

NORTHERN

INSIGHT

MAY 2018



AERO NETWORKS: ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER CHAPTER

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

issue 35

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John F Kennedy

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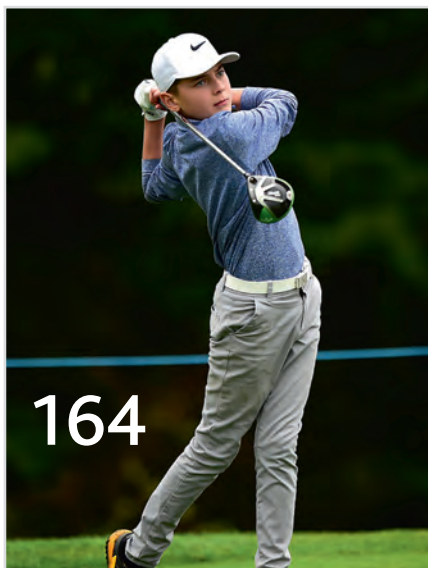
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FOREWORD

Welcome to the May edition of Northern Insight

As we approach our 3rd anniversary I am delighted to bring you our biggest issue to date and one I am immensely proud of.

Our cover stars are the Cloud and IT specialists Aero Networks who reflect on their recent accomplishments and plans for a prosperous future.

We visit Durham's newest luxury hotel, Hotel Indigo which is a fantastic new leisure, accommodation and business facility in the Cathedral city.

Look out also for the pick of the region's top social events of the past month including the inaugural Rob Armstrong Celebratory Dinner and the North East premiere of Sting's Last Ship at Northern Stage.

Following on from the last issue we showcase the ABCurry Club Primary to Prosperity event where I was delighted to be a guest speaker.

Overall something for everyone and much to enjoy and enthuse.

Thank you for your continued support.
Till next month.

M.J. Grahamslaw
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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OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALLIST ANNOUNCED AS BRAND AMBASSADOR



Olympic gold medallist Jonathan Edwards CBE has joined forces with Team Cycles, based on the Team Valley in Gateshead, as its brand ambassador.

Team Cycles offers a wide range of road, mountain, hybrid and cross bikes including the latest models from top brands Cipollini, Whyte, Trek and Lapierre.

Jonathan said: "Cycling is a growing sport throughout the UK and across the world. Living in the North East I was looking for a local bike store to service my bike and also provide me with the latest cycle accessories and models. I was hugely impressed when I visited the store and wanted to

help the team spread the word about the services and products it has on offer."

Barry Wilkinson, Team Cycles Managing Director, said: "Team Cycles is delighted to have someone with Jonathan's profile and reputation on board as a brand ambassador. We are looking forward to working with him and raising awareness of the benefits of cycling as a sport."

Team Cycles opened in 2013 and has quickly proven to be one of the most innovative independently owned bike shops in the North East. It is managed by Richard Smith, who has been involved with bikes for 30 years.

Richard said: "We are a four-strong team who are all fanatical about cycling. Between us we have a vast range of expertise which is drawn from experience on the road and a very keen knowledge of current and future trends and developments."

Jonathan still holds the world record for the longest triple jump ever at 18m 29cm. He is former Olympic, World, Commonwealth and European champion. Following his retirement as an athlete, Jonathan has worked as a TV sports commentator. He now uses cycling as his number one sport for both fitness and pleasure.

SIMPLY BOWS AND CHAIR COVERS PASS ON KNOWLEDGE IN NEW VENTURE

North East entrepreneur Sarah Pittendrigh has launched a new consultancy firm that aims to support the next generation of business leaders.

Founder of the award-winning event linen business Simply Bows and Chair Covers, Sarah is now looking to support other business owners with the knowledge she has gained from her own journey.

Sarah, who turned her life around after facing bankruptcy, started Simply Bows and Chair Covers after spotting a gap in the market for luxury chair decor and table linen at events. From there she transformed her idea into a lucrative business that has gone on to be franchised across the UK and awarded numerous business accolades.

Sarah's experience of success and failure has now driven her to launch Sarah Pittendrigh Consultancy.

Sarah said: "I feel that over the years I have gained such varied experience. Those highs and lows mean I can use my hindsight to give guidance to business start-ups, which is something I would have benefitted from at all stages in my career. I act as a non-executive director to owners wanting to grow their company and I offer one-on-one life coaching sessions as well as workplace consultancy."



There are no shortcuts to creating a brand.



NEWCASTLE COLLEGE CELEBRATES SUCCESS WITH FIRST APPRENTICESHIP AWARDS

Apprentices and companies from across the region were recently honoured in a glitzy ceremony at The Copthorne Hotel as Newcastle College held its first Apprenticeship Awards. The evening saw students, staff and employers come together to celebrate achievements made within the College's apprenticeship programme over the past year.

Nine awards were up for grabs on the night, including three surprise awards for Apprenticeship Employer of the Year, Skills Trainer of the Year and Outstanding Apprentice of the Year.

The College's Apprenticeships team were tasked with deciding Apprentice Employer of the Year. The team awarded the honour to Northumbrian Water, noting that the company has made a lengthy commitment to invest in their current workforce through apprenticeships.

Newcastle College's relationships with local employers are key to the success of its apprenticeship programme, allowing it to develop courses which can address skill gaps and meet industry demand.



TOP RATED GATESHEAD HOTEL CHANGES HANDS

Tyneside-based Eslington Villa has recently been sold through specialist business property adviser Christie & Co. Boasting top ratings on TripAdvisor, the hotel is situated in Low Fell, one of Gateshead's most desirable residential suburbs.

The 19th century building offers 18 luxurious bedrooms, a wonderful dining conservatory overlooking two acres of wooded grounds, a comfortable lounge/bar and a function room ideal for private dining and parties.

The sale, which was conducted entirely off market, marks the end of an era for previous owners Nick and Melanie Tulip, who have considerably built up the business since the 1980s.

New owners Nicky Tucker and Jim Johnson said: "Both being Low Fell residents, we were fully aware of the reputation of Eslington Villa. When Mark suggested the possibility of an off-market deal, we couldn't turn down the chance to own it."

The specialist leisure and hospitality team at Newcastle based Mincoffs Solicitors advised the buyer on the transaction.



CRAMLINGTON PENSIONERS GET EGGCITED AT EASTER

Freemasons in Northumberland recently paid a surprise visit to a Cramlington care home to deliver bags full of Easter eggs.

Tom Stewart, Secretary of The Northumberland Chapter of the Widows Son's Masonic Bikers Association, arranged for the eggs to be donated to residents at Scarborough Court care home in Cramlington.

