUNTERS ON THE MOVE



North East job hunters will notice a new look and feel to the regional recruitment website, Sector1.net.

The popular site, which is managed and developed by Newcastle-based Retox Digital, has been redesigned and relaunched in a bid to keep up with rapid changes in technology.

Founded as a public sector specific job site in 2001, Sector1.net has grown to become the region's biggest recruitment and careers website, advertising vacancies across all industries within the public and private sector, from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Yorkshire Dales.

Sector1.net's developers have completed the redesign to ensure users can also browse for jobs from their mobile and tablet devices more easily and get quick access to their applications and CVs. The site processes thousands of applications from candidates each month and has a really strong following.

Managing Director at Retox Digital, Lilian Hughes, explained: "Technology is advancing all of the time and as more people are now surfing the internet while on the go, it's important that we revisit our websites to make sure they remain compatible with user demands.

"The new website has a much cleaner design and is fully responsive, which will greatly improve the user experience on mobile and tablet devices."

Boasting a wealth of built-in management and HR tools, reporting and analytics, Sector1.net has been

carefully designed to help simplify the recruitment process for its users.

Regularly used by the region's big employers, local authorities and governing bodies, schools, charities and health and social care organisations, Sector1.net has a range of features to support employers.

Through the dedicated Employer Section, employers can upload jobs and add supporting documents and logos, manage vacancies and respond to applicants directly as they progress through the process. There are also a number of inclusive analytics tools which are useful for looking back at how many candidates viewed a job listing and identifying demographic information for equal opportunities reporting.

For employers who have regular recruitment needs, for example, call centres, Sector1.net also offers 'Talent Pools'. These allow potential candidates to register their interest in a job role or a place of work and store their details for employers to view when vacancies become available, taking the pressure off a continuous recruitment process.

Lilian added: "Sector1.net already had so many fantastic tools built-in, we haven't had to add many more, we have simply focused on improving the overall look and feel of the new site and streamlining the user journey, so that its features are easier to find."

Job seekers using Sector1.net to help them find

their dream job can also benefit from features that help them manage their applications and find suitable jobs online.

The 'MySector1' candidate area of the site allows job seekers to create their own online profile outlining their skills and work experience which can be used to pre-populate job digital application forms. Candidates can also set up SMS and email alerts when jobs matching their skill set become available and can manage applications for all of their jobs in one, easy to use online portal.

Digital Account Director at Retox Digital, Julie Routledge, said: "It was our primary aim to create an intuitive website which would simplify the entire recruitment process whether you are an employer looking for staff, or a job hunter looking for work. With Sector1.net I think we've got the balance just right."

Retox Digital is a North East-based web design and marketing agency with a long track record for work with bespoke web development projects, many of which have focused on the recruitment sector.

Offering a full range of digital and off-line solutions, including content management systems, e-commerce systems for online shopping, branding and print media, Retox Digital enables its varied client base to have all of their marketing needs handled under one roof.

To find out more about Sector1.net, visit: [www.sector1.net](http://www.sector1.net) or for more information about Retox Digital, visit: [www.retoxdigital.com](http://www.retoxdigital.com)





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## ROAR-ING AHEAD

In February 2016, Michael Knowles took a massive step. After achieving a degree in Marketing and spending fifteen years working in marketing and sales for some of the region's leading companies, he decided to go it alone.

---

Fast forward to 2017 and Michael's company, ROAR Digital Marketing, has gone from zero turnover to almost six figures. By the arrival of next year, ROAR is expected to easily exceed the magic £100,000 mark.

### So, what's the secret?

"I guess that it comes down to giving clients exactly what they want," said Michael. "It may sound strange, but we ensure that clients know precisely what they're going to get from ROAR and what sort of results they can expect. We then show them what the results have been and how to move things forward."

That approach has certainly been successful because ROAR Digital Marketing has recently secured accounts with two prestigious companies, Royal Mail PFS and Northumbrian Water Group.

For Royal Mail PFS (Property Facility Solution), ROAR will be helping with their digital marketing strategy to help increase awareness and drive online performance.

For Northumbrian Water, ROAR is providing extra online content, digital advertising and a digital journey strategy. In a short space of time,

Northumbrian Water has already seen increased online traffic which, when compared to last year, has seen value double. This is a terrific achievement in what is an extremely demanding marketplace.

ROAR specialise in PPC (Pay-Per-Click) advertising, SEO (Search Engine Optimisation), HubSpot Software management and Digital Journey Planning where they lead a customer 'by the hand' through where they should be heading in terms of digital marketing, web tools, social media and web analytics.

You won't get any waffle from Michael Knowles and his team. The bottom line is that ROAR Digital know what they're doing. You don't get the sort of success that ROAR has enjoyed in such a short space of time, purely by luck. ROAR also ensures that clients aren't blinded by the science of marketing. Working in collaboration with Google, Michael is a trainer and speaker for Google Digital Garage projects which has enabled him to help 1000's of businesses understand and get to grips with digital marketing.

"There is no point in putting a complicated spreadsheet in front of clients if they haven't got a clue what it means. Too many companies know

that they should be implementing PPC or SEO yet cannot interpret the results. I aim to educate clients so that they fully understand what we do at ROAR, how we get results and, importantly, what those results mean. There is no use having what look like impressive figures if those figures do not generate business or value. It is the old adage "quantity doesn't necessarily mean quality."

It's all summed-up in the name of Michael's company, ROAR.

Real Opportunity, Actual Results.

Well, Michael plainly practices what he preaches because he saw a Real Opportunity and he's getting Actual Results. ROAR has got off to a flying start and has secured further accounts which were previously handled by other digital marketing firms in the region. Good news spreads quickly.

If you have a business where you are either unsure about using digital marketing or are unhappy with the sort of results you've been achieving, the best idea is to have a chat with the team at ROAR. They'll then look at your business and provide a fully detailed plan of what ROAR can offer. Be prepared for some no-nonsense, straight talking.

**Go on. See what all the fuss is about.**

Either call ROAR on 0191 290 3460 or send them an email at [info@roardigitalmarketing.co.uk](mailto:info@roardigitalmarketing.co.uk)  
You can also reach them via their website, [www.roardigitalmarketing.co.uk](http://www.roardigitalmarketing.co.uk)



## ASK SILVER BULLET



“My company advertises regularly and uses Direct Mail extensively but after some initial early success we’re now seeing very little returns?”

There may be no single sector where the old adage of ‘what worked yesterday won’t necessarily work today’ is more true than in marketing and, indeed, you could probably add, ‘and definitely won’t work tomorrow.’

Those organisations that continue to rely on past marketing strategies in a rapidly changing landscape may well survive but they will not prosper and will inevitably be overtaken by competitors who innovate, not only in their products or services, but also in the way these are delivered and, crucially relevant to this question, in the way they are marketed.

It was Harold Wilson who went one step further in this when he noted, “He who rejects change is the architect of decay.” For your company to continue to base their marketing on a strategy or media mix that is no longer working is commercial suicide that will inevitably catch up with yourselves with dire consequences.

So without any knowledge of where you have been advertising and what message your Direct Mail is carrying and how you are delivering it to whom,

I’d recommend pulling the plug on everything and taking a hard look at your whole marketing strategy.

I don’t believe marketing is actually rocket science or in confusing our clients with advertising and technical jargon. To my mind, it’s actually fairly straightforward - identify your customers, develop your offer to them and identify the means of delivery that gives you the best returns.

It’s sometimes difficult to do this internally through vested interests, internal politics or sheer commercial pressure so why not bring in external assistance? An external marketing agency can audit your marketing material, analyse your brand, marketing strategy and results and deliver an independent expert opinion coupled with costed options to remedy the situation. Of course, whether you follow their advice is entirely up to yourself, as with any external consultancy, but a brief look through the sales or order book usually focuses everyone’s attention.

As to why your current marketing mix isn’t working, is harder to answer without knowing more

details, but I could hazard a guess that your choice of advertising media may be traditional printed media such as newspapers or even directories whose circulation and reach have declined over recent years in relation to the growth of the Internet and the mighty Google. Consider the once almost-omnipotent position of the Yellow Pages Directories and their subsequent demise and you’ll see the need to change your media mix in light of current trends.

I’m personally a great believer in Direct Mail for some sectors, but if it’s no longer working, maybe your offer is no longer relevant to your target market, maybe the response mechanism isn’t working or maybe the design and means of delivery is no longer successful. Whatever the reason, now is the time to consider using other marketing tools including investment in better design, PR and maybe outdoor media advertising in addition to your all-important digital offer. Your website and your social media may be the most important ingredients to your marketing mix and if these are not functioning, you need to address them before spending resources on external media.

Do you need some assistance with your marketing? Do you need to review your strategy or do you have another marketing question we can help with? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today [hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk](mailto:hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk) or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.



# WEB DESIGN IS ABOUT MORE THAN SCREEN SIZE

As digital director at full-service marketing, advertising and digital agency The Works, Tim Mather has seen the influence mobile has had on design in recent years. Here, he discusses how audiences' behaviour has changed in the past few years and the impact that has had on design...



digital director at The Works, Tim Mather

**We all know that mobile isn't the "new thing" or "the future", it is very much the present and without doubt it has been the biggest driver of change in web design over recent years.**

We eat, sleep and breath our smartphones. It's estimated that around 90% of us have our phones with us day and night, 68% of us check them within 15 minutes of waking up in the morning and 30% of us feel anxious when they're not next to us.

The increasing popularity of smartphones means we must reflect how we design websites based on our audiences' needs. Designing for mobile was initially a complicated process that required specific mobile content, design and code, but now responsive designs degrade gracefully from desktop to mobile with little effort. But is that enough? If we're all mobile first, should we forget about desktop entirely and just focus on mobile sites?

As the number of mobile views increases, the time each user spends on a visit decreases. We might be using the web more often, but we're spending less time on individual tasks. Not only that, but the accessibility of smartphones means we no longer stop what we are doing to use our

phones, instead using them within existing buying processes to make informed decisions quickly and efficiently. Google refers to this behaviour as "micro-moments".

According to Google, there are four types of "micro-moments" in which a customer may use their smart device to take action.

**Know Moments** - someone exploring or researching but not yet in purchase mode.

**Go Moments** - people looking to buy locally or see a product in the flesh.

**Do Moments** - people trying to find out "How To" do something.

**Buy Moments** - people ready and willing to buy.

Each of these moments represent an opportunity for your business to present itself to its audience and complete a transaction, whether that be consume content, buy a product, sign up to a newsletter or download a document. Once in the "moment", Google then defines three basic strategies to "win" the audience.

**Be There** - anticipate the micro-moments for users in your industry, and then commit to being there to help when those moments occur.

**Be Useful** - be relevant to consumers' needs in the moment and connect people to the answers they're looking for.

**Be Quick** - mobile users want to know, go, and buy swiftly. Your mobile experience has to be fast and frictionless.

Though exaggerated by how and when we use smartphones, the above principles aren't solely applicable to mobile. Interestingly, though mobile is likely to be the initial entry point for a customer, up to 90% of users use multiple devices (mainly desktop) to complete everyday tasks like buying groceries or booking a holiday, so I don't think we can forget about desktop sites just yet.

What is clear is that the shift to mobile has focussed the design process on how your audience uses your site rather than how they view it. Understanding your audience should be the first priority of any design process. Critically, if your audience has changed how they buy, search, find, or consume information then it is key to ensure your business understands that change and reacts to it.



# UNITED AIRLINES SHOWS WHY GOOD COMMS CAN SAVE YOUR COMPANY



Christian Cerisola

## What else can we talk about, apart from the fallout from that horrific United Airlines PR disaster?

**Organisations keep giving us the ammunition to write articles like this. Seriously, I wish they wouldn't, but it makes this column really easy.**

It's a predictable topic, but it keeps on happening. We've been here before. Countless times. And the argument remains the same. Bad things can and will happen in your business. So often, it's how you react that can be the making or breaking of the situation.

For those of you living under rocks, United overbooked a domestic flight in the States and struggled to remove willing passengers from it. So they manhandled a gentleman off the plane in the most disturbing of manners. Naturally, other passengers filmed the incident and it was round the world within minutes.

United Airlines assessed this situation teetering on a cliff edge and ham-fistedly and appallingly gave it such a shove that they fell off the cliff with it. It was horrific from start to finish.

There was the chance for the CEO to front up quickly, admit procedures had gone badly wrong and issue full and wholehearted apologies to the passenger involved. Instead, a flimsy half-

acceptance was issued alongside a bizarre internal memo which suggested the passenger had been 'disruptive' beforehand and effectively absolved blame from any of the United Airlines staff involved.

But the day after the incident, a day where the CEO Oscar Munoz still hadn't issued a sufficient public apology, United Airlines saw \$255m wiped from its share price. In addition, corporate user after corporate user (not to mention the many thousands of individual customers) publicly announced they'd be cancelling their future flying arrangements with the airline.

The condemnation of the airline was worldwide.

The next person who says to me 'Yes, but PR is just a nice to have when times are good' will be shown this case study. Because it's a classic example where communications advice seems to have been left at the gate.

If you're still thinking that communications' role with your organisation is to issue a few fluffy press releases every now and again, then I'm afraid you have United-sized problems facing you in the very near future.

Communication's professionals are your eyes and

ears. They're your sense checkers. They're the ones who have the ability to listen quickly and intently and advise on actions accordingly. They can keep you honest and humble and have the potential to pull back a situation from the fire.

There are SO MANY bad things taking place in this United episode that there simply isn't room to discuss them here.

That awful internal memo that Munoz sent to United staff? Implicating the passenger involved in such a communication that he must have known would go public was major error number one.

Then sitting on it overnight, only issuing a wholesome apology after the share price tumbled showed another lack of humility so alarming that I question whether the guy will still be in his job by the time this goes to print.

Incidents like this prove that communications demand a place at the very centre of the boardroom table. The message moves far too quickly these days for a team of financial or legal experts, as good as they are at their job, to pontificate over what to do next.

Sleep on it and you're dead.





## YOUR MONTHLY DIGITAL ROUNDUP

North East digital marketing agency Mediaworks keeps you up-to-date with some essential digital developments.

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In the fast-paced world of digital marketing, rarely does a month go by without some form of update — and the past month has been no different. From industry whispers to full-blown Google changes, we explain what has shook-up the industry most recently:

### Introducing Google Fred

Google Fred may sound like the name of Google's new personal assistant, but it's actually the name given to the search engine's latest update. Although the update took effect around March 7th and 8th, it wasn't officially confirmed until March 24th, when Google's Gary Illyes took to Twitter.

In typical Google fashion, it's unclear exactly what the update targets. However, analysis of rankings in the weeks following suggests that the update is a reaction to content and link quality. Further comment from Google's John Mueller suggests

that sites targeted by the update were those that do not follow Google's Webmaster Guidelines. He said: "Essentially, if you are following the Google guidelines and you are doing things technically right, then that sounds to me like there might just be just quality issues with regards to your site. Things that you can improve overall when it comes to the quality of the site."