Tom said: "It was a pleasure to meet the staff and residents and spend quality time chatting with them. That's the final delivery of chocolate Easter eggs done now for 2018. In total we've distributed around 400 to special schools and to Scarborough Court."

The Widows Sons is open to all Freemasons who enjoy the sport of motorcycling. They have recently helped many great causes by buying equipment for schools and charities. This has included the Greggs Children's Cancer Run, IT equipment for special schools and tricycles for Hexham Priory School.



TETRAD APPOINTS CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Fast growing recruitment specialist Tetrad has appointed Kelly Adamson to its board as chief executive officer.

Kelly's professional career spans strategic HR and recruitment. She was appointed North East regional director of the Recruitment Employment Confederation in 2008, a role that sees her act as spokesperson on matters such as skills.

From its restored grade 2 listed offices in Ward Jackson

Park, Hartlepool, Tetrad has a growing customer base spread across the North. This includes Redu Ltd in Seaham and Teesside tech business Phusion IM.

Neil Stephenson, Chairman of Tetrad, said: "Kelly has more than 20 years' experience, so we are delighted to have someone of her calibre leading the business. Kelly brings a reputation for delivering excellence and has a real passion for growth. She joins Tetrad at a pivotal time with the business about to enter its second year and embarking on a major expansion drive."

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

IAN SMITH

Owner, Virtus Global



What has been your career path so far?

It was a huge ambition from my early teenage years to be Royal Marine Commando, my Grandfather was part of an elite military unit in World War 2. I was delighted to join in 2004, I knew from an early stage I was going to excel as I was awarded a "Diamond" which is only given to the top recruits. I was a member of 45 Commando and served in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

Upon leaving in 2011 I moved into the private sector, firstly maritime security where I operated in and around the Indian Ocean and East/West coast of Africa. Career progression was rapid as I advanced to Operations Manager in land-based security supporting international companies in the Middle East and North Africa, diversifying in Business Development and In Country Management.

I was in Iraq when Islamic State began their offensive, it provided a great experience and offered many challenges.

What inspired you to form Virtus Global?

Emerging markets provide a great opportunity for business, coupled with the unfortunate world we live in with the complexities and commitment of a travelling work force. I felt I had all the pieces of the jigsaw needed to set up an International Risk Management Company (with now Corporate Travel). Where others were directing companies to the FCO website as they didn't have the experience or knowledge to advise or support companies when they travel, Virtus does.

What services do you provide?

Travel services, from flights and accommodation to personal concierge, through to in country profiles, travel policies, bespoke risk management personalised to each company and their needs.

We can take you safely and cost effectively from planning your journey right through to your safe return, effectively reducing the risks involved in international business and travel. The personnel we have are hugely experienced and can support you in every continent: Asia, Africa, North America, South

America, Europe, the Middle East and Australia.

We minimise the risk so it's worth the reward.

What is your proudest achievement so far?

Joining the Marines. In business I am still awaiting my proudest achievement although I am proud that we are the first company to offer this comprehensive service. Adding our eLearning course to our arsenal is an invaluable tool and something that we offer complimentary to those who book international travel with Virtus.

What is the biggest challenge you have faced so far?

Re-writing the "rule book". We live in a world of daily incidents, whether terrorism, natural disasters or an accident. My passion is to encourage businesses to travel safely. It is better to be prepared for an incident than to not be. Trying to remove the thought process that companies have of 'it hasn't happened so far' – this doesn't mean it can't or won't. I want international travellers to come home safely to their friends and family.

I spoke to a company who said we don't need risk management if something goes wrong our insurance covers it?!.....I wonder what their employees would think, or their clients if they knew the Managements attitude towards their duty of care!

Companies pay for health and safety advisors in the UK but will send employees internationally with no real procedures or policies to ensure safety in place.

What is your companies USP?

Offering both Corporate Travel and Risk Management

– We have the knowledge and skills not to only organise and book travel but to advise – nobody else is doing this in house. Virtus makes it easier and more convenient for companies with one company handling all their travel needs, allowing them to direct their attention to grow their business, we take the travel headache away.

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

Follow your passion and not a pay cheque.

Who are your Heroes in and out of business?

Celebrity - Dana White, his business acumen and achievements are admirable.

Personal - I have two, my wife, she is the International GM for an Engineering company. She defines hard working; her work ethic is second to none. She completes tasks in time frames that seem impossible and can pull profit from margins that would also appear to be impossible. First in the office and last out the office – a great leader.

The second is a gentleman who taught me to work at a different level to anyone or any company. I had skills and experience and operated at a high level, however working with this gentleman took me to the next level, giving me a new perspective on service, quality and elitism.

How would you describe yourself?

Risk aware not risk averse.

How do you like to unwind?

Walking my 2 dogs, the gym and playing golf.

AERO NETWORKS: ANOTHER YEAR, ANOTHER CHAPTER

Cloud and IT Specialists company Aero Networks, have been in the works since May 2006.

Each year they continue to create a new and revolutionising face to cloud technology, by providing professional and sophisticated services for their clientele. The family owned business have established themselves as experienced cloud technology consultants and have many more promising plans for the future.

Since Aero Networks' last cover article in May 2017's issue, the company has further advanced and developed their Cloud Platform offering. Below entails a small and personal interview with Directors, Paul Curry and Ben Curry. Together, they discuss the accomplishments and prosperous future of Aero Networks.

What makes Aero Networks the go-to company for specialised Cloud and IT services in the North East?

Ben comments "We have adapted quickly to the recent and ongoing changes in Cloud Technology. We have a great understanding of the latest technologies, and we are always looking ahead to embrace new products as they become available."

Aero Networks have made a successful name for themselves, which continues to grow with each chapter in their business journey. They provide clientele with specialist services, and an established, friendly rapport, allowing them to highly advance from other IT and Cloud companies in the North East. They have taken an advantage to the current uprising of cloud technologies, allowing the company to strive forward and utilise their services each year. Aero Networks provide professional Cloud and IT services such as SharePoint, office 365, Hosted Exchange Email, Cloud File Storage and Cloud Data Backup. These services are extremely coherent and synced with modern day technologies, and are especially valuable to those in the SME sector.

From your perspective, how do you see the business advancing in 2018?

Paul comments "We started 2018 with a view to simplify our product offering, allowing us to offer a more specialist approach when designing solutions. We use selected partners for our other services, allowing us to focus on our core areas of expertise. IT Consultancy, Office 365 and SharePoint. We also achieved Microsoft Silver Partner status last

summer, further enhancing our commitment to clients and the cloud."

Aero Networks has continued to adapt their company through learning about the importance of cloud technologies, and what they have to offer. Since the future of modern day IT technology is predominantly within cloud, the company has utilised the aspects of Office 365 and SharePoint, and currently offer these products as part of their services. These Microsoft products hold such an extraordinary presence in the Cloud and IT industries, allowing Aero Networks to further advance. Director Ben Curry has been able to intensively learn the ins and outs of Office 365, to extend his IT knowledge, and further extend the ever-promising future of the company. The company's knowledge and service of Office 365 and SharePoint, is another two out of the endless reasons for why companies start their journey together with Aero Networks.

How has being a family owned company shaped the promising future for Aero Networks?

Paul comments "Family first is the answer to that. We all have a common goal. Look after the team, the clients and grow the business."

With guidance from father, Paul, and son, Ben, Aero Networks have established a bright and encouraging future on their horizons. Ben became a part of Aero Networks in 2014, and has solidly thrived alongside his father, and the rest of the team, to mould and create the company that it is today. Being connected to such a family led company, automatically assures clients with a sense of authenticity, solidarity and trust, as family always comes first. Managing Director, Paul, is straightforward and concise when it comes to establishing Aero Networks' relationships with its clientele. The rapport between companies and clients is a necessity for all, and Aero Networks make it their priority.

With a friendly smile at Aero Networks, we always welcome any company to get in touch if you have any interest in creating a future with us, or simply want to know more about our IT and Cloud services. If you are interested in any of the services or products we provide, including Office 365 and SharePoint, we can offer you a free demonstration or trial, to see if it suits you.

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'WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE'

“When performance is measured, performance improves. When performance is measured and reported the rate of improvement accelerates.”

Thomas S Monson

Having worked with numerous businesses I have often been fascinated by the impact putting a spotlight on certain metrics can have on performance. The challenge in this data accessible age is where to put the spotlight. A long list of key performance indicators is difficult to manage. For employees it can become a never ending journey where ultimate success and satisfaction always seem just out of reach.

Do you know 'what' or 'who' is driving your profit growth?

Take some time to analyse your business performance, breaking down your sales into appropriate segments, understanding your profit margins and establishing who are your most profitable customers? Internally who is performing, who is stalling and who is hitching a ride? Do you have effective measures to manage the performance of your team?

A balanced scorecard approach to measurement

Having clear financial goals is not enough. Work out the most important metrics for measuring the performance of your employees, your customer satisfaction, your operational delivery as well as having clear financial targets. Creating a long term sustainable business requires a clear focus on your people and customers. A balanced scorecard approach gives you a 360 degree view of the business and will increase the likelihood of reaching your ultimate vision.

Are your measurements supporting your purpose, values and vision?

The 'why' is what makes your business unique.



Andrew Silver

Your vision and values provide the roadmap. Make sure that when you are setting your metrics they support rather than detract from your company goals.

Make them relevant to your business priorities

A recent McKinsey article 'Harnessing the power of performance management' talks about how successful companies link employees performance goals to business priorities. People need to understand the relevance of their performance metrics to the overall success of the business.

Are you playing golf whilst your team are playing hockey?

Having identified your key performance indicators you have just started the journey to ensuring what gets measured gets done. Having bold objectives and headline KPIs is great but the achievement of such will depend on what your employees are doing day in, day out and whether they are playing the same game. Create a consistent and uniform approach to reporting at all levels of the organisation.

Can't see the wood for the trees – make it visual

It is important to take the time to analyse what is

driving your business results. Getting the metrics right is critical and you might not have the system to measure some, straightaway. Create a timeline for having a reportable set of measures and find a way to make it visual. We are all time poor so make it easy to digest and remember not everyone is data hungry. Products such as Microsoft's Power BI or Futrli can translate your data into engaging and real time dashboards.

Performance management framework

Having clear measures will not in itself drive performance. We now know the score but how do we manage the teams to put the ball in the back of the net! The rest is down to how your organisation inspires performance and the quality of management and leadership. Great companies get the right people on the bus and then have a culture of engagement where employees are involved, accountable, psychologically safe and celebrated.

Get started today

Start the measurement challenge today. The ultimate success is not just about having aspirational goals it is the ability to measure your progress towards achieving them on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. What are your measurements?

Andrew Silver is the owner of 360 Growth Partners who identify, coordinate and make the adjustments businesses need to accelerate growth. For more information go to www.360growthpartners.co.uk or e-mail start@360growthpartners.co.uk



**ROB ARMSTRONG
CELEBRATORY DINNER**

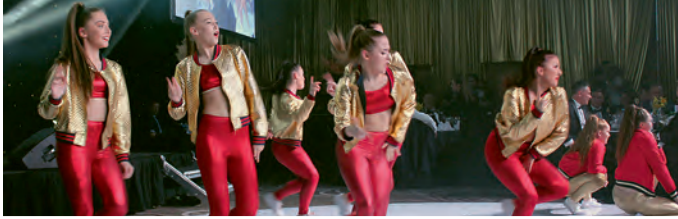
Around 400 people attended the inaugural Rob Armstrong Celebratory Dinner at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead.

Entertainment was provided by ex Jersey Boys star Ryan Molloy who sang classics from his role as Frankie Valli.

Although not in attendance on the night, video messages were shown from Jonny Wilkinson, Alan Shearer, Rafa Benitez and Kevin Keegan.

A magnificent £101,800 was raised for Hadrian School in Pendower.





NORTH SHIELDS ACCOUNTANCY FIRM TO TURN THE 'TUN'



A North Shields pub has been unveiled as the location of a new corporate HQ for growing accountancy firm Blu Sky, as part of a £200,000 investment to renovate the old 'Tun' into a unique office space.

The 100, known as the 'Tun' to locals, has been in existence for decades. The pub will now be completely refurbished and launched as the revamped headquarters for Blu Sky.

Jon Dudgeon, Partner at Blu Sky, said: "We've been searching for new office premises for quite some time but could never quite find the kind of space that suited our type of business. I walk past the Tun every day and could see that it had real potential with the right vision and investment."

The offices have been designed by Blake Hopkinson Architects and are currently under construction by North East building firm JD joinery and Building Services.

SENIOR APPOINTMENT MARKS CONTINUED GROWTH FOR BALDWINS



A North East accountancy practice has expanded its corporate finance team to help satisfy increasing demand for its services.

Baldwins, a CogitalGroup company, has appointed experienced dealmaker Graham Cornforth as the new corporate finance director of the firm's North East team.

With almost 20 years' experience working with entrepreneurial owner-managed businesses, Graham is passionate about helping clients realise their ambitions. At Baldwins, he will be responsible for advising on a range of

transactional work, including structuring and negotiating management buyouts, business disposals and corporate acquisitions.

Speaking about his new role, Graham said: "It's exciting to be part of one of the UK's fastest-growing accountancy firms. The company boasts an incredibly strong corporate finance offering that constantly delivers outstanding results for clients. I'm looking forward to helping the team build upon its success in the North East."