"...There is no simple kind of answer, like there is no meta tag that would make your web site higher quality. It is just in general, you probably need to take a step back, get random people who are interested in that topic to review your site compared to other sites to kind of go through a survey to see what you can be doing better to improve the quality of your site overall."

From his comments, it's clear that Google is placing a strong emphasis on content quality and the overall user experience. However, improving search

quality has been Google's main priority for a while now — so this should already be a fundamental aspect of your existing digital strategy.

### Mobile-First Indexing

With the dominance of mobile, Google has been experimenting with a mobile-first indexing since November 2016. Since then, we've been anticipating the rollout of the index.

Essentially, the mobile-first index would invert the ranking process; the mobile version of a site will determine its ranking potential over the desktop version. This month, Google's Gary Illyes confirmed the search engine is aiming to roll out this index by the end of the year.

If your current mobile offering is sub-standard, the delayed rollout is good news, as it gives you time to improve your presence across mobile devices, in advance of the update taking effect.





## WELCOME TO THE DARK SIDE

I still remember my first few lectures at university. As a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed 22 year-old studying journalism, I was ready to conquer the world with a pen being my weapon of choice.

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One of the first things we were taught was that as a journalist, the world of public relations was a dark place which we would do well to avoid contact with unless absolutely necessary – think of that scene in the Lion King when Simba is learning about the shadowy place and you're well on the way. They had, we were told, hidden agendas and as a writer, we were the perfect, albeit unwilling accomplice.

Fast forward almost four years and having graduated, I'm back doing a masters in the dark arts, or public relations as it's actually known. And do you know what? It's not such a dark secretive world after all.

There are no secret handshakes or meetings at midnight at all. In fact, during my three years with JAM Marketing, it couldn't be further from the truth. Journalists are incredibly handy in the day-to-day workings of PR – especially for me writing press releases and editorials.

And it could even be argued that PR would not work without them. But in the same way, journalists are often governed by tight deadlines and a set amount of copy – something I also learned in my undergraduate course – and are thankful for good, well-written copy which can be published almost as it is.

As for me, it's been more than interesting to see

both sides of the coin and how the two not only benefit each other, but can also work together to achieve both their goals. I couldn't have done it without the opportunity at JAM, which initially started as a voluntary role. A massive thanks has to go to Jackie, Ayesha and all the Jammy Dodgers from me for the chance to improve my copy writing, editing and proofing skills.

These days you will find me working on written content – both online and in print – website editing and everything in-between as JAM's PR Assistant. It's not a job I saw myself in when I started in journalism, but now, it's something I can really see a career in and what's more, there's not a shady figure to be seen.



# BOOK REVIEW: MYTHS OF PR

Public relations is often misunderstood and the rapidly changing nature of the profession means there is more cross over with digital and marketing than ever before.

Thankfully a new book has hit the shelves. *Myths of PR* by Rich Leigh aims to dispel many of the popular misconceptions about the industry, including all publicity is good publicity.

Here are ten of my favourite quotes.

## On public representation

Kiss and tell PR is a tiny and fatuous corner of our world – and something the majority of practitioners will never have experience of. However, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, Max Clifford, who specialized in this style of publicity, became the self-appointed face of PR.

Clifford's face and the word 'PR guru' appeared together on-screen and in print regularly, each time creating a negative public association with the industry despite the fact he barely represented it at all.

## On silence

Transparency is something we talk about a lot within communications on behalf of our clients, but there's a reluctance to be transparent about our own tactics and work... This allows for myths and misconceptions – like the notion that all PR people lie – to propagate, unchecked.

## On opportunity

In circumstances where there's a choice to be made, the questions 'How does this achieve the goals we're working towards?' and 'Really, who does this opportunity serve?' have to be asked...

The opportunities you say no to are every bit as important as the ones you say yes to.

## About the death of the press release

Just because there are other ways to communicate to and with our target audience, that isn't the same as the press release being 'dead', redundant or obsolete, in the same way a cassette player is.

As a tactic, the press release has stood the test of time and continues to deliver results, but, with a host of new tactics at our fingertips, there's simply more choice of how we achieve those results.

## On social media

Social media marketing can and should fall under the remit of PR, in exactly the way media relations does. Social media is, organic reach issues aside, a much more democratic way to reach an audience... The most important element... is the idea itself, whether that's a video, great image or a message that gets spread far and wide – or, if it's working properly, to the intended audience.

## On building an audience

Building and communicating with a relevant and beneficial audience takes time, commitment and can involve a small degree of trial and error. Clients and excitable bosses don't often like to hear this. If you prefer to avoid the hard work... you can pay.

## On making something go viral

Every time the word 'viral' is uttered and it isn't in relation to the spread of disease, there is a PR person somewhere that falls down dead.

## On why PR can't improve a mediocre business

Some people come to PR agencies under the assumption that PR is the silver bullet. What I mean by that is, it's the shot that will propel their business or themselves to dizzying heights of fame and popularity – and if that doesn't happen, it's because the agency wasn't quite good enough. The problem is never closer to home.

## On brand conversations

The fact is, consumers don't owe brands anything, and the sooner the transactional relationship of marketing and customer service is not only accepted, but embraced, the better.

## On hiring a PR agency

Ideas, evidence of previous results and execution where available, and/or an understanding of the market and the ways to reach and influence them should always trump the promise of relationships.

*Myths of PR* by Rich Leigh is available on Amazon.



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# 25 YEARS DONE – NOW TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

A quarter of a century is a long time in business and where technology is concerned, it may as well be a lifetime.



Think back 25 years, and I will say with certainty that no one in 1992 ever could have predicted that we would be here in 2017 watching HDTVs, scrolling through social media on our smart phones and surfing the net at super high speed. To say changes have occurred may just be the ultimate understatement.

But back in the early 90s, when the internet was at its inception among the haze of shell suits and 'mobile' telephones, The Diamond Group was formed.

Initially offering printers and copiers, they never thought as far ahead as 2017, but here they are, having just turned 25 years old – in bigger premises and offering more telecoms, technology and business solutions than ever before.

But it's never been in their genes to rest on their laurels, and just a month after celebrating their milestone, they're already looking ahead to the next advancement in technology which will help them help your company to be the best, most efficient business it can be.

So fresh from the celebrations, here are some business boosting technologies that they wouldn't mind making an appearance...

## Clicks over bricks?

With the world becoming ever more digitised, some are suggesting that even the office space

itself is not safe. Having already lost paper to iPads, and memos to email, several feel it is just a matter of time before the office goes online.

Virtual offices, as they have been coined, may see an increasingly international workforce brought together by technology. Something Diamond knows a thing or two about.

## Sky high storage

Cloud computing is already big in some, if not most businesses, however it is yet to catch on enough to see firms completely do away with traditional methods of backup and data storage.

But give it a quarter century, and the HDD may be a relic of an era gone by if many commentators are to be believed. They say that backup will be

done entirely online on what is known as the cloud, eliminating the need for bulky drives and disks. Diamond already offer cloud storage, meaning that your backup is safe and secure.

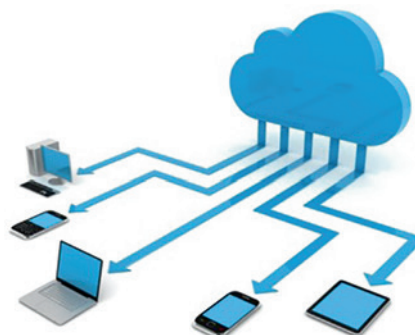
## Wearable work

Wearable technology, like the cloud, is something that has been gathering a lot of attention lately and shows no signs of slowing down any time soon. From smartwatches from Apple to the fitness fan's favourite the FitBit, wearable technology seems to be inescapable in recent years.

Imagine then if you will, a world where wearable technology and business merge. Experts suggest it's a world not too far in the future.

Along with claims of driverless cars allowing you to work on the way to work, wearable technology has the potential to revolutionise the way business is done. Diamond can't see this one catching on themselves, but if it did, it's another area they would be happy to see succeed and get involved with. It would be interesting to see spreadsheets and such brought to the outdoors and available at all times.

Diamond may not be able to supply you with self-lacing shoes that we saw on the set of Back to the Future, but what they can do is provide a solution to your business's IT and technology solutions which will allow you and your business to concentrate on what's important to you.



For more information on Diamond, and the services they offer, visit them online at [www.diamond-group.net](http://www.diamond-group.net), or call 0191 519 3700 and see what they can do for your business.



# Want your business to be in the **spotlight**?



## Talk to the PR specialists at **MHW PR...**

We storyboard and implement communications campaigns that build client reputations. That involves generating and distributing persuasive, engaging content - online and offline.

We have years of knowledge to help make our clients more famous, putting them centre stage. We work across a range of business sectors from the corporate world to industrial, healthcare and hospitality.

Please call if you need your business putting in the spotlight.



## SYNERGI ON FIRE, POUR ON WATER!



Gateshead's Synergi IT have recently acquired four major contracts, all taking their process mobility platform Nintex, a leading automation system that helps transform and improve workflow processes.

The Synergi team are working alongside two fire and rescue services, helping them to introduce Nintex workflow solutions that have already made huge time savings around what were paper intensive processes.

Justin Short, Director at Synergi, explained: "Reducing fire officers' administration time and allowing them more time to carry out their duties is vital. The hours of work saved by streamlining and automating processes genuinely makes a difference in how they save lives on the frontline."

He continued: "We're also actively engaged with two water authorities. For one, we have successfully introduced and developed a solution to drive ideas and innovation across the entire organisation, while driving efficiency around safety auditing and risk management."

## CONSTRUCTION SECTOR SAFETY APP WILL SET NEW STANDARDS

A North East-based risk management company is partnering with Northumbria University to develop a new digital approach to building information systems.

Construction sector safety specialist Lucion Services is partnering with Northumbria University to develop the new NexGen app to directly connect building plans and drawings with data from asbestos surveys and laboratory analysis information.

Lucion Services has seconded developer Alexei Holgate to work on the project, providing a new and technically advanced way of completing safety and risk management assessments in buildings.

The new software will present users with a 3D image of a building, including floor by floor and room by room representations, allowing users and surveyors to flag-up the presence of asbestos or other safety hazards more accurately and efficiently.

The new app design aims to reduce human error, eliminating the risk of mistakes made with traditional paper-based plans and subsequent problems associated with the inspection of buildings.



## TECH START UP'S AMBITIOUS PLANS ATTRACT SAGE LEADER



The former head of business development for Sage UK has moved to an ambitious start up, after proving himself to be compatible with the growing enterprise.

Mike Rohan has moved on to a role with Sunderland Software Centre based Technically Compatible, joining the company in the newly created role of Sales Director as part of the senior management team.

Mike's move is another vote of confidence for the company, which enables businesses to accurately test the technical capabilities of prospective employees.

The appointment is part of the strong commercial plans for the 11-strong team, which include expanding the product offering and increasing the head count. Mike will be tasked with delivering strategic growth, taking advantage of new market opportunities and driving the company forward.

Mike is excited about the move and is already making inroads, recently bringing on Admiral Group and Sage.

## JB SKILLS CLAIMS MICROSOFT ACADEMY STATUS

JB Skills Training Ltd now holds the status of Microsoft Certified Academy. The status ensures that any individuals or companies wanting to undertake apprenticeships are guaranteed the best possible quality IT apprenticeship course and qualification.

The certification also means that as well as the current ICT levels, JB Skills Training will be delivering four Microsoft Technology Associate Certifications (MTA's): Software Development Fundamentals, Networking Fundamentals, Mobility and Device Fundamentals and Cloud Fundamentals.

Kieron Hanlon, Assessor and Manager of the ICT department, said: "We are delighted to be a Microsoft Certified Academy. Not only does it give us a great accolade, it means we can be confident that every course we deliver is of the best possible quality, something which is always important to JB Skills."

As well as becoming certified, JB Skills Training has also been named the Best Newcomer business in the North East Business Awards that were recently held at the Stadium of Light.



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# Nearly half of all crime now has an element of cyber-enablement

From internet-connected TVs that can spy on you in your living room, to talking dolls that can open your front door, the media headlines are full of scare stories about online security. For the hacker, wherever there is data there is information to be harvested and money to be made.

Cybercrime is constantly evolving and you need to keep one step ahead. Find out more about protecting your business by talking to our experts, or coming along to one of our regular cyber security events.

Our world assures yours

Contact us today to find out more:

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# CYBER-SECURITY NOW THE BIGGEST THREAT TO BUSINESS



Andy Hunter, Technical Director at technology solutions and support company ITPS, takes a look at cyber-security and the threat that no business can afford to ignore.

The UK National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) published a recent report showing that nearly half of all crime now has an element of cyber-enablement.

From internet-connected TVs that can spy on you in your living room, to talking dolls that can open your front door, the media headlines are full of scare stories about online security. For the hacker, wherever there is data – and let's face it, that means within every organisation – there is information to be harvested and money to be made.

At the NCSC's CyberUK conference in March, delegates were warned that hackers are targeting the Internet of Things (IoT), wearable devices and voice-activated gadgets as priorities. Ransomware, where hackers encrypt data and demand money for handing over the encryption key, is now a big problem for all sizes and types of business, with the FBI estimating a ransom total of \$1billion dollars in 2016.

Anecdotally, some businesses are said to be considering whether to ringfence a pot of cash and simply pay ransom demands as they arise. This is a risky and costly approach, as criminals then see you as worth targeting again. Prevention is a much better approach than cure.

As the amount of data we produce increases

exponentially, there are correspondingly more targets. So what can business owners do to counteract the threats? Organisations that cannot afford to suffer any downtime or loss of data can opt for a managed services approach, outsourcing some or all elements of their IT needs to an expert partner, but there are sensible precautions that every organisation can take.

Keep up to date. Cybercrime is constantly evolving, and at our regular cyber-security events our experts highlight topical issues and advise business owners how to avoid attacks.

Be proactive. Do not ignore the threat, particularly if you are a small business. Around 43% of cyber-attacks are aimed at small enterprises.

Get the basics right. Create a secure network and implement a carefully thought out business continuity and disaster recovery strategy.

Educate your people. Use strong, complex passwords. Current advice is to change them less regularly than previously advised. Password complexity – rather than a simple password more frequently changed – reduces the likelihood of passwords being compromised. Coach employees about cyber security and regularly test their knowledge and understanding.

Make yourself less of a target. Backup your data

and systems, and keep all your software – not just your anti-virus and firewall programs – up to date.

Check your logs. If you do not have time to check your logs, then it is not worth the effort to setup the logging.

Use the best tools. Security companies are developing new and more sophisticated products to counteract the threat of constantly evolving malware, use all of the tools at your disposal.

Prevention is always better than cure. There are network monitoring tools on the market that constantly scan and assess your network for any unusual activity that might be a threat, and alert your IT team. If you work with an IT partner, make sure they understand and are using these tools to full advantage.

Undertake assessments and implement standards. Look at Government-backed schemes such as Cyber Essentials, and Cyber Essentials Plus.

We will never be in a situation where we have zero cyber attacks, but we can keep one step ahead by acknowledging the threats and taking the right steps to mitigate risk. If you want to find out more about protecting your business, talk to our experts, come to one of our regular technology briefings or sign up for our monthly newsletter.