ACCOUNTANCY FIRM AWARDED WITH SILVER AWARD



Newcastle-based accountancy firm Robson Laidler has achieved a silver award in the North East's Better Health at Work programme and is now going for gold.

Heralded as an example of improving workplace health, The Better Health at Work Award is a unique partnership between all 12 of the region's Local Authorities, the NHS and the Northern TUC.

To achieve the award, Robson Laidler has invested in new staff facilities to encourage healthier ways of travelling to and from work, including a new shower cubicle and changing area, garage for bike storage and a bike to work scheme. It has also launched a new staff dining area with healthy snacks and free fruit and water.

Robson Laidler also holds regular stress and cancer awareness sessions and has set up its own walking group, in which some members recently completed the Three Peaks Challenge to raise over £2000 for charity.



HARRY GETS BACK ON THE SADDLE TO FORM BUSINESS

A talented young rider has set up his own eventing business with support from business advisors and accountants Robson Laidler.

Harry Mutch, 20 from Holywell in North Tyneside, has set up Harry Mutch Eventing Limited after falling from his horse and suffering a severe leg hematoma last year.

Harry Mutch Evening Limited is housed at the Manor House in Holywell and includes stables and a large indoor arena with a wax track surface, dressage mirrors and a full course of show jumps. There is also a large field of cross country jumps for training. Harry now offers a schooling service in dressage, show jumping and cross country.

The new firm had business support and accountancy advice from Robson Laidler Accountants in Jesmond, who have set the business up on cloud-based accounting software Xero.

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INVESTMENT IN SOFTWARE DOESN'T HAVE TO BE AS EXPENSIVE AS YOU THINK



Software is everywhere. In every part of business, the use of new software applications is transforming the way that companies operate in terms of their understanding of the world and the connections they make with their customers.

Varied fields, such as SaaS, engineering and Blockchain are capturing the attention of the media, but there are applications in companies large and small from every corner of commerce.

New software can smooth the way we work, add vital clarity over what happens for the team and make extra income among other benefits. The way that these are applied can literally transform processes and procedures for the better, making a brighter future. This can be for one or more of a number of reasons –

- To innovate and stay ahead of the competition
- Automating processes to save costs and boost revenue
- Online commerce options to widen a market for products and services

The North East is a hotbed of digital progress and these solutions are often not that far away. People and businesses are moving to online and mobile options for their everyday transactions and this means the agile company must cater for this. The trend is that the investment in software has become much more bespoke over the last few years. In the past, off the shelf solutions were chosen because of cost. As expertise has risen, there are bespoke software solutions produced that serve a specific purpose and don't cost the earth. The trend is to get

a business to make something that is unique and personalised.

Building a unique future

And this is one of the ways that any business can differentiate itself from its rivals. Being able to offer products, services, cost savings or anything else for that matter, that nobody else does or can do is a great definition of competitive advantage. And that's something that all business strives for.

This can happen for a small business now in a way that never happened before. Using an in-house developer or contracting someone to build from the ground up is within reach now more than ever. Although these costs are a lot lower than they were in the past, every investment made by business is assessed for ROI and must more than pay its way to make it worthwhile. It can be a worry for small business to spend and not know if the results are positive enough to provide that vital return.

But it doesn't always have to be this way. There is a government incentive that can help business across the North East and beyond offset some of the costs of developing new software and lessening the potential risk of this.

Risk is at the centre of any business. The UK government has recognised this and wants to help. Through HMRC, they have established R&D tax credits that are designed to reward any business

that invests in software, as well as other areas of investment, to progress their business. The idea behind it is that this investment increases our understanding and makes the UK a more competitive place. With Brexit on the way, this is becoming more vital to our position in the global pecking order.

Finding a partner to help you with this

Getting software produced takes up enough of your valuable time in terms of ideas, planning and testing. The last thing you want to do at the end of this process is to start negotiation with HMRC regarding your R&D tax credit claim. That's where you need the help of an expert. You should look for someone that has a track record in dealing with R&D tax to ensure that your claim is processed in an orderly, effective and timely manner.

At Harlands, we have a 100% record with the HMRC in terms of submitting claims. This doesn't mean we don't get asked queries from HMRC. However, we know our stuff inside out, and this means we are able to produce the reports needed that answer all the question HMRC have. It only takes us around half an hour of our time to understand your business and where your investment in software is eligible for an R&D tax claim. The average size of a claim we submit on behalf of our clients is over £35k and this translates to a large sum of money coming back into a business.



FARMERS CAN NOW BE GETTING MORE OUT OF THEIR CASH?

A portal that helps professionals, individuals and companies enhance returns on savings is now increasing Farmer's cash returns and providing them with increased deposit protection.

Recent figures released by the Government in the Farm Business Survey show the average net worth of farms sits between £1.14 million for spare and part-time farms to £3.85 million for very large farms, largely driven by land values and other assets.

As cash balances continue to increase as Brexit uncertainty leads British farmers to stockpile more cash, Cascade Cash Management asks the question 'Are farmers getting the most out of their cash?'

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

The service's online portal is the only one of its kind in the UK allowing independent and unbiased cash solutions meaning that clients don't have to choose only one bank. With the online portal and Cascade's on-hand client support team, all banks are accessed quickly and easily, on a daily basis.

Managing director, Dr Emma Black, said: "Some assets are difficult or costly to convert to cash quickly and so many advisers use the liquidity ratio as a measure used for assessing the short

term financial viability of farms. The data released reports that the average total current assets (i.e. cash, savings or stock) to average current liabilities (i.e. debt obligations) of farms is 224%, indicating that the majority of farms continue to hold strong cash buffers to meet their short term financial obligations.

"Our experience tells us that most British farmers are banking with one of the top four's agriculture divisions, namely HSBC UK, Barclays Bank, Lloyds Bank and RBS. Cash tends to be held in a core current account with some linked savings accounts offered. Rates on these accounts tend to be low. On the average cash balance of £500,000, British farmers could expect to earn 0.00% on current account balances and up to only 0.45% with their existing provider subject to earning a loyalty rate (equating up to £2,250 annually) or 0.20% with a new provider (equating up to £1,000 annually)."

In contrast, the best rates available to Farmers in the market are much higher when looking outside of the top four and these can all be accessed through the Cascade Cash portal. On Instant Access, rates in the top quartile range from 0.45% to 1.50%, up to £6,500 more per year than remaining with the top

four. Over a 10-year period, making the most of your cash could earn British farmers up to an extra £65,000 on Instant Access alone. For those that can spread cash deposits across different maturities, rates step up to 1.50% on 90-day notice periods and 1.86% on 1-year fixed terms."

While earning better returns is a primary motivation to switching savings accounts, depositor protection guarantee schemes also allow for cash to be placed on separate banking licences to achieve full compensation should the provider fail. The current limit is £85,000 per banking licence so by placing for example a £500,000 cash holding across 6 different banks and building societies, British farmers could fully protect their capital in the event that any one provider fail.

Increasing cash returns while reducing risk makes professional cash management a key priority for 2018 for those in agriculture. The Cascade team can administer funds on behalf of clients and savers are provided with direct access to the online portal to view all of their accounts in one place. Partners including IFA's, solicitors, attorneys, accountants and many more can also self-brand the product for presentation to their own clients.

For those wishing to learn more, please visit www.Cascade.co.uk or call 0191 481 3777 to find out how much more your cash could be earning.



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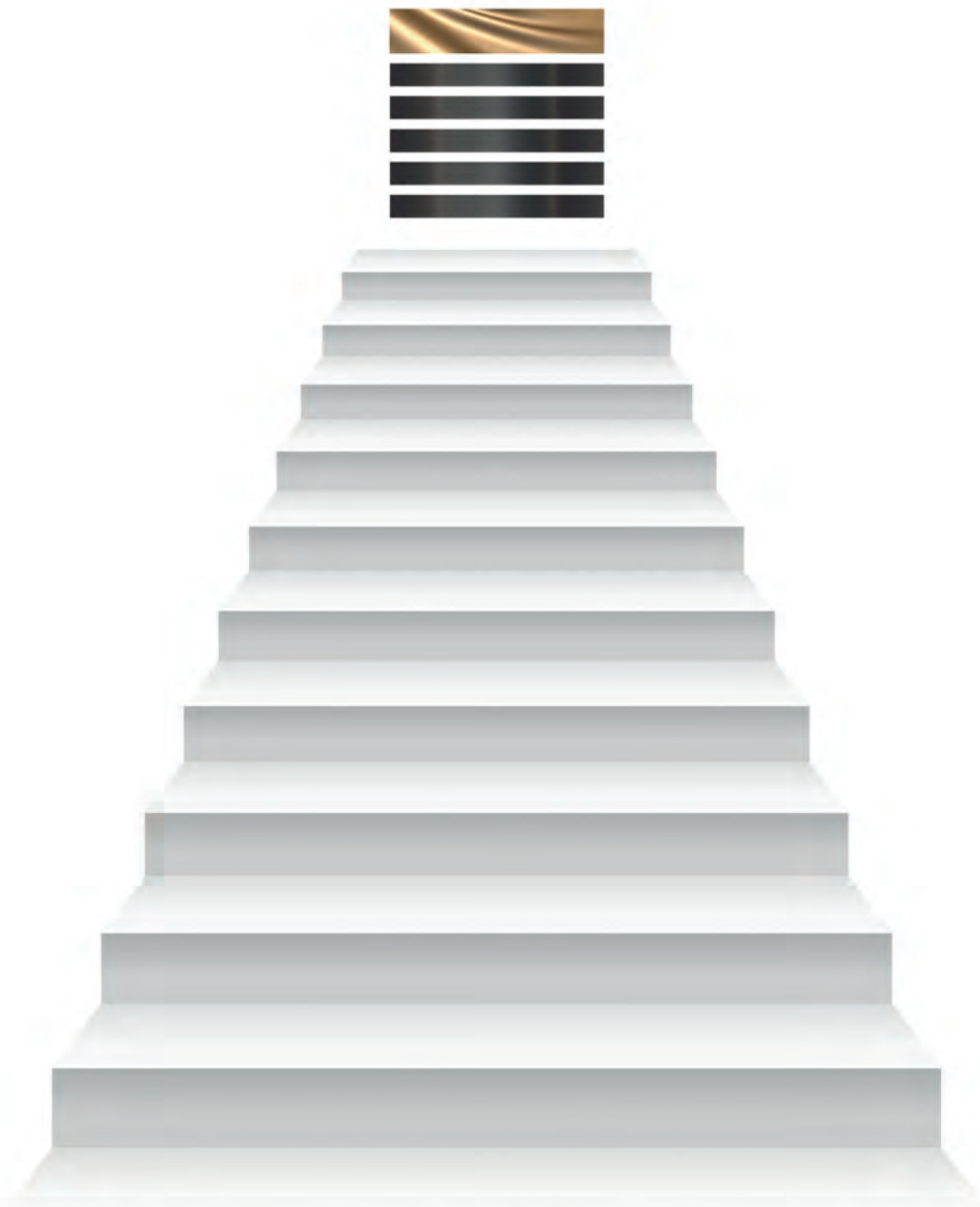
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COMFORTABLY ON TOP OF THINGS



NEW TEESSIDE BUSINESS PLUMPS FOR COMMERCE HOUSE

A unique new business, which has launched on Teesside, has shown confidence in its own future by selecting Commerce House as its office of choice.

Vanquish Steel Associates is the new innovative company launched by Andrew Oliver and Ayesha Crabtree. The couple has launched the business to help people of Teesside benefit in better jobs and be treated in a better way by employers.

In essence an executive search company, Vanquish Steel is different in that it focuses on long-term relationships, the improvement of candidates and also helps employers develop and design employee benefits and retention strategies.

Andrew, who has 20 years experience in HR in a range of industries including fitness, construction, gas and oil and mining, also holds a diploma in executive search and headhunting. He said: "The name Vanquish Steel comes from our desire to help Teesside overcome its recent demise and tips its hat to the history of the area. We can see the potential of both the people and the business

here and want to support them to have long-term profitable working relationships.

"What we do is very much about reputation and being thought of highly, so as soon as we saw Commerce House we knew it was for us. As I currently do quite a bit of travelling and am out of the office, the virtual office offering and support is perfect for us too!"

From Middlesbrough, the couple who have four children, currently live in Redcar but wanted to base their new business in the heart of the city. Ayesha continued:

"We have based our business offering on the personal experiences we have both had, which at best have actually been impersonal. Executive and management roles are so important for any company to get right, so our service works in partnership with the recruiting business to get

the right people at the right time.

"We are so excited to be onboard with Commerce House and are confident it will give our new business the boost it needs right from the start!"

Vanquish Steel Associates offers clients a warranty so they can try their services confidently, even the first time.

Commerce House, a beautiful Grade II listed building in the heart of TS1, is now fully open following a renovation of £1.2m, with office space filling fast. Facilities manager Christine, said:

"We are delighted to have Vanquish Steel Associates as part of our business community. They are the kind of professionals we love to be working with and supporting. Our office space and services are being snapped up now the refurbishment is complete, so it is exciting times all round!"