# MY WEEKEND

We find out what

## SUSAN JOPLING

Director of Corporate Strategy and Policy at Technology Solutions and Support Experts ITPS

gets up to on a typical weekend.



### Do you ever have to work weekends?

I have an ethos that my door is always open and I am always contactable, so the traditional 9-5, Monday to Friday model doesn't apply in my life. This allows me to be flexible and work when it suits me, and when it fits in around other commitments and family life.

### Are most weekends the same?

I love sport and my weekends usually include a Newcastle match or a Falcons game. I also regularly watch my son play rugby but as the season draws to a close I'll be watching him switch to cricket, and following Durham County Cricket Club instead.

### Do you find it hard to switch off?

I'm lucky enough to have a lot of variety in my life so I never really feel the need to switch off completely. I combine my 'day job' with being a Trustee of the Percy Hedley Foundation and working with several other charities that ITPS supports. It means I get to experience different environments and issues, and gives me some thinking time so I can come back to tackle problems in a different way.

### What do you do at a weekend which you can't fit in through the week?

I like to make sure we spend time as a family, and we schedule regular weekends away as well as doing something sporty or social at home. I also make a point of catching up with friends, whether that's for a quick coffee or a weekend away in the sun with the girls.

### Morning exercise or a recovery lie in?

I'm not someone who likes to lie in bed for hours and hours, it's such a waste of time. Early morning power walks are my current flavour of the month since I signed up to do the Great North Run for Percy

Hedley this year, so I'm working on building up my stamina.

### Big night out or a night in the house?

I enjoy both equally. A night in having a takeaway and watching a movie with the family, or going out to an Italian restaurant or having cocktails with friends.

### Do you watch or play sport at the weekends?

As well as watching sport I am doing my best to work through a Couch to 5k programme, which is designed to get you from the couch to running 5k in just nine weeks. I've also started a Women into Golf programme, partly for fitness and partly because it's good for meeting other business people, and a lot of business is done on the golf course.

### Where do you like to eat out at a weekend?

I recently ate at the fairly new contemporary British restaurant, Branches in Ponteland, which was a refreshing change to my usual haunts, but I still think you can't beat sitting on the pier at Seahouses eating fish and chips.

### How important is the weekend to you?

Absolutely vital. I go through the week at a hundred miles an hour so weekends are vital for kicking back a little.

### What's the best thing about weekends?

An extra half hour in bed after the alarm goes off, just because I can, and avoiding the school run and the manic rush hour traffic.

### Of a weekend, you'll usually find me...

Busy doing something with the children, ferrying them around or organising a gathering of friends and family.







## ITPS & GUESTS ENJOY PRE-SUMMER GOLF EVENT AT RAMSIDE

ITPS held a spring golf "get together" at Ramside Hall last month encouraging clients and partners to leave their desks and enjoy a day in the sunshine to loosen up their swing in preparation for their annual corporate golf day in June. All who were involved in the event agreed the pre-summer warm up was a relaxed and enjoyable day away from the office.









# THE DEATH OF THE TAX RETURN?



From now on it's got to be digital and quarterly – and that's just the start of it!  
The saying goes, "the only things certain in life are death and taxes", well, one thing is certain, the traditional tax return is dead and it's going digital.

## Digitisation of tax

We are in a rapidly accelerating digital world. More and more of our lives are now online. From social interactions and photo albums to holiday bookings and banking. In fact, millions of people and companies are benefiting from the practicality and ease of services going digital.

For us in the UK it started in, March 2015, when the Chancellor foretold the 'death of the tax return' with the development of transformative digital tax processes for all. It would bring all individual and business tax data into one place, making it easier to register, file, pay and update your tax information online.

Simplifying, centralising and digitising tax for individuals is already rolling out, with the introduction of the Personal Tax Account. What comes next is the challenge of Making Tax Digital for Business.

There may be significant upheaval and a generational 'price' to be paid but the UK is actually behind the trend. Australia and the ATO (their equivalent of the HMRC) have already gone digital and have an App, and in Holland it's real time every time - with big brother watching every step.

Businesses will no longer have to wait until the end of the year to know their tax balance - the digital tax system will collect and process tax information in real-time. This will reduce tax-due and repayments owed from accruing.

## What are the benefits to my business?

The new digital tax system will reduce form filling so that you won't have to tell multiple HMRC services the information it already knows. It will help make time delays a thing of the past because

the tax system will be in real-time - showing you up-to-date calculations whenever you log in. It also means being more aware of monies owed, allowing you to plan ahead.

Although a delay in parts of the roll out were announced in this Spring's Budget, the first sections of MTDfB come into effect in less than a year.

The Chancellor's announcement means that sole traders, the self employed and buy-to-let landlords with income of less than the current £85,000 VAT threshold will not have to start quarterly reporting until 2019, a one-year deferral from the planned April 2018 date. Those with turnovers above the threshold, still start in April 2018.

## What do I need to do?

The change to digital tax need not be as daunting as it sounds. In many respects, this is an opportunity to streamline and simplify your own processes - how you record and capture your tax information. Think how easy you find it to take and share photos - you use your Smartphone and it's always with you. We have become a nation of selfie snappers and food picture sharers. With the right tools, recording and sharing the information you need for your tax return can be just as simple.

Although the process should be easy, never before has professional advice been more important - see your accountant.

As things go digital, mistakes can be easily made. An expense in the wrong category, mileage missed or misplaced income could trigger automatic investigations. So we urge you to speak with your accountant for information and advice on how they are preparing and what digital tools and processes they are going to use which you need to dovetail into.

## Accountants are preparing

At MyFirmsApp, we have been advising accountants since 2013 on how to respond to digital transformation. From webinars to a total of over 10,000 individuals to 1:1 consultations, we have been able to help accountants not only prepare themselves, but their clients with simple, proven and easy to use tools. Many started the journey feeling daunted but are now using mobile digital technology to their and their clients advantage.

The key is bringing all the digital logins, data capture and software integrations together into one single place - a single App on your Smartphone. The App helps clients record income, expenses and mileage as simply as taking a selfie and posting it on Facebook. We now have over 1,000 firms prepared with their own, MTD ready App. Each firm has a tailor-made solution for their firm and their clients, in their branding so clients can find it and download it.

If your accountant doesn't have a plan for MTD, they can get in touch with MyFirmsApp and we will talk them through the simple options for their own MTD App solution.

So, you see, we may be facing the 'death of the tax return' but it does not have to be a painful transition to digital nirvana.





# BIG PIE CHALLENGE 2017





# THE BIG PIE FRIDAY CHALLENGE 2017 - NORTH EAST

## KNIGHT INVESTS IN OUR FUTURE GENERATIONS



After the enormous success of last years' largest ever Enterprise, Engineering and Coding Education Challenge that involved over 1,000 pupils, 21 schools and 50 businesses, this year was planned to be bigger and better. The hugely successful, popular and industrious Sir John Hall agreed to take the lead on this year's BIG PIE Friday Challenge that took place on the morning of Friday 31st March.

This year's challenge seen 26 primary schools from Barnard Castle, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Durham, Kibblesworth, Wickham, Birtley, Gateshead, Sunderland, Houghton le Spring, Walker, Blakelaw, Ponteland, Ashington, Newcastle, Benwell, Scotswood, Fawdon, Dinnington with over 1,600 pupils all across the North East compete against one another. Targeting 9, 10 and 11 year olds this unique, exciting and ambitious Challenge engages, inspires and educates future generations in enterprise and Science, Technology, Engineering, Enterprise and Maths (STEEM) based activities.

The BIG PIE Friday Challenge sponsored by Gainford Group and County Durham Community Foundation is being delivered for free to schools within three stages. The first being two timed activities, one engineering and another Coding based, that took place on the morning of the 31st March. Eight schools that were the quickest at completing the tasks have gone through to the second stage where they will each undertake a full week of enterprise, coinciding with Newcastle Start-Up Week. The students will plan, create and sell something with support from local businesses, complete a formal qualification and then be judged purely on the profit they make. The Challenge

will ultimately culminate in an awards ceremony at the Discovery Museum on the 13th July 2017. Each of the Schools was allocated a PIE'Oneer – someone from industry - to help them through the challenge and independently validate the competition. Ammar Mirza CBE, Trustee and Founder of the PIE Project Trust Charity explains, ***"The level of support and interest for all across the public, private and third sectors for the Challenge has been overwhelming. We have small and big businesses coming together to support our common purpose, focused on improving life chances and enhancing life choices within young people regardless of their background."***

"Organisations already committed to supporting the pupils this year include Gainford Group, Teesside University, Federation of Small Business (FSB), North East Chamber of Commerce (NECC), County Durham Community Foundation, Durham and Darlington Fire Service, Your Homes Newcastle, North East LEP, Asian Business Connexions, Great Annual Savings, Arnia, First-Face-to-Face, the InCredAbles, Learning Curve Group, Brand Ami, SME Centre of Excellence and our Armed Forces. "

"Sir John has been a huge supporter of our work

over the past 4 years alongside the likes of Her Royal Highness Princess Eugenie, inspiring pupils through school assemblies, sharing life experiences and presenting students with their certificates. In fact as a local successful entrepreneur, the students study Sir John as part of the NCFE Enterprise Qualification. I am absolutely delighted that Sir John has agreed to spearhead this years' campaign.

I am also grateful for the significant support from a number of organisations that recognise the valuable work of the charity including our Armed Forces and in particular Gainford Group and County Durham Community Foundation that have made a significant donation to ensure success of the BIG PIE Friday Challenge in primary schools across Durham and Darlington."

The key aim of the challenge is connect business with education, positively affect careers, information, advice and guidance and promote good practices like the Gatsby Benchmarks. Within the North East there have been improvements in unemployment rates, however it still suffers from being at the lower end of a number of league tables with our younger generation leaving





school with limited ambition or aspiration. Business continues to complain about skill shortages and the younger generations not having the right attitude and aptitude for work.

Andrew Hodgson, chair of the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, said, "We are dedicated to putting careers at the heart of young peoples' education; particularly given that we know from research that life-limiting decisions about careers can be made from as early as aged 10. To improve this, we need to give young people enough time and resources to enable them to think about their futures early.

"We are pleased to support the PIE Challenge as it closely aligns with our Good Career Guidance Benchmarks and Enterprise Adviser programmes, both of which aim to raise aspirations among young people and educate them about the many careers opportunities available here in our region. The North East strategic economic plan is dedicated to improving skills in our region and programmes like this one help to achieve just that."

As someone who has grown up in the North East and passionate about supporting the whole community, Sir John shares his experiences, ***"When I was growing up in Ashington I didn't have any role models or mentors that I could relate to. There was limited career advice and guidance. However, I was driven and understood the importance of setting goals and having ambition."***

"These days there appears to be a lot of confusion and limited direction on the opportunities available to our young. This issue affects every single one of us. We need to get in early and provide pupils with the skills they need to succeed, linking them clearly to industry and helping them build a better and brighter future. Being prepared for the world of work, having clear options and routes and support from parents, schools and businesses will deliver successful outcomes and destinations for our young people."

I have worked with the PIE Project over the past years and recognise the significant impact it has made in helping our future generations. I want our young people to understand, alongside formal academic

skills, the value of life and work experiences and build abilities such as self-management, team working, business and customer awareness, problem solving, communication and interview skills and self-discipline, all of the skills that the PIE Project develops."

The BIG PIE Friday Challenge is a fun and inclusive way for businesses to support their schools and schools to engage with business. The key focus is on linking local organisations and individuals so that school children have a clear line of site of job opportunities and positive inspirational role models. The NCFE Qualification provides the pupils with an industry recognised qualification and the foundations to become better equipped to enter the world of work.

Sir John goes on to say, ***"Every single person and business has a responsibility to contribute to the success of our future generations I would encourage everyone to get behind this inclusive campaign that can help make our region industrious again, promoting British values to power our country forward through clear ambition and aspiration"***.



For further details/to register your interest email [Big@Pieproject.org](mailto:Big@Pieproject.org) or call Ammar Mirza CBE on 0191 2424894.  
Twitter @PIEPROJECTUK #ILOVEPIE



There is so much negative press relating to funding pressures and the various challenges for schools to appropriately skill young people. The BIG PIE Challenge provides the perfect solution, enabling the whole community to come together with industry to make a positive contribution to education helping realise and raise ambitions and aspirations.

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## HEADLINE BENEFITS OF THE PIE PROJECT ARE:

- Free for schools to enter
  - Links to Ofsted community and business engagement
  - Features three of the Gatsby Career Benchmarks
  - Engages parents and local businesses through fun and interactive activities linked to the curriculum
  - 1st stage - 2 x 30 minute engineering and coding (STEM) challenges
  - 2nd stage - school is loaned £100 to make and sell something. With all profits being retained by the school
    - Underpinned by a formal NCFE Qualification for Pupils. Additional CPD Qualifications for Teachers - All Fully Funded
    - Access to the PIE Shops to provide a real working environment supported by local business experts
  - Pupils develop a range of skills including resilience, problem solving, team working, self-learning and ultimately helps them realise and raise ambitions and aspirations
  - 3rd stage - Celebratory event at Discovery Museum bringing business and community leaders together with competition winners
  - Links with STEM Ambassador and various other programmes
  - Inclusive programme that involves every single pupil focusing on developing their strengths and recognising weaknesses
  - Links into the Industrial Strategy and proposed T-Levels
  - Pathway into vocational study
  - Out of Term Wellbeing and Business Boot Camps for parents and pupils.
- 

## WHAT THEY SAY ABOUT PIE:

“The challenges that our young people will face in the World of the future will be far more demanding than those who have grown up over the past fifty years, or at least for most of us. Those of us who have prospered in that time owe a duty to our future generations, a duty to the World in which they will live, to provide the resources to help them determine their future.

Sadly, far too many in our Communities simply ignore this responsibility and are far too much wrapped up in their own immediate environment.

PIE seeks to break that barrier. It provides young people, our future and our prospective work force, with a broader view of the demands of life and the basis for a successful future. This is done working alongside Schools, providing them with a programme and resources which is a unique base for expanding the understanding of what will be required to build the base of a better life.

Educators, Government at local and national level, business and the community as a whole have the responsibility to meet their responsibilities. Unfortunately far too many fail or simply leave it to others.

Perhaps a time for all of us to examine our conscious and meet our individual responsibility? It is about the World that you leave as your heritage and how future generations will see you. PIE is part of that, but it needs you.”

**Bill Midgley OBE, President, Pie Project.**

“We heard of the BIG PIE Challenge last year, but missed the opportunity to get involved. So when we were approached this year to support the Charity we didn't think twice. As a local employer we recognise the importance of contributing to the local community and what better way than giving young people a much needed step up. The great thing about the PIE Project is that it brings pupils, teachers and businesses together providing a common purpose around enterprise promotion. The young people start developing the skills business need early on together with a vocational qualification that industry recognises.

I was shocked when I first heard that 10 and 11 year olds were gaining qualifications so early on. However as an entrepreneur it makes perfect sense to me. We need to encourage young people to become more ambitious together with providing them with role models they can relate to as early as possible.