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MAKING YOUR BUSINESS READY FOR INVESTMENT FROM NEW £120M NORTH EAST FUND

By Michael Cantwell, head of Corporate Finance at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors

With the recent launch of the long-awaited £120m North East Fund, and announcements being made on the fund managers who have been given responsibility for investing its different constituent parts, the race is on for businesses across the region to be among the first to access investment capital from it.



Michael Cantwell

The Funds have been designed to support over 600 North East businesses and create around 3,500 jobs across the region, with each of the funds of which it is comprised focussing on a specific part of the business community, from seed capital and early stage businesses through to well-established firms that want to take their operations to the next level.

Each fund manager is going to want to make a fast start on building their new portfolio of investee firms, and it's reasonable to expect that they're going to get a lot of enquiries and business plans to choose from over the next few months.

So if you're thinking about being one of these applicants, what do you need to do to stand out from the crowd, to make yourself and your business as attractive an investment proposition as possible and to ensure you're fully 'investment ready' when the fund manager comes calling?

The calibre of the people within your business should be the first thing you look at, which means both the management team that will be driving the implementation of the business plan in which you're looking for an investment, and the workforce that will deliver it on a day-to-day basis.

Yours and your management team's track record will also play a big part in weighing up the likelihood of success. Can you show that your people and/or business have achieved their commercial objectives in the past, that this experience is going to be used

to make similar success more likely in your next venture and that you're in the right shape to make this happen?

Do they have the collective credibility, knowledge, skills and determination to turn what's on paper into something more tangible?

How will they do this, how will venture capital involvement make success more likely, what new tools or ideas do you think you need, and are there any gaps in your team that you should be looking to fill?

The strength and extent of the competition you're facing also makes a big difference, especially if you're going up against a well-established or highly-regarded rival - how are you going to compete successfully against them, and what makes you stand out from their other potential rivals?

Having a credible narrative business plan in place should go without saying, and should present a clear growth strategy which defines the market opportunity, identifies how your product and/or service will address it, and offers realistic costs for delivering the plan you're promising.

It's essential that you have robust financial plans and forecasts in place which dovetail with the way forward that you're laying out.

As any of the entrepreneurs on Dragons' Den would tell you, if the numbers don't stack up, they're not going to be interested in the story, however good it is, and it's an area where we spend a lot of time working with clients to draw out all the detail that's required.

Our experience of helping dozens of North East firms attract investment capital tells us that the more detailed planning, preparation and research you do, and the more expert support you have in developing, refining and delivering your investment case, the more likely you are to succeed.

With a fresh tranche of investment capital now available to the North East business community, and a real willingness to see it begin to reach its constituent companies sooner rather than later, there's a real opportunity for ambitious firms to be getting on with bringing in the capital they need to grow, develop and create jobs in the years to come.

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



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

EMPLOYERS NEED TO KEEP THEIR WITS ABOUT THEM TO KEEP UP WITH CHANGES IN LEGISLATION

Each new tax year brings with it a raft of changes in employment taxes legislation and this year is no different.



There are a number of changes that employers need to contend with this year, including: changes to the reporting requirement regarding benefits in kind paid under Optional Remuneration Arrangements; taxation of termination payments; how PAYE Settlement Agreements are agreed with HMRC; the increase in Auto Enrolment contribution rates; and, of course, increases in the National Living and National Minimum Wages.

Whilst getting it wrong can have financial consequences in all areas of employment legislation, possibly the most damaging penalty regime concerns failure to pay the National Minimum Wage. In addition to paying the employees the amount of wage underpaid, this regime not only involves a financial penalty, but also involves the potential reputational damage for the employer through being "named and shamed".

The publication of the list naming and shaming employers who have not complied with the minimum wage requirements serves as a reminder, not just of the increases in National Living and National Minimum wage rates from 1 April 2018, but also of how easy it can be to fall foul of the legislation.

Whilst it is relatively simple to set hourly pay rates that comply with the regulations, the complications

generally arise in other areas such as non-statutory deductions from wages, the impact of salary sacrifice arrangements and, perhaps most problematic of all, the classification of employees as either salaried, time workers, or unmeasured workers. In the flurry of press releases following the latest list, at least one of the employers suggested that the underpayments related to a technical inaccuracy in worker classifications.

It is easy to make incorrect assumptions without a detailed knowledge of the definition of salaried worker under the regulations. It could be assumed that any worker who is paid an annual salary equally over 12 months is a salaried worker and, provided the annual salary divided by the actual hours worked is equal to or more than the relevant minimum wage, there isn't a problem.

However, it isn't that simple. It is necessary to refer to the individual's contract to determine whether an individual is, in fact, a salaried worker for this purpose. One of the determining factors is whether the worker is paid under the contract for an ascertainable number of hours per year.

For example, if the contract says the individual is

contracted to work a number of hours per week and expected to work additional hours according to business needs, the National Minimum Wage Unit will take the view that the actual hours for the year cannot be ascertained under the contract. 52 weeks at seven days a week is equal only to 364 days rather than 365, therefore, it is not possible to determine how many extra hours will be required at the start. That may seem overly pedantic to most readers, however, this is the consistent stance taken by the National Minimum Wage Unit when dealing with reviews.

But why is this important? It's because each of the employee classifications has its own method of calculating pay for National Minimum Wage purposes. In order to satisfy the minimum wage requirements it is essential to pay the worker at least equal to the relevant minimum wage for every hour worked in a pay period. These detailed calculations are outside the scope of this article but here's a simple example. A worker is paid an annual salary in 12 equal instalments, but incorrectly classified as salaried, and paid at or close to the minimum rates. This employee will be paid over the National Minimum Wage in a pay period covering a four week month when 160 hours are worked, but under the National Minimum Wage in a pay period covering a five week month when 200 hours are worked.

Employers should review their worker classifications in order to ensure that this does not create a problem for them.

As another reminder the National Living and National Minimum Wage rates from 1 April 2018 are:

	Current Rate	New rate from April 2018	Increase
National Living Wage (25+)	£7.50	£7.83	4.4%
21 to 24 year olds	£7.05	£7.38	4.7%
18 to 20 year olds	£5.60	£5.90	5.3%
16 to 17 year olds	£4.05	£4.20	3.7%
Apprentices	£3.50	£3.70	5.7%



For more information on complying with National Minimum Wage requirements or other employment taxes issues, please contact Jackie Hall on 0191 255 7000 or e-mail jackie.hall@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact. Alternatively, please register to receive regular updates on this topic at www.rsmuk.com/preferences.