I was fortunate to visit Tyneview Primary School and hear first-hand the impact the PIE Project has had on the pupils and their parents. These young people are developing a CV, being interviewed to run the PIE Shop and learning all about problem solving, making them more resilient together with experiencing the challenges and opportunities that businesses do. This is just what the North East needs to tackle some of the challenges around youth unemployment, low levels of esteem and a skills shortage. I would ask everyone to get behind this charity that invests locally for the benefit of our whole community.”

**Imran Khaliq Gainford Group.**

“Our children and young people deserve the very best that we can give them. This is an exciting project that offers both challenge and fun and offers new horizons and experiences which will enrich our children's lives.”

**The Right Reverend Christine Hardman Bishop of Newcastle**



“This is a fantastic project and it's great to see so many schools on board. These young people are the North East's future and it is so important that we engage and inspire them early so they have useful skills for when they enter the world of work.”

**Vera Baird, Northumbria Police and Crime Commissioner**



"We have many excellent, national programmes in place focussed on hiring apprentices and supporting young adults through the apprenticeship process and that has a huge importance. However, I believe we should be even more forward thinking. We need to introduce children to science and technology and ultimately inspire them and hold their interest and their curiosity so that, when they become young adults they know that science and technology is a real career opportunity for them. Something they want to do and something that is relevant to them. The PIE Project is having a real impact on our children in the region. By connecting businesses to Primary Schools, I believe the project is creating real future opportunities for boys and girls to have the desire and the confidence to choose a science or technology career."

**Mark Jackson, North East entrepreneur and CEO of Arnia. He is passionate about promoting science and technology within the primary school curriculum. (Arnia is leading an initiative that is using the data collected by its bee monitoring equipment to bring to life science, technology and maths for Key Stage 1 and 2 school children. Email mark@arnia.co.uk for more information.)**

"North East England is an area with enormous opportunity, but this can only be realised if we invest in our future talent. The children in our schools today can be the stars of our businesses in a few years' time if we back them to fulfil their potential."

**Ross Smith, Director of Policy North East Chamber**



"The BIG PIE Challenge is a fantastic initiative which links together employers and young people in the North East. Inspiring the next generation of our community to challenge themselves and develop innovative thinking is an important part of improving the future aspirations of our region and County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service are proud to support the Challenge."

**Stuart Errington, Chief Fire Officer, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service.**

"The Newcastle City Council Education Division fully supports The Big PIE Challenge 2017 and we would encourage as many of our schools to become involved as possible. This is a great opportunity for the young people of the city to gain an introduction to the world of work through an exciting project that will develop their understanding of enterprise, entrepreneurship and business. Most importantly, it will help to foster a passion for science, technology, engineering and mathematics in every young person taking part that will help them throughout their adult life."

**Dean Jackson, Lead Assistant Director, Education and Skills Newcastle City Council**

"What a great initiative making a positive impact on our future generations. I am proud to support the local schools that are taking part."

**Guy Opperman MP**





The prosperity of our economy, the future skills of the workforce and the career prospects of young people are dependent on adequate and appropriate development opportunities being available to ensure individuals have the right skills and attributes to successfully enter the 'world of work'. There is much evidence to suggest that we are not doing enough in this respect. To have the desired impact we must all take responsibility for making the positive change that is required.

Working with the Progression Forum, 'Work ready Newcastle' and the North East LEP the PIE Project is a call to action for all schools, colleges, other learning providers and most importantly employers to collaborate in facilitating the activity that young people need to become work ready. It is also about encouraging young people, parents/carers and families to be involved and take responsibility for ensuring that young people take part in and benefit from experiences that will make them successful in work.

Building on local good practice more relevant and good quality interaction needs to occur between business and local learning provision that will:

***Provide context for learning • Develop transferable skills • Raise awareness of the 'world of work' • Help inform young people's future careers choices***

Activity should begin ideally in primary phase and should continue through secondary schools and beyond.

Primary Inspiration through Enterprise helps to provide a holistic approach to enterprise education. Engaging with parents, pupils and practitioners underpinned by a formal qualification. The PIE Project provides the perfect platform for a school to demonstrate Ofsted requirements on community and business involvement within the curriculum. The ultimate aim of the PIE Project is to help students understand key skills such as budgeting, social interaction, career planning, and personal development. Promoting strengths and addressing weaknesses, the project will help establish a practical platform for students to understand opportunities and realise future aspirations.

*By working with local businesses the PIE Project helps promote community cohesion, tackling inequalities and addressing real industry issues, all through Primary Inspiration through Enterprise.*

**We would like to offer a huge thank you to the following organisations and individuals for supporting the 1st Stage of the BIG PIE Friday Challenge – our sponsors Gainford Group and County Durham Community Foundation. Our PIE'Oneers - Jacqui Miller MBE, Prof Roy Sandbach, Caroline Theobald CBE, Ammar Mirza CBE (InCredAbles); Cpl Tony Strachan, Pascal Lamb-Carmarena, Sergeant Major Mark Hill MBE, Sergeant Craig Henaghan, Cpl Daniel Bell, WO2 Dave Ross, Maj Edward Lilleyman, Sgt Andrew Birtles, Capt William Thompson, Sgt Jamie Farrer, Sgt Sharon Kay (Armed Forces); Mark Jackson (Arnia); Alice Holliday (First Face to Face), Georgia Philips, Alex Farrington, Kylie Allen, Jane Turner (Teesside University; Ricky Mingle, Wayne Seddon (Great Annual Savings); Paul Carbert (North East of England Chamber of Commerce); Rob Kleiser, Paul Harm, Angela Whitfield (Learning Curve Group); Doc Anand (Newcastle International Film Festival/ABC); Ami Davies (My Little Explorer); Neha Nair (AMPM 247); Heather Horan, Louise Grogan (YHN); Andrew Alison, David Mitchelson, Graham Chaytor, Stuart Errington (Durham and Darlington Fire Brigade); Paul Lancaster (Newcastle Start-Up Week), Imran Khaliq (Gainford Group); Andrew Vince (North East Skills Training); Raj Singh (ABC).**

We are now looking for local companies and individuals to support the 2nd and 3rd Stages. If you are able to commit to supporting your local school or would like to make a donation towards our critical work please contact us. The BIG PIE Friday Challenge is only the start and if you are interested in supporting any of the activities or simply want to have fun helping young people realise and raise their ambitions please get in touch.

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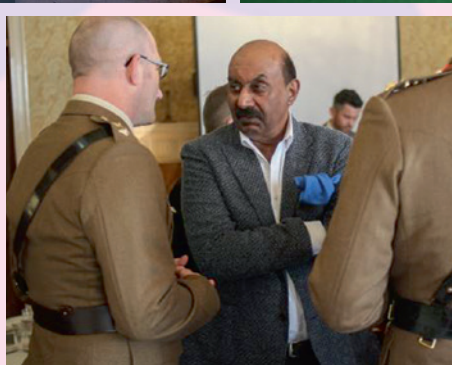
**Primary Inspiration Through Enterprise (PIE) Project Trust Limited**  
**The Beacon, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 9PN (U.K.) Email: info@pieproject.org Web: www.pieproject.org**





# GAINFORD GROUP SIGN THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT

On Friday 31st March at the Northern Counties Club, Gainford Group hosted an Afternoon Tea to celebrate the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant. Gainford Group is the first significant Asian employer in the North East of England to sign up to formally supporting the Armed Forces through the Covenant. The event was attended by a number of dignitaries, community and business leaders including Ian Mearns MP, Chi Onwurah MP, Andrew Hodgson Chair of the North East LEP and members of the Armed Forces. The event was followed by a private dinner at the award winning Vermont Hotel and Drinks Reception at Aveika.



For further information on signing up to the Covenant contact Ammar Mirza CBE via [info@abconnexions.org](mailto:info@abconnexions.org)



# SIR JAMES KNOTT TRUST BACKS NATIONAL LANDSCAPE DISCOVERY CENTRE SCHOOLS PROGRAMME

With Northumberland National Park's Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre opening to the public this summer, its education programme has received a £10k boost from Sir James Knott Trust.

The grant is supporting the development and delivery of The Sill Partnership Schools Programme. The initiative combines classroom learning with a range of workshops connected to nature, history, arts and conservation which are delivered within the National Park by a dedicated team of engagement and education officers.

A pilot of the three-year programme is currently underway with eight primary and middle schools from rural and urban locations across Tyne and Wear and Northumberland.

Sarah Glynn, Sill Manager, explains: "We are delighted to have the support of Sir James Knott Trust for The Sill Partnership Schools Programme. Whilst Northumberland National Park welcomes an impressive 1.4 million people annually, we've also experienced an 11% decline in the number of young people visiting since 2007.

"We firmly believe that a strong and diverse education programme is critical in re-engaging young people with our landscapes. The educational and personal development benefits to youngsters connecting with the outdoors are limitless. It's our aim to use the Park's amazing landscapes to contribute to the curriculum and inspire a new generation of landscape and nature enthusiasts."

Spearheaded by Northumberland National Park Authority and supported by a range of partners and funders, including the YHA and a £7.8 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre, will be a visitor attraction like no other.

Situated in the Hadrian's Wall area of the National Park, it has been developed



in partnership with people in the community and will help more people to access and learn about the incredible landscapes, geography and habitats within Northumberland National Park.

In addition to its £10k education grant, Sir James Knott Trust also donated £50,000 to the capital phase of The Sill project.

Vivien Stapley, Trust Secretary, said: "The Trust is a long-standing supporter of The Sill project and is delighted to assist with Northumberland National Park Authority's exciting plans to use its landscape, heritage, and cultural assets to deliver learning and experiential opportunities for young people throughout the region."

[www.knott-trust.co.uk](http://www.knott-trust.co.uk)

## "MUSIC EXPRESSES THAT WHICH CANNOT BE SAID AND ON WHICH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO BE SILENT"

By Ken James, Headmaster, Red House School

**How right Victor Hugo was. Little did he know when he wrote this that one of his novels would become the inspiration for the greatest musical of our time, Les Miserables. Even without forethought, he recognised the importance of music and the part it should play in our lives.**

Growing up, I had the privilege of being taught in excellent state schools, committed to the performing arts. I was often on stage or performing in concerts and this is something which has stayed with me to this day. Whilst I may have put down my violin and bow some time ago, I still perform in musicals and help the children in school too.

There has been significant coverage recently about cuts to funding in state schools. Whilst the Department for Education is insisting school funding had been protected in recent years, a number of state schools are saying there will be a significant impact on their offering. Staffing costs equate to about 70% of a school's expenditure. Therefore, most of the savings will primarily come from staffing cuts. But which subjects will be affected the most?

Attainment in schools is measured in part by how the pupils perform in the English Baccalureate (the EBacc). The EBacc is made up of: English, mathematics, history or geography, the sciences



and a language. It stands to reason that schools will want to perform well in these subjects and wish to protect them. You'll notice there's no mention of music or drama. Where's art? Or design?

George Bernard Shaw said "Without art, the crudeness of reality would make the world unbearable" and whilst we would expect a literary great to support the arts, an appreciation of the

part they play in the world of technology was also displayed by a less likely man, one of our greatest inventors, Steve Jobs. When introducing the iPad 2 in 2011, he stated "It is in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough - it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the results that make our heart sing." Not only will the world be a less colourful place without the arts, but how will other areas of life be affected by a decreased focus on this area of the curriculum?

As an independent school, Red House has much more freedom when it comes to the curriculum. Our children are heading towards the same terminal examinations but we can expose the children to the broadest of educations without the fear of merely being judged on our performance in the EBacc. Our statistics for the EBacc are still published but, thankfully, parents and our governing bodies appreciate that the quality of an education should not be reduced purely to a statistic. We openly encourage the arts: a fashion show last term showcasing the work of the pupils, our talent show, concerts next term and our musical, Oliver!, in its final stages of production. We will continue to promote the arts, continue to offer a broad curriculum and continue to produce the Steve Jobs of the future.

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





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**10am-1pm**

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This is a very relaxed event which will give you a true flavour of life here. However, if you cannot make the Open Morning, please don't worry: just call Claire on **01642 558119** to arrange an individual visit.

With best wishes

**Ken James**  
Headmaster

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# WHAT MAKES A SCHOOL GREAT?

In my column last time I wrote about what I thought made for a great education. More pragmatically this month I want to talk about what makes for a great school. I've been lucky enough in my career to work at a number of top schools and to have visited many more. Whilst every school is different, the best schools all have things in common which are important for prospective parents to focus on when they visit.

First and foremost are academic standards. That does not mean pure exam results; there are a number of factors which affect the exam statistics in each school and it doesn't always follow that the best schools are those with the best results. I advise parents to look at the value added by a school; how are the pupils thriving at that school compared to elsewhere? You can see that in scores, but much better is to talk to the pupils. Do they feel supported in class? Are teachers available when they need help? Do they feel they are pushed to fulfil their potential? Youngsters are pretty perceptive and are good judges of their own experiences.

Next to look at is what happens outside of the classroom. Are there opportunities to take part in sport, music, drama and so on? Crucially, are those opportunities available for all and are youngsters encouraged to go beyond their comfort zone to try something new? The best schools will find the talents of their pupils, ones perhaps they themselves didn't know they had, and inspire them to excel.

Finally, ask about pastoral care. How does the school look after its pupils and what do they do if something goes wrong? Are the staff approachable and how can parents get in touch? The home-school partnership is crucial, and the best schools will communicate formally and informally on a regular basis. Furthermore they will build relationships with you as parents so you get to know them almost as well as your children do. After all, you are trusting them with that which is most important to you – your children.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 386 4783, email [admissions@durhamschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@durhamschool.co.uk) or visit [www.durhamschool.co.uk](http://www.durhamschool.co.uk)



Kieran McLaughlin

## YOUNG READERS REAP REWARDS WITH WATERSTONES AND THE EDUCATION NETWORK

**Pupils from a primary school in Cramlington are to see their work on display at a major book retailer in Newcastle thanks to a competition organised by The Education Network.**

Children at Cragside Church of England Primary School were given the opportunity to take part in the inter-school competition to have their work displayed at Waterstones as part of their World Book Day celebrations.

The competition, which ran between February and March 2017 saw children from across key stages one and two completing various different literature-based tasks set by their class teachers, based on their favourite books.

Year Six class teacher at Cragside Church of England Primary School, Rachel Middis, explained:

"At Cragside Primary, we place a really strong emphasis on reading and writing and we are always looking for new ways to encourage the children to engage with books.

"When The Education Network approached us about the World Book Day competition they were running in conjunction with Waterstones, we thought it sounded like a great opportunity to celebrate reading in a fun way that would get the whole school involved."

Following a special assembly given to launch the

competition in February, class teachers from each year group set to work planning a book-based activity for their class to complete, ranging from new front cover designs to character profiles, book reviews to original poetry based on the book, depending on the age and abilities of the children.

After submitting their entries in March, four pieces of work from each key stage were selected to go through to the final judging panel before the overall winners were chosen.