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Jam Jar Cinema Founder Dan Ellis (left) and Head of Operations Rachel Arkley (centre) with UNW Corporate Finance Partner Paul Kaiser (right)

BIG POTENTIAL FUNDING SPREADING JOY FOR JAM JAR CINEMA

An independent community cinema in North Tyneside is celebrating after receiving a timely funding boost with help from UNW.

Jam Jar Cinema, which is situated in the heart of Whitley Bay town centre, has received the £65,000 grant through Big Potential Advanced.

Big Potential is a £10m fund aimed at eligible voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations (VCSEs) that want to improve their sustainability, capacity and scale, helping them deliver greater social impact to communities across England.

The cinema, founded in 2012 by Dan Ellis, takes its name from a 1930's tradition that originated in North Tyneside where children brought jam jars to the cinema in exchange for discounted or free admission.

After receiving initial funding from North Tyneside Council and Start Up loans, Dan and the team converted a derelict job centre into a fully functional single screen venue with a licensed café and 50-seat theatre in September 2013.

Since then, Jam Jar has grown rapidly and now screens over 900 screenings to over 35,000 visitors every year. The funding means plans have now commenced to expand their existing premises; giving them a greater capacity for access, ancillary

space and potentially two additional screening rooms.

Chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW, who are the only organisation in the region to offer both Big Potential Breakthrough and Advanced routes, worked with Jam Jar to secure the funding.

Dan, speaking of his delight at the successful grant application, said: "Jam Jar was born out of a need to diversify Whitley Bay's economy, and we're thrilled with how well it's been adopted by local people. There are a lot of great things happening in the town and it's great to be part of that."

"As well as screening the latest film releases and hosting many events, we also offer free community space to local groups and run successful education projects and training schemes. The corporate finance team at UNW, who helped us secure the funding, is incredibly passionate about the project we are undertaking, and we look forward to a long and successful collaboration with them."

In addition to their refurbishment project, the funding will also enable Jam Jar to bring in industry specific professionals for brand creation

and development, measuring social impact and development and to analyse market demand. This is in addition to creating a robust investment plan, which will be provided by UNW.

Jam Jar has also recently appointed Rachel Arkley as its new Head of Operations to support the growth of the venue. Dan added: "From an idea on a piece of paper 5 years ago, it's incredible that Jam Jar is now in a position to bring in very skilled full-time staff members as we look to becoming a venue of regional significance."

Paul Kaiser, Corporate Finance Partner at UNW, said: "With grant options becoming increasingly limited, UNW is placing particular focus on supporting VCSE's to help them become investment ready. We are delighted to have helped Jam Jar with their Big Potential application, an organisation that has had a huge impact on the Whitley Bay community in a short space of time."

It not only acts as a vital social outlet, but also plays a vital role in the personal development of its volunteers. The Big Potential Funding means that the opportunity to increase their locations and reach to deliver an even greater social impact in the coming years."

UNW is a leading independent firm of chartered accountants and business advisors that delivers a wide range of business services to its clients. For more information on grant opportunities or investment funds, please visit: www.unw.co.uk/expertise/grant-programmes



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Michael Vassallo and Ramsay Duff of Maven Capital Partners, Shaun Crawley of Elvet Developments and Paul Borg of Hotel Indigo.

MAVEN PROPERTY'S LATEST HOTEL DEVELOPMENT OPENS IN DURHAM

Earlier this year Maven Capital Partners (Maven) opened the doors on its latest hotel development following a year-long comprehensive £15 million redevelopment. The Grade II listed Shire Hall, which was originally built in the 1890s as the headquarters for Durham County Council, has been transformed into the four-star, 83-bedroom Hotel Indigo Durham.

Maven, the UK-based alternative asset manager, has successfully completed a range of development, refurbishment and conversion projects across the hotel, student accommodation and office refurbishment sectors. Maven's property team now manage over 20 property investments with a combined Gross Development Value in excess of £250 million.

Having stood vacant since 2012, Maven completed the purchase of the iconic building in 2016, which has since undergone a sympathetic renovation. The new hotel boasts a number of impressive period features which have all been lovingly restored to their former glory, including the grand tiled marble staircases, wood panelling and stained glass windows.

The rooms are designed to capture the history of Durham City, each bedroom has either an academic or cathedral theme in a bid to reflect the characteristics Durham is most recognised for. One of the most decorated rooms, the former council chamber and lobby room, which was later used by Durham University's decision-making senate, has been retained to provide an iconic setting for the Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar and Grill

restaurant and cocktail bar.

Creating over 60 jobs in the heart of Durham, this is Maven's third venture with the boutique brand Hotel Indigo, owned by InterContinental Hotels Group, following similar projects in Glasgow and Cardiff. The property will sit within Maven's growing hotel portfolio, which also includes brands such as ibis Styles and Travelodge.

Michael Vassallo, Investment Director of Maven for the North East, said: "We are delighted Maven's third Hotel Indigo opened in such a magnificent building and in the North East where our business has seen significant growth, with offices now open in Newcastle and Durham.

"As Fund Manager of the Finance Durham Fund, established by Durham County Council, we are currently supporting a number of local companies with investment so we're delighted to be part of another project that adds significant value to the County's economy."

Ramsay Duff, Investment Director of Maven, who led on the redevelopment project for Hotel Indigo in Durham said, "Maven is delighted to be involved in this prestigious project, bringing such a magnificent

building back into use and in an area, indeed a city, so important to Maven.

"Durham is an increasingly popular tourist and business destination and the Hotel itself is already fast becoming a 'must visit' location. Maven Property is looking forward to supporting future property projects in the area and the team is currently assessing other potential development opportunities."

Hotel Indigo Durham represents Maven's second property venture in the area in recent years' following the development of new purpose built student accommodation at Neville's Cross, Durham. The new building will comprise of 274 high quality en-suite studio bedrooms across six attractive blocks, with the total cost of the development expected to be approximately £24 million.

The opportunity

Maven Investor Partners is an established investor network for Professional Clients. It provides the opportunity to access thoroughly researched private equity and property investments that are typically not available to other investor networks.

Further details are available on request. If you are interested in joining the Maven Investor Partners network please visit www.mavencp.com or call 0191 731 8590

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ARE YOU DEPRIVING YOURSELF?

Financial advice covers several areas. For example, arranging mortgages, which we don't do, life insurance, investments, pensions, inheritance tax planning and long-term care planning, all of which we do advise upon.

A number of these areas have specialist qualifications and, indeed, I have the long-term care (LTC) qualification.

One of the basic tenets is that someone receiving care should not deprive themselves of their capital that could be used to fund their care costs, and thereby gain extra benefits from the local authority. Until now.

In January the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman found against North Yorkshire County Council.