Scooping the prize for key stage one was Kayla Greig aged 6. Kayla received a £15 book token from Waterstones for her review of Jill Tomlinson's classic 'The owl who was afraid of the dark', while the grand prize winner from key stage two, Katie Charlton aged 9 received a £25 book token and will have her entry, a book review of Cressida Cowell's 'How to train your dragon', put on display on one of the columns in the Waterstones Blackett Street branch.

Michelle Giles from The Education Network said: "This is the second time that The Education Network has worked with Waterstones in Newcastle on a project to help promote reading at Cragside Church of England Primary School, the first being the sponsorship of a book advent calendar for the school last Christmas.

"We are always on the lookout for opportunities

to add value to our client schools, whether that be through donations of book tokens or school equipment, or through sponsorship of grassroots sports teams.

"We are passionate about learning and the schools we work with, so it is great for us to be able to give something back."

The Education Network is a leading provider of professional recruitment and training services to the education sector. Specialising in long-term cover and permanent placements, The Education Network is dedicated to providing high-quality, flexible supply solutions to its client schools, helping to minimise the disruption to the children's learning through staff absences.



To find out more about The Education Network, visit: [www.theeducationnetwork.co.uk](http://www.theeducationnetwork.co.uk)





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# NEWCASTLE SCHOOL FOR BOYS SET FOR EXPANSION



Headmaster Mr David Tickner  
is joined by some of the  
school's sixth form students

Gosforth-based, Newcastle School for Boys has recently announced the acquisition of a new, dedicated Sixth Form centre to be opened in September 2017

The region's only single sex boys independent school also happens to be the newest, having opened its doors 11 years ago, following a merger of founding prep schools, Ascham House and Newlands. Since then the School has grown rapidly, expanded its age range and operation to cater for boys aged 3 to 18.

Sixth form teaching began in 2009. Since then, the school's sixth formers have gone on to great success with many old boys heading to top Russell Group and Oxbridge universities, securing business or professional careers or going on to top-flight, professional sports careers.

The school's current senior site is based on Gosforth's The Grove, housing boys from Years 7 to 13. Following the end of a business lease, a property at 1 Moor Road South, directly opposite

the existing senior site became available. The school took this opportunity to secure it to help fulfil its ambitions for continued growth and development.

Newcastle School for Boys' Headmaster, Mr David Tickner said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for the school which came along at exactly the right time.

Over recent years, the school has seen increasing success and pupil numbers have risen, particularly in our Sixth Form. The acquisition of this facility gives us the perfect opportunity to further this success.

The new Sixth Form centre will allow our boys to access the best possible facilities to further enhance the learning they already receive.

We have ambitious plans for the next ten years at Newcastle School for Boys and growth of both

pupil numbers and courses available in our Sixth Form are a significant part of those plans.

The move will also make more space available in our current Senior School site to further increase the learning space for our boys lower down in our senior school."

Head of Sixth Form, Mrs Steph Rourke, commented, "Our A level and BTEC students already receive exceptional teaching and support from our teaching staff and we really feel this new Sixth Form centre will provide them with the best possible facilities to support that teaching.

Whilst still remaining part of everything that goes on in the Senior School, it will be a great space which for the boys to focus on their studies both in directed lessons and their own private study time."

Some places are still available in the Sixth Form for September 2017. Anybody interested should contact [admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk), 0191 255 9303. Visit [www.newcastleschool.co.uk](http://www.newcastleschool.co.uk) for further information.





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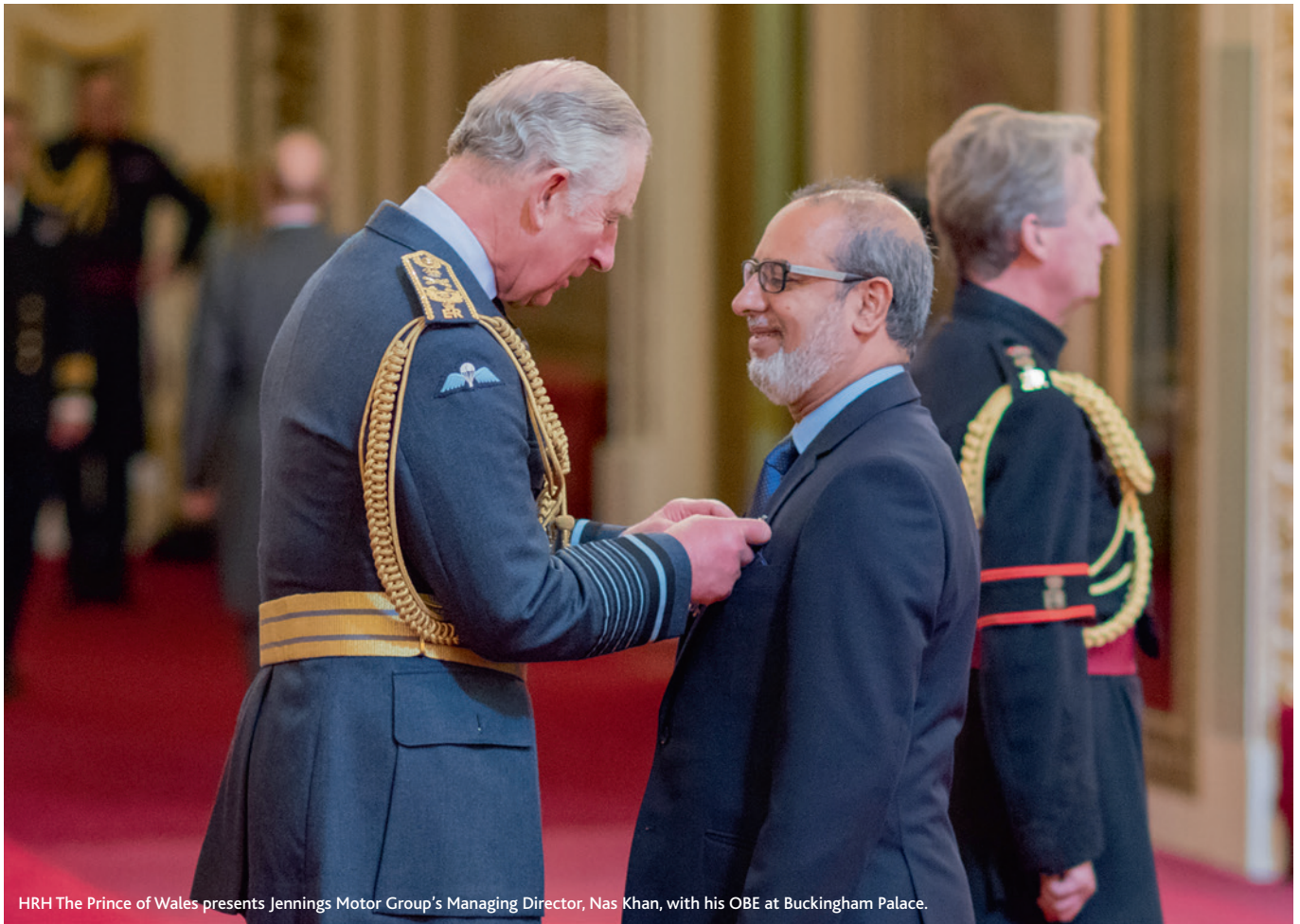


*Westfield*

S C H O O L

INDEPENDENT DAY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS





HRH The Prince of Wales presents Jennings Motor Group's Managing Director, Nas Khan, with his OBE at Buckingham Palace.

## NORTH EAST BUSINESSMAN RECEIVES OBE FROM HRH THE PRINCE OF WALES

A visit to Buckingham Palace was on the agenda for a philanthropic North East businessman when he officially received his OBE from HRH The Prince of Wales.

Pakistan-born Nas Khan, Owner and Managing Director of Jennings Motor Group, was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his charity work and contribution to the economy.

Nas said: "It's a tremendous honour to receive such an award – I am very humbled and extremely honoured.

"The day was very exciting and it was great meeting other award recipients at the ceremony.

"I was also thrilled that members of my family were able to share such a momentous occasion with me – given the support they have given over the years."

As an individual, Nas has always actively supported both local and national charities, but the most poignant and challenging came about in 2010, when he wanted to help save and rebuild lives of people in Pakistan, following devastating floods. An appeal was set up through his own registered charity, The Emaan Foundation.

Raising £120,000 not only provided essential

life-saving aid in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, but it also financed the construction of a new village. A total of 60 new homes were built for people in the village of Rahim Yar Khan, with livestock and fresh water also being provided.

On completion of the village, which has officially been named 'The Emaan Village' after the charity, Nas launched a second appeal with the aim to build a health centre for the village community and surrounding areas. To date, funds are in excess of £20,000.

Nas's career with Jennings began as a graduate at the age of 23 when he was appointed as a sales executive at the group's Ford dealership on Yarm Road in Stockton. The next decade saw a number of promotions to business manager, assistant sales manager and group sales/marketing manager.

He has been involved in three successful management buyouts, the first of which, resulted in another promotion to sales and marketing director, prior to taking over as managing director and later becoming sole proprietor of the company.

As managing director of Jennings Motor Group, Nas is responsible for 524 members of staff across the company's Ford, Kia, Mazda, SEAT and Mitsubishi branches located from Tyneside to Teesside, in addition to recently adding Harley-Davidson® dealerships in Leeds and Gateshead, as well as a SUBWAY® store in Stockton, Teesside, to the business portfolio.

In addition to being awarded an OBE, Nas has also been the recipient of Ford Motor Company's 'Salute to Dealers' global award, as well as being awarded Teesside Business Executive of the Year at the North East Business Awards.

Over the years, the company has focused heavily on supporting the local community and a variety of charities.

For the past 18 years, the Salvation Army has received on-going support with its annual Christmas Present Appeal, as well as Teesside Hospice and the Great North Air Ambulance being the company's nominated charities.

For more information about Jennings Motor Group, visit [www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk](http://www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk)



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# QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT TO ROCK UK LATE 2017



Just weeks after announcing a 26-date summer tour of North America, Queen + Adam Lambert will return to Europe later this year for 24 dates, including a much welcomed return to the Metro Radio Arena Newcastle on Friday 1st December 2017.

The tour will showcase a spectacular new stage production and set list, which the band hints will provide some surprises. It will be the band's first full British tour in almost three years, having last performed 10 sold out shows across the UK in January 2015.

For their 2017 tour, the performance material will no doubt acknowledge this year's 40th anniversary of Queen's biggest-selling studio album to date, *News of the World*, which yielded the immortal anthems 'We Will Rock You' and 'We Are the Champions.'

Queen Drummer and Co-Founder Roger Taylor said: "The 2017 tour will look entirely different to the show we took around before. Production has changed a lot and technology has really come along but we don't use it all. We don't play to click track. It's 100% live. We're planning on doing stuff

we either haven't done before or haven't done for a long time."

Adam Lambert added: "We will still be playing the big hit songs you know and love from Queen but we thought it would be good to challenge ourselves a bit. Change it up a little bit, change the visuals, change all the technology, change the set list to some degree. We will probably be pulling some other songs out of the Queen catalogue which we haven't done before which I am very excited about."

## JERSEY BOYS TO EMBARK ON SECOND UK & IRELAND TOUR

Due to overwhelming public demand, the producers of Jersey Boys have announced a second UK & Ireland Tour, with a return date at Sunderland Empire (20 – 31 March 2018).

Jersey Boys is the remarkable true story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons and their rise to stardom from the wrong side of the tracks. These four boys from New Jersey became one of the most successful bands in pop history and sold 175 million records worldwide, all before they turned 30. The show is packed with their hits, including 'Walk

Like a Man', 'Big Girls Don't Cry' and 'Rag Doll'.

Winner of Broadway's Tony, London's Olivier and Australia's Helpmann Awards for Best New Musical, Jersey Boys is the winner of 57 major awards worldwide and has been seen by over 24 million people.

Jersey Boys is written by Marshall Brickman and Rick Elice. The UK & Ireland Tour production is staged by the entire original Broadway creative team, led by Director Des McAnuff and choreographer Sergio Trujillo. Casting will be announced soon.



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## OVERWHELMING DEMAND BRINGS CURIOUS INCIDENT BACK TO NEWCASTLE

The National Theatre's multi award-winning production of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* is set to return to Newcastle Theatre Royal due to popular demand (30 May – 10 June 2017).

Simon Stephens' adaptation of Mark Haddon's best-selling novel, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time*, received seven Olivier Awards in 2013. The show's first phenomenally successful tour was seen by almost 400,000 people nationwide and is currently being rolled out to US shores.

The show tells the story of fifteen-year-old Christopher Boone. He stands beside Mrs Shears' dead dog, which has been speared with a garden fork; it is seven minutes after midnight and Christopher is under suspicion. Christopher records each fact in a book he is writing to solve the mystery of who murdered Wellington. His detective work takes him on a frightening journey that upturns his world.

National Theatre producer, Kash Bennett, said: "We are delighted to be taking this beautiful and inventive show to new venues and making return visits to others."

## RECORD OF THE MONTH - TEXAS 'JUMP ON BOARD'

A solo spell never quite suited Sharleen Spiteri so now she's rejoined her former bandmates for this stirring new release, *Jump on Board*.

The album marks the 9th for the Glasgow beat combo and is yet another strong collection of songs. First up, is lead single *Let's Work It Out*. Clipped funk guitar, subtle strings and Spiteri's trademark smouldering vocals combine to make this a groovy mid-tempo toe-tapper. Other notable standouts include the rockier *Tell That Girl* and the quietly groovy *It Was Up To You* whilst Spiteri channels Debbie Harry on *Great Romances*. All in all, this is a polished offering of disco-tinged soft-rock which is largely upbeat in tempo.

Bolstered by this new batch of tracks, Texas are set to embark on a nationwide tour later this year and roll into Newcastle City Hall on 27th September. A date for the diary indeed.



## WHAT'S ON THIS MAY?

### Grease

May 1-6

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 265 5020  
[www.atgtickets.com](http://www.atgtickets.com)

### Adam Ant

May 5

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

### Roy Chubby Brown

May 6

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121  
[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

### Paul Rodgers

May 7

Newcastle City Hall  
T: (0844) 8112 121 [www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

### Take That

May 8-9

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

### More Light

May 9-13

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020  
[www.peoples theatre.co.uk](http://www.peoples theatre.co.uk)

### Running Wild

May 9-13

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121  
[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

### Gangsta Granny

May 10-14

Sunderland Empire T: (0191) 265 5020  
[www.atgtickets.com](http://www.atgtickets.com)

### Tom Chaplin

May 11

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661  
[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

### Iron Maiden

May 14

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666  
[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

### Simple Minds

May 19

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661  
[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

### Out of Order

May 22-27

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121  
[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

### The Cranberries

May 24

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661  
[www.sagegateshead.com](http://www.sagegateshead.com)

### The Railway Children

May 27-28

The Custom's House T: (0191) 454 1234  
[www.customshouse.co.uk](http://www.customshouse.co.uk)

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# NATIONAL ACCLAIM FOR THE WORD

The Word, National Centre for the Written Word, has taken centre stage in two national trade magazines in addition to winning a prestigious regional award.



Public Sector Build Journal featured the iconic cultural centre on the front cover in addition to an internal five page feature on the building being simply the first stage of the 365 regeneration plan whilst RIBA Journal, the magazine of the Royal Institute of British Architects, also featured The Word on the front cover and a six page article enthusing over the library's architecture.

On April 7th The Word was also announced as the winner in the Best Public Service Building category at the LABC (Local Authority Building Control) Northern Region Awards and now goes through to the LABC Grand Finals to be held in London in November. The building has also been shortlisted in three categories the North East RICS Awards, the RIBA North East Awards, to be decided in May, and in two categories in the CENE (Constructing Excellence North East) awards to be decided in June.

David Wells, Regional Director of Muse Developments, South Tyneside Council's development partner, commented, "The coverage

in national trade magazines is hugely important as they are read by influential decision makers in their own fields of the public sector and architecture. As such, they're shouting out to the professions that South Shields is alive and kicking and embarking on a fantastic regeneration that will carry the town forwards."

"The awards, both regional and, hopefully, national, are also about telling the property world that the town is moving and offers fantastic opportunities for developers and investors – these are exactly the people we need to attract to maximise the potential of the Council's initial public spending and attract further private investment. It has always been our intention to kick-start the 365 regeneration plan with an iconic building and we're on track for the next phases of infrastructure development, which, whilst maybe not as glamorous as the initial phase of The Word and the Market redevelopment, are vital for the future."

"Phase two of the plan, the construction of a new Transport Interchange which will bring the town's

Metro and bus services together for the first time, is a more complicated proposal involving many other parties and a huge amount of preparatory infrastructure but the whole team is working hard towards construction commencing early next year."

Councillor Iain Malcolm, Leader of South Tyneside Council, added, "We're thrilled that The Word has won another award. We always knew that it was going to be a fantastic asset to the Borough and almost 200,000 local residents and visitors from further afield have already seen for themselves what an outstanding facility this is."

"But to receive awards and recognition from respected national institutions and publications is further endorsement of The Word and the wider 365 vision and sends a clear signal that South Shields is open for business."

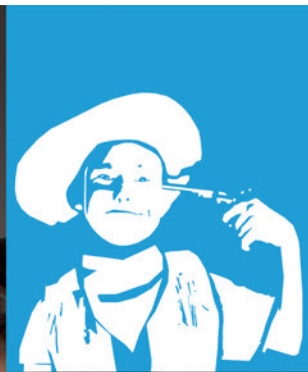
For more information about the regeneration of South Shields and the 365 Master Plan please go to: [www.southshields365progress.com](http://www.southshields365progress.com)



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# ART IN THE WORKPLACE



“Business owners are beginning to understand that displaying artwork in the workplace does more than make the office aesthetically pleasing; it can actually increase employee efficiency, productivity, and creativity.”

– Forbes.com

## Are you interested in having art pieces at your offices, boardrooms, lobbies, hotels, restaurants, or healthcare environments?

Today, many businesses are recognised for their valuable art collections. Most are extremely influential in the world of art and business. The right choice of art can also help inspire your team, impress your clients, and express your brand identity.

Here are some aspects that you need to consider in choosing the right artwork for your business:

### 1. First Impressions Last

The artwork a person sees first has the ability to influence his opinion about your business and also your employees. Make sure to place your best artworks on your visual wall – meaning the first wall a person sees when he enters a room. To make a positive first impression, you should seriously consider what type of impression you want to create.

### 2. Colours That Match

The company style and colour go hand in hand when decorating an office. You should choose colours which adhere to your company environment and personality. You should also consider the space where the artwork will be hung. Artwork hung in doorways or near entrances should create a welcoming atmosphere and fit the company style.

### 3. Never Limit Yourself

Artwork doesn't have to be framed. Mixed media can add a great deal more interest to your office. Mixing different types of artwork also allows businesses more room for fun and creativity.

It's amazing how just a few art pieces can add to the overall ambience of a place. They say the more comfortable you feel in your work environment, the more conducive it is to increasing productivity.

Commission an Artist serves businesses large and small, across an array of industries. Whether you're a FTSE 100 company looking to impress

your clients or a growing tech startup interested in personalizing your space, we can help.

We can produce artworks to suit the décor of the space where the work will hang, or we can create custom sizes as needed. We know that you are interested in the artwork that is durable and easily maintained, and we can help you with that, too.

Our Project Managers can assist you create the perfect pieces for your work space. We are ready to discuss your concerns and special needs. We are here to build a trusting relationship with you.

Buying artwork doesn't need to break the bank. You can take advantage of our services to fill an entire office floor or a single room. At Commission an Artist, our aim is to make art accessible to everyone even businesses.

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## SPRING HAS INDEED SPRUNG!

At last the dark months are behind us, and long days mean I can continue painting well into the evenings, maintaining momentum, and hopefully resolving themes and ideas right through to completion, at a time when galleries up and down the country which exhibit my work are beginning to want some fresh new paintings on their wall to entice the passers by to step inside.

The annual transformation of this little bit of Northumberland from dull greens and brown to bright green, with yellow daffodils just lifts the heart, and once again, I've managed to find time to complete a few daffodil paintings before the display is all over, and the next layer of colours replaces them.

The beginning of 2017 has marked a dramatic change to activities here following the decision to take all of the trade side of the business 'in house'. This has meant taking on more staff to manage the stock, orders and credit control, and it's a good job I am perfectly happy to paint while other people work in the same area! So far so good, the trade customers are trickling in every week and range quite dramatically from visitor centres in Ireland to Floors Castle in the Borders, and we are quietly thrilled to now be one of the carefully selected suppliers of greetings cards to the ten WWT (Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust) centres, founded at Slimbridge by the artist, Sir Peter Scott- son of the famous Antarctic Explorer, Captain Robert Falcon Scott. We share a passion for wildlife, and I have spent many hours drawing birds here at Washington Wetland trust, right on our doorstep, so it seems apt.

We are getting to grips with the new website, which went 'live' last week, not without its gremlins - these things never happen smoothly, no matter how carefully they are planned. We are all learning how to manage and upload text/images in this rather different format to the old website. With hundreds of variations across the paintings, prints, cards and gifts, getting every single option, postage price, sizes, descriptions etc correct is time consuming and sometimes frustrating. The new website magically resizes for smart phones and tablets, as habits change, and browsing now takes place more often while sitting on the sofa in the evening, and less often sat in front of the computer screen, apparently! Another feature is the facility for 'trade' customers to access the trade prices, new offers etc where they can order, apply for a credit account and even pay for things.

Last summer's exhibition, 'Nature is Dreaming' started just one day after the referendum results, which could have been a disaster. Fortunately for me, most of the original paintings featured in the catalogue, mailed out three weeks earlier, had already been reserved prior to the actual preview, otherwise it would have been a very disappointing preview, as most people were quite shocked by the results, and uncertain about how 'Brexit' would

affect them - this does not create the feelgood factor we artists rely upon for sales!

The design work for the catalogue and invitations for my own summer exhibition this year, 'Wild for Midsummer' here at West Woodburn, is almost complete. The exhibition doesn't take place until June, but the photoshoot, design and themes all need to be in place, then the last part is when the new paintings get 'dropped' into the empty pages.

This always seems to be one of the most productive times for me. The alarm goes off at 6.30am, and once the dogs and horses are fed and the coffee drunk, I head straight down to the studio, buzzing about either new work or the next stage in a painting. I often dream about painting, and also wake in the night thinking about the work I am doing, and occasionally come up with the solutions which I'm able to take straight to the drawing board next day. I frequently work on more than one painting at a time - this is the best way with watercolour, as the drying time is critical in between 'layers', so wet paint, already mixed can be used on another painting, usually the same subject. This technique takes the pressure off, and encourages me to maintain a confidence and a flow which results in a more 'daring' attitude I feel. I think it's the 'not having all one's eggs in one basket' effect!

For details about exhibitions and events including 'Wild for Midsummer' visit [www.marogers.com](http://www.marogers.com) or call 01434 270216









## DISCOVER IRELAND'S SILVER-LININGS AMIDST ITS CLOUDS

By Bridie Chomse, Travel Planner, Travel Bureau Destinations

If you visit Ireland, chances are it's going to rain at least once – whatever the season! But don't let this put you off for, as I discovered when I visited County Wicklow, the Emerald Isle's inclement climate is all part of its charm.

Glendalough is an early medieval monastic settlement set amid the stunning scenery of the Wicklow mountains. My visit was not blessed with clear skies and dazzling sunshine but the place lost none of its magic for this.

St Kevin founded the settlement here in the 6th century, seeking out Glendalough, "Valley of the Two Lakes", as a place for peaceful contemplation to be at one with God and nature. It's not hard to see why Kevin chose this spot for such a pursuit, even with groups of tourists roaming around the remains of the settlement, Glendalough has a pervading atmosphere of serenity. On the day I visited the site, the misty gloom which hung in the air only added to its mystical quality, hinting at hidden magic in the ancient valley.

I would have loved more time to explore the surrounding forests and mountains but if I felt I had missed an opportunity for adventure and discovery, my next destination more than made up for it.

Approaching Powerscourt I was expecting the spectacular gardens that I'd seen in photographs on the internet, and I certainly got these, but what I did not expect was the elating feeling of excitement I would get from discovering the daringly imaginative and diverse grounds of Powerscourt Estate.

The weather had not improved since departing Glendalough and while you might imagine it would be disappointing not to see the gardens in spectacular sunshine and set against a bright blue sky, this didn't dampen my spirits. The gardens are so vast and varied, with hidden nooks and crannies and something different around every corner, that you get a real sense of adventure when moving through them, which was

only increased by the opening of the heavens and a slight battle with the elements.

My first surprise was the Pepperpot Tower, a fairytale fortress complete with cannon which peeks out from among the trees. The next sight to take my breath away was the remarkable Japanese garden, a veritable wonderland of winding paths, trickling streams and mossy grottos. The great lake with its central fountain and flanking statues dominates the scene at the heart of the estate.

As I reluctantly made my way out of the gardens I passed, once again, the sculptures that had first greeted me upon my arrival. There is something about the statues at Powerscourt which reflects the nature of the estate, or at least reflects my experience of the grounds and gardens on a grizzly Autumn day.

The great stone figures from ancient mythology have a grand majesty about them but they also exude a very real and rugged dignity: they are not shining marble in a well-lit museum but wind-beaten and weather-stained stone, standing firm against any conditions the Irish countryside can throw at them.

At the top of the gardens statues of the twin gods, Artemis and Apollo, welcome visitors to Powerscourt. Apollo, his face turned back towards approaching visitors, seems to beckon you into the gardens while Artemis, a goddess closely associated with the wild, untamed aspect of nature, gazes out across the grounds to the Wicklow mountains. For me, it was precisely this sense of wilderness, embodied by the Greek goddess of the hunt and amplified by the bracing Irish weather, which made Powerscourt estate so much more than just another garden.

**Bridie travelled to Ireland with Fáilte Ireland. Start your adventure with an inspirational tailor-made itinerary from Travel Bureau Destinations: Visit [www.travelbureaudestinations.com](http://www.travelbureaudestinations.com), call 0344 847 5004 or email [destinations@travelb.co.uk](mailto:destinations@travelb.co.uk)**



# OUT & ABOUT - WHITBY



Sometimes after my travels, I just want to sit down and write up my findings, just to be able to “bottle” what I have discovered. I have been to Whitby many times, but there are still undiscovered parts of this fascinating town to explore.

Between Newquay Road where I was staying at the Station Inn, and Baxtergate, a main shopping street, there must be a dozen alleyways and yards. Some are through routes wide enough for only one person, some are yards containing cafes or other businesses and some are just dead ends. And the pattern is repeated throughout the town.

On my arrival by train it was a fine night, so I decided to catch the last Arriva X4 bus to Sandsend, three miles away, alight at the Hart Inn and walk back along the coast as night fell. I started on the beach, but a combination of narrowing beach, incoming tide and failing light suggested I should climb the path onto the road and over to the cliff top, and I discovered the amazing building known as the Met which is now private apartments with a restaurant and café. The 37 metre vertical cliff lift (not an inclined railway like at Saltburn) looked completely closed up. I continued along the West Cliff to the Whale Bone Arch and the Royal Crescent developed by Railway King George Hudson who was bankrupted before its completion. And so down the Khyber Pass, named after the Afghan one, to the Fish Quay and along the Esk river side to the Inn.

Inevitable, you may say, that I chose the Station Inn, opposite Whitby's railway station, for my one

night stay on a Sunday evening. Since they do not have a kitchen, the deal is room only, but there are plenty of places to find breakfast, including the Wetherspoon's Angel Inn nearby. On Sunday night I had noticed their enticing tables outside, but a team of scaffolders on the Monday morning had covered the entire frontage. I was amazed they had erected so much metal and timber in a short while.

The morning train had disgorged its usual load of children from the Esk Valley villages who attend Caedmon College, named after the Northumbrian poet, and arrive on the first train from Middlesbrough at 08:37. Indeed the whole timetable on the Esk Valley line is predicated upon the needs of schoolchildren, who return from Whitby at 15:59. There are four round trips from Middlesbrough, with connections further afield. On Sundays there are direct trains from Bishop Auckland and Darlington and it was the 15:50 from Darlington to Whitby which I took on Sunday 2nd April, the first day of the season that runs until November.

The RNLI Museum is interesting, and there's a whole museum devoted to Captain Cook on Grape Lane, turn right at the Dolphin pub just over the bridge. 199 steps take you up to the Abbey and St. Mary's Church, but don't bother with the dated and appallingly rated Dracula exhibition on



Marine Parade which will have you out the back exit in three minutes. Even at £3 it's not worth it and yet with some re-engineering using modern technology it could be really scary again. Invest your £3 instead on the Yellow Boats like Summer Queen which offer a trip out into the bay, or for a more heritage feel try former RNLI lifeboat Mary Ann Hepworth which was on station from 1938 to 1974 and now also offers pleasure trips. There's loads of accommodation options in Whitby, and going by train enhances the adventure.

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](http://www.nationalrail.com). For National Rail Enquiries call 24hr 08457 484950. [www.visitwhitby.com](http://www.visitwhitby.com)



# NEWCASTLE AIRPORT OFF TO A FLYER IN 2017

In what can generally be called turbulent times courtesy of Brexit and a General Election, Newcastle Airport has continued its remarkable success. 2016 was a highly successful year for the airport and 2017 is off to a flyer.



Without stating the obvious, the key detail of any airport is the list of destinations to which you can fly. At Newcastle Airport the list continues to grow. There are now more than eighty destinations with a direct flight from Newcastle.

Included in that list are some key cities. Okay, London is the obvious one. Let's face it, if you need to fly on to anywhere in the world, head for London Heathrow. Newcastle airport continues to have brilliant links thanks to its five flights per day with British Airways.

It's a similar situation with other national carriers like Emirates, Air France, KLM, Aer Lingus, BMI and SAS. They provide a regular service to Dubai, Paris, Amsterdam, Dublin, Brussels and Copenhagen and the opportunity for onward travel. However, they also offer something that is becoming increasingly popular out of Newcastle Airport; city breaks.

New cities are being added to the list of destinations. The latest to land at Newcastle Airport are Berlin and Madrid. These are not seasonal flights; they are permanent connections to two of Europe's most important cities. They are also the ideal destinations for anyone who fancies exploring

somewhere new. Although a city like Madrid is also an important hub especially if you are travelling on to South America, it is a stunning, vibrant place in which to spend a few days.

Newcastle Airport is also spreading its wings here in the UK.

"We're noticing a steady increase in the number of people using the airport who travel from further afield," said Newcastle Airport's Business Development Manager, John Irving. "Our core customers will always come from the North East, but we are attracting more and more travellers from Scotland, Cumbria, Teesside and Yorkshire. Our goal is to be the UK's Most Welcoming Airport. Of course, getting passengers to their destination on time and with as little fuss as possible is a key element of our success and we are delighted to recently have been named as one of the World's best airports for flights leaving on time."

While the business traveller accounts for about 30 per cent of passengers who travel through Newcastle Airport, the leisure market continues to dominate. New routes are being added such as flights to Hurgada on the Red Sea coast or Almeria in Spain.

The main reason why so many new destinations are being added at Newcastle Airport is because of the airport's success in working closely with the airlines. Ryanair, EasyJet, Jet2, FlyBe, BMI and the holiday airlines of Thomson and Thomas Cook, continue to enjoy excellent passenger levels with routes from Newcastle Airport.

"It must also be emphasised how important Newcastle Airport is to the local and regional economy," added John Irving. "Business needs links around the world; people need to be able to connect with major cities from a local airport. They also need to get from one end of the UK to the other without having to sit for hours on a train or struggling along our road network. And of course, over three thousand people are employed on site with a further twelve thousand, at least, who work indirectly with us."

In other words, Newcastle Airport is one of the most important businesses in the region, not only as a gateway to business and holiday destinations, but also as one of the biggest employers in the North East.

No wonder they're flying.



## CASH INJECTION ENHANCES POPULAR OUT OF TOWN BAR AND EATERY



North East leisure operator Danieli Holdings has invested £80K into its yolo bar in Ponteland to increase space and offering for customers, as it prepares to bring the brand to Newcastle city centre.

In response to high demand for private parties and functions, the project has included an extension of the mezzanine level with the addition of a dedicated bar, taking the floor's capacity up to 50.

Meanwhile downstairs, the main bar has been extended with a section for draft and bottle service in order to speed up customer flow and reduce queuing during busy periods. There are also more

VIP booths for hire, the interior has benefitted from general improvement and a pizza oven has been installed in the kitchen.

As part of the changes and in time for the warmer weather, the outdoor terrace has also secured a later license, hosting guests all day until 10.30pm.

Customers can now sample a fresh choice on the food and cocktail menus. The menu has welcomed a selection of homemade pizzas, as well as two-foot long sharing options.

The updated cocktail list features the new 'Cocktail Tree', with nine cocktails to enjoy as a group. Mojito

Boxes now also offer an interactive experience, with key ingredients and fruits allowing customers to experiment with flavours and mix their own. Extra blends have also been added, such as the classic Espresso Martini and the Peach Lychee Daiquiri.

Danieli Holdings Chief Executive, Neill Winch, said: "We have been overwhelmed by the success of yolo Ponteland and are aiming to make customers' dining and drinking experiences even more enjoyable. Following the relaunch of our Ponteland venue, we are gearing up for the grand unveiling of our sister site in Newcastle city centre."

## DURHAM COUNTY CRICKET CLUB AND PHIZZ ANNOUNCE TWO-YEAR PARTNERSHIP

Durham CCC players will now use PHIZZ effervescent tablets to stay hydrated and maximise recovery. The tablets will be used across training, travel and all competitive fixtures.

PHIZZ contain electrolytes, vitamins and minerals that enhance water absorption, improve performance and reduce fatigue.

The two-year deal will see PHIZZ advertise their new brand on the boards around the ground at Emirates Riverside.

Sir Ian Botham, Durham Cricket Chairman, said: "PHIZZ have a unique product. We're ready to tackle promotion head-on and are glad to have PHIZZ with us."

Yasmin Badiani, Head of Sport at PHIZZ, said: "We're proud to have been selected by Durham's medical department as their preferred hydration supplement. To have signed a broader sponsorship contract with the club is ideal. We can't wait for our first season."



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## NEW CULINARY TASTING EXPERIENCE ON THE MENU AT DOBSON & PARNELL

Food lovers can now indulge in a gastronomic journey thanks to a new tasting menu being launched at Dobson & Parnell on Newcastle's Quayside.

Troy Terrington, Chef Patron of Dobson & Parnell, has carefully crafted the tasting menu with matching wines, showcasing the very best of refined British and European cuisine.

The new tasting menu will change daily but an example of dishes customers can experience includes North Shields crab and parsley risotto, Waterford House Farm lamb and Yorkshire rhubarb ricotta.

A vegetarian tasting menu has been developed which highlights some of the region's finest vegetables on offer. This menu will also change daily to include dishes like North country beetroots with celeriac remoulade and Potato pasta, mushroom, truffle and parmesan.

The seven-course tasting menu is priced at £65 per person or £100 with wine pairing. It is available from 5.30 – 9pm between Tuesday and Saturday. Guests are advised to allow around three hours to enjoy the tasting menu experience.



## DEAL TO BRING NEW BAR TO HIGH BRIDGE REACHES COMPLETION

A new bar on Newcastle's High Bridge will be created after a commercial property deal between two entrepreneurial brothers and a leading leisure operator has reached completion.

John and Greg Hall have agreed to lease their former retail premises to Neill Winch of leisure operator Danieli Holdings. The re-development will see the 4500sqft, four storey property being



transformed into the region's second yolo bar, following the successful opening of the first outlet in Ponteland in September 2015.

John Hall said: "The decision to go with Danieli Holdings was cemented by Neill's reputation to deliver what promises to be a fantastic addition to the City's leisure scene."

Bradley Hall acted on behalf of the landlord.

Tim Aisbitt, Associate Director at Bradley Hall, commented: "This is an exciting investment for Danieli Holdings as opportunities like this don't come along very often. The planning permission for a bar, on top of the high footfall in the area and the surrounding established businesses, made the property very attractive to leisure operators."

## MÖVENPICK LAUNCHES AT INTU

Luxury Swiss ice cream brand Mövenpick is now tantalising northern taste buds with the launch of its first UK Boutique, serving desserts and drinks that hero its delicious ice cream and sorbets.

Located in intu Metrocentre in Gateshead, the new Mövenpick Boutique is an all-day dessert bar serving sundae creations, combinations and sharing plates, alongside Nespresso coffee and soft drinks. Mövenpick is perfect for those looking for a break from shopping, pre-cinema treat or post-dinner delight.

From the traditional Banoffee Pie and Cherry Bakewell, reinvented as sundae creations, to the soon-to-be-popular sharing plates, including Mövenpick

Chocolate Fondue, the new Boutique promises to help you discover your favourite flavour of Mövenpick Ice Cream.

The premium ice cream brand is renowned for its quality and award-winning taste, offering the perfect treat for all gourmet ice cream lovers with over 27 different flavours of luxury ice cream and sorbet. Made using naturally sourced ingredients discovered around the world, each scoop contains real pieces of fruit, chocolate or nuts, as well as ripples of syrup or sauce, promising an exquisite taste with every mouthful.

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## NORTH EAST SOCIAL INVESTMENT COMPANY HOLDS STAKEHOLDER EVENT

The North East Social Investment Company (NESIC) held its first stakeholder event at the Baltic to raise awareness of the enormous benefits social investment can bring to the North East.

Guests from a range of North East organisations joined the NESIC board to discuss the current social investment climate and hear presentations about some of the first investments and future projects being supported by the North East Social Investment Fund operated by Northstar on behalf of NESIC.

The Board's aim is to provide an innovative, regional, strategic solution to develop the market for social investment in the North East and to help reduce disadvantage, deprivation and social need in North-East communities.







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# NE1 CAN DELIVERS UNIQUE INITIATIVE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN NORTH EAST



A new initiative to tackle youth unemployment and improve employment opportunities in the North East has been launched by International award winning Business Improvement District Company, NE1 Ltd and is already having a huge impact in the region.

Using NE1's unique contacts and relationships with the city's business community, NE1 Can is providing direct links between 1,400 business members and young people aged between 16 – 19 years old in the North East.

NE1 Can is ultimately about jobs and marrying the right young people with the right employment opportunities, as well as raising aspirations.

One of the key goals is equipping young people with essential skills as they transition from school and college into the workplace. These skills include a greater awareness of career choices and what businesses want and need from their workers.

The initiative is proving a major boom for business allowing them to gain greater understanding of working with and employing young people. The relationship is fast, direct and is delivering results efficiently and cost effectively.

A growing number of schools and colleges have signed up and NE1 Can has already teamed up with businesses including the NHS, Marks & Spencer, Leeds Building Society, Nigel Wright and NRG among others. To date, a number of business-led training and skills sessions have been organised including a Day in the Life of a Doctor, mock interview sessions, CV writing, as well as quality work experience opportunities across a range of industry sectors. The sessions have allowed young people to visit workplaces, apply for work experience placements as well as for jobs and apprenticeships.

Events are planned over the coming months with Virgin Money, Marks & Spencer, Bond Dickinson and others.

Sean Bullick, Chief Executive of NE1 said: "The North East business community has been really keen to get involved and to throw its weight behind this unique approach to tackling the dual issues of youth unemployment and the lack of skilled employees in the region. NE1 Can is unique because it takes services direct to young people, often within an individual business, or commercial environment. It has allowed us to extend our reach, have a greater impact and deliver even greater results.

"We have already had some great successes and are working hard to raise aspirations and help more young people into quality work, education or training."

A recent NHS 'Day in the Life of a Doctor' event was attended by over 40 young people, coordinator, Mike Wilson from Health Education England said:

"We hope to target more young people with events like this than we could ever hope to reach on our own. Through NE1 Can events we can show the diversity of roles and careers available and hopefully inspire young people who may not have considered medicine and the NHS as a personal career route. We can also take the opportunity to help young people map out exactly what will be needed for a career in the NHS."

Elaine Tulip-Johnson, Managing Consultant at Nigel Wright Group, one of the businesses involved in NE1 Can, said; "Nigel Wright deals with hundreds of executive and professional appointments in the UK and overseas each year. The advice we can offer young people on areas such as job interviews, CVs and employability will not only benefit them now but will stay with them throughout their working lives. We hope the knowledge and skills the students gain during our workshops will help as well as motivate them to seek out a rewarding career.

Sarah Garay at St Cuthbert's Catholic High School assistant to the Head of Sixth Form said: "Working with NE1 has enabled our Sixth Form students to come into direct contact with local employers which helps them develop real world skills to make them more employable, be that in a part time capacity or to support further or higher education, or for when they complete their education and move into their careers. This is a fantastic opportunity that helps students put their formal education into context, become more confident and helps them when applying for and successfully gaining employment."

NE1 Can is always seeking volunteers from businesses keen to get involved and can work with employers to develop bespoke events and activities.

For further information or to find out how to get involved in the NE1 Can programme contact Dawn Barber, NE1 Business Network Manager at [dawn.barber@newcastle1ltd.com](mailto:dawn.barber@newcastle1ltd.com)



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# NEWCASTLE IN THE SKY DOESN'T SLEEP ON MOTEL ONE NEWCASTLE DEAL

Newcastle in the Sky 2017 may already have made a statement by offering a unique dining experience at 100ft, but it's back on solid ground for the latest news from Tyneside's can't miss event.

As Newcastle's finest chefs continue to sign up to prepare a wide range of cuisine in a setting which many have described as a once in a lifetime experience, a new partner has entered the fray – and this time it's not culinary.

The newest addition to the city centre's hotel scene - Motel One Newcastle has joined the party and has become the official accommodation provider of the week-long event in the summer. It all means that those travelling to Newcastle between August 24-29 can take advantage of everything the jewel of the north has to offer – both from the skies and the ground.

Motel One Newcastle, on Newcastle's High Bridge only opened its doors in December 2015, but has wasted no time in establishing itself as a favourite among visitors to the historic former walled city, offering a mix of affordability, comfort and modern amenities.

Nick Hogarth, Hotel Manager at Motel One Newcastle says they had no hesitation in becoming part of the spectacular for 2017.

"When we were approached to get on board with Newcastle in the Sky 2017, we were more than happy to agree. We saw the coverage last year's edition gained and were more than impressed, so when we were asked this year there was absolutely no doubt we wanted to get involved.

"It's a special week, and I know I've never seen anything like it before. There's a buzz from the chefs and we have the same sort of buzz already in getting ready for August."



Jacqui McKirdy from The Experimental Diner, the team behind Newcastle in the Sky, says the partnership is one year in the planning.

"Last year we ran the event under the 'Dine by the Tyne' name, we had a lot of interest from outside Newcastle with people from cities such as Leeds, Manchester and even London getting in touch. It got us thinking why not let them enjoy the city to its fullest rather than travelling and going home.

"The agreement with Motel One Newcastle makes perfect sense. They're right in the middle of the city and a short walk away from Newcastle's attractions – including the setting of Newcastle in the Sky."

Motel One Newcastle have 222 rooms available from just £59 per night and feature exclusive lighting, HDTVs and free Wi-Fi throughout.  
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You know what it's like, Summer is finally on the horizon and sunnier weather is slowly creeping its way towards the North. Your staff start wanting to move their desks outside to make the most of the nice weather, but the reality is, they can't so they sulk like pubescent teenagers!

It's hard to keep staff morale up, especially when we insist they work during the sunny hours of the day and then only let them go home once the sun has no longer got its hat on. So how can we ensure we keep them smiling, even though they're crying inside?

Well one way is to treat them to a corporate package at Tiger Tiger, where they can get unlimited drinks. Yes, unlimited drinks. Although I am sure that as responsible business owners you wouldn't want your staff to drink to excess, everyone deserves to let their hair down occasionally, so with the fantastic offers going at Tiger Tiger, they can do exactly that and the Finance Director won't have heart failure at the price too!

With prices varying per person per hour, the office will love the opportunity to unwind, enjoy a shandy or two and have some Tiger roaring fun!

With a selection of corporate packages available starting at £12.50 per person per hour, employees are entitled to enjoy standard beer, house wine



and soft drinks during their visit to Tiger Tiger. For a wider selection of drinks available you can also upgrade to £17.50 per person per hour for premium beer, wine and soft drinks.

If you're looking to treat the whole office to this corporate event, Tiger Tiger also offer larger drinks packages, should you really want to treat your loyal workforce!

At £19.50 a head you'll be entitled to premium drinks as well as house spirits and for an additional £3 you'll get access to a range of premium spirits.

If you're thinking of making it an evening of unlimited drinks with the office, then you'll be pleased to find out the shortest stay they offer on the unlimited drinks deal is four hours. If the evening progresses nicely then they'll be able to offer you their longest package at five and a half hours on the unlimited drinks deal.

If this offer sounds like a corporate event you'd like to involve the office in, then you simply need to let Tiger Tiger team know how many people you have going, how many hours you want to stay for and which package you want to purchase. Give their events team a call on 0191 235 7065, after all, don't your staff deserve it?





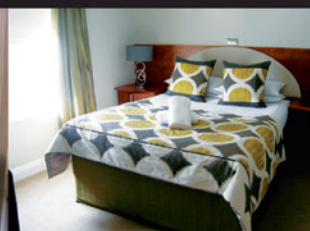
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# MAGICAL MALBEC

Occasionally, an individual grape variety becomes synonymous with a single wine producing country - think Sauvignon Blanc and New Zealand. Even more inextricably linked though is Malbec and Argentina - certainly one of the wine industry's most successful recent partnerships.

Whilst South America is now its new home, the Malbec grape variety originates, and is still important, in South West France, especially in the region of Cahors, a dramatic area bordering the river Lot that meanders through the hills on its way down towards Bordeaux to the west. Here the variety is often known as the Côt or Auxerrois.

At times a difficult grape to grow, Malbec is very susceptible to a great many diseases and pests and has a low tolerance to frost and in the rugged conditions of Cahors it produces equally earthy and rustic wines sometimes known locally as vin noir ("black wine"). At times very tough, chewy and tannic, they can take many years to soften and become approachable, and many producers add 20% or so of Merlot to soften the wine; certainly not a hugely popular wine outside of the local area.

It is thought that Malbec was first taken to Argentina in the mid 19th century and over time it has adapted itself wonderfully to the local conditions - Argentina has many optimal natural conditions for the production of fine wines: a continental and dry climate, great diversity of low

fertility soils, and high altitude and abundant pure melt water courtesy of the Andes Mountains that dominate western Argentina.

The Argentine wine industry has grown hugely in recent times and today Argentina is the fifth largest producer of wine in the world. During this time, the role of Malbec has been fundamental to the success of the industry with the grape being grown in all the wine regions of the country, indeed 35% of all the vineyards in Argentina are planted with Malbec and it represents more than 50% of Argentinian wine sales abroad. Of all the wine regions in Argentina it is Mendoza that has the greatest affinity with the Malbec.

Out of a global total of 40,000 hectares of Malbec vineyards Argentina has 31,000 hectares, more than 75%. France is a distant second with 6,000 hectares. Without doubt Argentina is the world's most important source of this grape variety and indeed it could be said that Argentina has "saved" and rejuvenated Malbec with other countries now looking to devote more attention to this once overlooked grape.

So why has Malbec been so successful in Argentina and why are its wines so fundamentally different from other sources of the variety?

Malbec loves high altitude. Here the greater daily temperature changes - warm days and cold nights - results in wines with greater freshness, elegance, more pronounced fruit flavours and higher levels of acidity. It is this acidity that gives the Argentinian Malbec their structure rather than the more aggressive tannins of their French counterparts. The end result is much more approachable and commercially successful wines full of bold fruit flavours.

A typical Argentinian Malbec is dark purple in appearance, deep and brooding with aromas of black cherry, plum, raspberry, blackberry and blueberry with hints of herbs and warming spice. The palate is full and rounded with generous red and black fruit flavours, soft tannins and gently supporting acidity. The perfect match to all red meats and full flavoured dishes. If you are not already a convert, give Argentinian Malbec a go, you won't be disappointed!

Further information about the aforementioned wine can be found at [www.richardgrangerwines.co.uk](http://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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# A LEGENDARY SUMMER OF FUN



Tyneside is preparing itself for a summer of fun courtesy of the Newcastle Legends, starting next month.

People wondered how the Legends would follow up the hugely-successful "Evening with Floyd Mayweather" and they've done that by announcing that, on May 14th, The Lancastrian Suite will again play host, this time to "Sunday Lunch with Tony Bellew."

The world cruiserweight champion recently put the world to rights when he took care of David Haye, a victory which went down extremely well in boxing circles, none-more-so than in the North East. He'll no doubt be expecting a heroes welcome!

Steve Wraith will then take his brainchild, Entertainers events, to Darlington and the Dolphin Centre for the first time on May 20th.

The former Newcastle United stars, a selection of players who made a name for themselves under Kevin Keegan during the nineties, head to Darlington for what is expected to be the first of many events there. On show will be Steve Howey, Keith Gillespie, John Beresford and Ruel Fox, a quartet who, combined, made over 420 appearances for the Magpies.

May 25th sees Wylam Breweries acting the venue for what promises to be a fond farewell for indie all-stars, The Longsands. The five-piece are bidding farewell to the music industry after two albums, numerous tours, high profile outings, and all those gigs.

Consisting of Trevor Cox, Ian Barnes, David Stanyer, Callum Thompson and Paul Stephenson, we may also see an appearance from former band member, Gary Ormston, as he's been sneaking into events recently. But, after the success of albums "Meet Me in Spanish City" and "Us & Them" it's time to call it a day, and in expected style.

At the end of June Steve Wraith will play host to an evening at the Copthorne Hotel alongside John Beresford and comedian Rudi West in aid of the Heel & Toe Children's Charity (email jane@heelandtoe.org.uk for tickets).

Then in July there's the small matter of an evening with Darren Peacock followed on July 9th, by the second Pavel Cup in memory of iconic, former Newcastle United goalkeeper, Pavel Srnicek, at the UTS Stadium in Dunston in aid of St Oswald's Hospice.

Exciting and successful last summer, this year's has the added memorial of it being the tenth anniversary of the passing of Felling FC legend, Chris Heron – double the memorial, double the spectacle and lots of summer sun too.

The summer will also see the arrival of a few books from the Mojo Risin' Publishing camp including Operation Acid: The Downfall of Charlie Kray, an already much-hyped publication.





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## SOHE NEW MENU LAUNCH PARTY

Asian-fusion cuisine hotspot Sohe recently launched its Spring-Summer menu with the help of the Jesmond elite who turned out to try the new tastes on offer.

Samples of the latest dishes were given out and thirsts were quenched by the exciting cocktail combinations which have been introduced to the extensive drinks choice. Educating guests on the sushi side of the menu was specialist chef Wai Pang – otherwise known as Walter – who mastered his skills at famous Japanese restaurant Nobu in Miami and London's prestigious Aqua Kyoto. He staged a live demonstration of crafting sushi rolls at a pop-up bar to show what goes on behind the scenes, which proved particularly popular with party-goers. Diners also made the most of the two courses and 'Bottomless Fizz' promotion which is available every day including weekends (limited times only, see website for details). Visit Sohe on Osborne Road to enjoy the new offering first hand.







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## VIP RELAUNCH EVENING AT ORANGEGRASS THAI

One of South Shields' favourite restaurants reopened its doors for a remarkable VIP relaunch evening after recently undergoing a £10,000 refurbishment. A selection of South Shields businesses and press were invited to enjoy an evening of celebration, welcome drinks and complimentary food from Orangegrass' new menu.

Along with their new menu and redesigned interior, guests were entertained by traditional Thai dancing, beautiful vocals from Annabel Pattinson and magic from the magnificent Ryan Phelps to applaud Orangegrass Thai Oriental Cuisine's 10th birthday.

Orangegrass Thai  
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[www.orangegrass.biz](http://www.orangegrass.biz)





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# A PROFOUND RELAXATION THERAPY TO HELP COMBAT STRESS AND ANXIETY



Registered nurse Helen Storey is bringing a profound relaxation therapy from the US to the region to help people suffering from stress, anxiety and insomnia.

Unavailable in the region until now, Helen is hoping that the 'M' Technique relaxation therapy will provide much needed support to people suffering from stress and anxiety as well as helping terminally ill patients and those with life changing conditions.

Helen was introduced to the 'M' Technique when her late husband Ian was undergoing extensive, invasive treatment for a terminal brain tumour and was offered the treatment through a local hospice.

The therapy provided instant relief to Ian, so the couple were devastated to discover that the therapy was not generally available in the North East and once Ian had used up his sessions at the hospice, they were unable to access it anymore.

Determined to continue to offer her husband the benefits of the therapy, Helen decided to put her years of nursing experience and caring for others to good use to train as an 'M' Technique practitioner and completed an accredited training programme in 2016.

Sadly, Ian lost his battle with cancer before Helen fully qualified, but Helen is now hoping that she can help others to experience the same benefits of the relaxation therapy.

Northern Insight Magazine met up with Helen to find out more about the therapy and how it can help.

## What is The 'M' Technique Used For?

The 'M' Technique, which is widely used in the US, was initially introduced as a palliative therapy for patients with life limiting illnesses to help induce a state of profound relaxation. In recent years however, whilst still used to ease the suffering of cancer patients and others with terminal illness, the gentle hands-on treatment which increases the flow of oxygen to the brain, is increasingly being used to help people suffering with stress, anxiety, insomnia, MS, dementia and fibromyalgia.

## What exactly is The 'M' Technique?

The 'M' Technique is a method of gentle, structured touch allowing you to deeply relax and to quickly allow the mind to unwind and let go of any inner turmoil.

Each movement is repeated a set number of times with the same very light pressure. It is carried out on the back, back of legs, face, head, neck, shoulders, arms, hands and front of the legs and feet. The rationale for the set pattern of gentle touch carried out is to build up confidence and

remove anxiety in the receiver. At first you will notice and pay attention to what is being done. The second time you will recognise the pattern of touch and the third time you will know what is going to happen and begin to relax. By carrying out these movements three times you will be lulled into a deep state of relaxation in a very short time.

The 'M' is very different to massage and brain imaging shows it working on different areas of the brain. It is more akin to meditation and is therefore more relaxing.

## Is The 'M' Technique Medically Proven?

Because the 'M' Technique was initially introduced on a high dependency unit in the States, its background is very much in traditional medicine and is supported by scientific research which shows that an increase in oxygen to the brain can help to promote profound relaxation.

## Where is the 'M' Technique available?

Helen was unable to find a private therapist in the North East when she searched for her husband which is why she made the decision to train and set up her own dedicated home-based therapy room in North Tyneside where she offers the treatment to a wide range of clients.



**WEDDING  
OPEN DAY**  
Sunday 11th June, 1-4pm



## CONTACT US

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# EARLY DETECTION MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE



Unlike most women, Amanda always checked her breasts on a regular basis, so when she discovered a lump on the side of her right breast she was distraught.

## Here she tells us her story:

"After finding a lump on my right breast, I didn't want to wait for an appointment; I decided to go through my private medical insurance to be seen quicker. They provided me with the details of three consultants who I could call to arrange a consultation.

"I rang Spire Washington Hospital and spoke to a very efficient adviser who was extremely helpful and sympathetic. I arranged an appointment to see Mr Bhatti, for just three days' time. I was relieved to know I'd be seen so soon.

"I attended my consultation with Mr Bhatti who I found to be caring and understanding. He examined me and immediately put my mind at ease. On the same evening I underwent a mammogram, ultrasound and biopsy. I was petrified and feared the worst, but Mr Bhatti and the staff at Spire

Washington Hospital provided me with plenty of reassurance. I was advised on the night that the lump would have to be removed but it was unclear what it was.

"Just two days later I returned for the official results. I was advised it was not cancer and there was nothing to be concerned about - I was ecstatic! An appointment was made for me to attend the hospital just over a week later, to have the lump removed.

"When I returned for surgery the staff were outstanding. I met so many different staff in varying capacities and each one of them were extremely professional in their role. I underwent my procedure which was a great success, I was only in for the day but I received fantastic care.

"I then had a follow-up appointment to discover that the lump was in fact a benign tumour. Mr

Bhatti checked my wound and was happy with my progress. He said he would see me in six months but advised me that if I had any problems or concerns, I could contact him any time.

"Mr Bhatti was a very polite, professional and friendly gentleman. I would have no hesitation recommending him and can't thank him – or the wider team at Spire Washington Hospital – enough."

Mr Bhatti says: "Self-examination of the breasts is extremely important and should be done by every woman once per month. If there are any unusual findings, such as a lump, tenderness, nipple discharge or change in size or shape of the breast, these should be immediately reported to a GP or consultant. Detecting cancers at an early stage makes all the difference in the treatment of breast cancer."

For information about Spire Washington Hospital and the services they provide, or if you'd like to find out more about inSpire – Spire's exclusive private medical plan – contact one of their friendly customer service advisers on 0191 448 9645.





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## ON THE TEE BOX

At Macdonald Linden Hall Golf and Country Club

### Location

Situated just north of the village of Longhorsley on the A697, just 5 minutes off the A1.

### Setting

The course offers panoramic views of the Cheviots, Coquet Island and the Northumberland coastline.

### Length of course

White tees 6502 yards; Yellow tees 6117 yards; Red tees 5530 yards.

### Course type

Our championship golf course at Macdonald Linden Hall Golf & Country Club is one of the most picturesque in the area. 18 holes are spread across our large private estate, ensuring a secluded, beautiful and satisfying round. Designed by highly regarded course architect Jonathan Gaunt, the par 72 parkland course has wide, undulating USGA specification greens and 4 memorable yet challenging par 3's. Several unique water hazards and strategically placed bunkers lie in wait for unlucky golfers at a number of holes.

### Facilities

18 hole championship golf course with fully stocked pro-shop, putting green & short game area, practice nets. Buggy & club hire available. For refreshments, the golfer's lounge in the Linden Tree Pub is the perfect place to quench your thirst and dissect your round.

### Nearest the Pin

Linden boasts a great set of par 3 holes, all four of which are under 150

yards from both Red & Yellow markers; all very picturesque but don't lose concentration as water comes in to play on each one; middle of the green on any one and you'll have a great opportunity for birdie.

### Toughest Hole

The 400 yard par four tenth hole, 'Avenue Wood' is stroke index one. A challenging dog-leg right makes for a tough tee-shot; too far left and you run out of fairway in to some penal rough, yet bite too much off to the right and the trees await. If you do manage to find the fairway, a mid to long iron second shot to a green well protected on all sides by bunkers. Definitely a hole to be happy with a par and walk to the next tee.

### Signature Hole

Hole 13 'Cedar' is a 547 yard double dog-leg par 5 and a true risk reward hole. Only the longest hitters have a chance to go for the green in two but even those choosing to lay-up are faced with a daunting 3rd to a small green, well protected by water waiting to swallow up any shot coming up short.

### A word from the Club Manager

Linden Hall has been regarded as one of the best layouts that the rich golf offering in Northumberland boasts. A stern test for even the most discerning of golfer, yet a course that can still be enjoyed by all age groups & ability levels. We'd love to see you here over the summer months, call or go online to book a round and come and experience Linden for yourself.

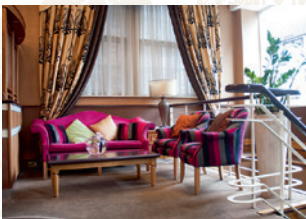
### Prices

Summer green fees from just £15pp Full adult memberships available from £325, juniors under 18 are free when a parent or guardian joins. Society golf offers available from just £35pp.





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