It had stopped paying the fees for a Mrs. Y, after deciding the woman had deliberately reduced her savings by giving money to her family. This was something she had been doing prior to needing care. However, the ombudsman found she had not given the money away to avoid costs, stating "Just because someone might be living in a care home, it does not mean they should not be able to spend their money on things other than their care, and this includes continuing to give gifts to friends and family."

The council accepted it "did not follow procedures" but said the case raised "important issues".

And it certainly does! When is deprivation not deprivation is one, and I would suggest that a key point was that she had been gifting before she needed care. But there is another issue in this case.

As the lady in question required care from the age of 80 in 2007, and had suffered a stroke, I



Peter Rutherford

would assume that the gifts continued to be paid under a power of attorney. However, gifting away money is not something an attorney should be doing. The Court of Protection and the Office of the Public Guardian would view this as a breach of the duties of an attorney.

Whilst the daughter's complaint (in this case) was upheld, it may be that she has opened a different can of worms.

So, if, generally speaking, you cannot "deprive" yourself of assets, what can you do?

Well, there are several things but crucially, do not wait until the last minute or when you are, or the loved one is, in care. It becomes all but impossible to argue that you are not depriving yourself.

It is also important that you seek advice from a properly qualified independent financial adviser. He or she will ask lots of questions, and that's not because they are being nosy. They need to know about income, assets and intentions. They will then investigate your options and put forward a written report, with recommendations. You then decide whether to proceed or not.

Why is it important to get it right? In broad terms, LTC costs could denude an individual, and their potential beneficiaries under a will or intestacy, of all but £14,250 of capital. Income will be spent along the way too.

Did I mention I was qualified in LTC? I did. Well, it is worth repeating.

Peter Rutherford is a Director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600 peter.rutherford@rutherfordhughes.com

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ARE YOU ADEQUATELY PROTECTED?



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

As mortgage specialists, the key concern, quite rightly, for our clients is obtaining the most suitable mortgage so that they can purchase a new home/ investment property or remortgage to a better deal.

However, that is only the first part of our role as mortgage advisers. The second part, and often overlooked, is how the mortgage will be paid if an unfortunate incident occurs that reduces or stops a clients' income for a given period of time (for example, loss of job, incapacity due to illness, death of an income earner etc).

In some ways, protecting your mortgage is like servicing a car and carrying out an annual MOT. It's a necessary cost to ensure that the car keeps getting from A to B. The difference with a mortgage is that the potential consequences are much more serious – and yet servicing a car is the more likely of the two to be considered more important by many people.....

So why is protecting the mortgage overlooked? Research suggests it's because protecting your mortgage is

not tangible. We can't see the benefits directly and the only time that we do is when it's needed, which could be too late.

But, consider the "What ifs" for a moment and the possible consequences;

- What if you or your partner died?
- What if you or your partner contracted a critical illness?
- What if you or your partner had a long term sickness which prevented you from working?
- What if you or your partner were made redundant?

Would you really want to put your family's home at risk for the price of servicing your car? With this in mind, consider your mortgage protection as compulsory as an MOT by taking expert mortgage advice. What have you got to lose – only yours and your family's house potentially!

Local, face to face, independent mortgage advice can smooth the whole process and we would be delighted to help.

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

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LEATHERS TAX SEMINAR

Leathers the Accountants held a seminar to examine the taxation issues involved in operating internationally.

In the event titled - The International Family: Tax adventures for the adventurous traveller - the firm's private client team explored the taxation principles when individuals move either themselves or their assets to or from the UK.

Using case studies, and including presentations from managing partner Michael Leather, Ryan Harrison, Jonathan Carr and Tim Mallon, the Tyneside Cinema event also highlighted some of the challenges ahead as UK taxation rules adapt.

Leathers, which has offices in Newcastle and Durham, is a specialist in advising on international taxation matters and has clients around the world.



TAIT WALKER WELCOME NEW TAX DIRECTOR TO SUPPORT STRATEGIC BUSINESS GROWTH



We have appointed Andrew Fitton as tax director to join our growing tax team.

Andrew Fitton joins us with a wealth of experience in corporate and business tax. Andrew's prior experience includes serving as a tax director with PwC for over 10 years in the North East and Yorkshire and acting as head of tax for Virgin Money as well as holding other senior tax positions at PwC.

In his role at Tait Walker, Andrew will work with our partners to help accelerate the growth of the firm's dedicated and experienced corporate tax team. He will also work with the team to provide strategic advice to businesses and directors, helping us to develop and pursue effective and efficient tax strategies.

Originally from North Cumbria, Andrew trained as a Chartered Accountant in Liverpool before moving to Newcastle and then Yorkshire. He now lives in Hexham with his wife and children.

Andrew said: "I am delighted to join Tait Walker at such a key time for the business. It is a progressive and energetic 21st Century firm that fosters excellent relationships with clients and the wider business community, whilst investing in the development of its people.

"My role at Tait Walker will give me a great opportunity to share my knowledge and experience with the tax team, and benefit from the insights of

the firm as a whole. I am most looking forward to working with the firm's clients and getting to know their businesses well."

Our Tax Partner, Alastair Wilson, added: "Now is an exciting time for Tait Walker as we continue to expand the business; we recently opened a fourth office in Durham and significantly expanded our head office in Gosforth, and we are continuing to grow our team.

"Andrew brings a wealth of impressive experience and specialist knowledge of corporate and business tax to the firm, and his appointment will be great for the team and for our clients."



Stephen Hall, Newcastle office senior partner, Deloitte

VETERANS WORK: RECOGNISING THE POTENTIAL OF EX-SERVICE PERSONNEL

Joanna Lumley, Ray Winstone, Larry Lamb, Hugh Bonneville and Nick Knowles are just some of the well-known faces encouraging employers to hire ex-service personnel. They all feature in *Veterans Work: The Films*, premiered by Deloitte UK with the Officers' Association, which were screened recently at Newcastle International Film Festival, showcasing the value of hiring veterans into UK plc.

What comes to mind when you hear the word 'veteran'? Well, some assume it is an American term and do not even associate it with our UK armed forces, while others think that veterans are old soldiers from WWII.

Yet, the reality is that a veteran could be a 26-year old woman with cyber skills.

Each year around 16,000 men and women leave the UK's armed forces and they bring with them some of the most sought-after skills sets as well as a great work ethic. Sadly, many organisations on civvy street fail to value what they offer or recognise their potential. As a result, more than half of the 700,000 veterans in employment in the UK have jobs in low paid or routine occupations that don't make full use of their skills.

That is why the three *Veterans Work* films, which were made by The Drive Project, have the potential to be so powerful in changing attitudes. By telling the stories of veterans who have transitioned successfully into the workplace, sharing the experiences of CEOs who have hired ex-service personnel and conveying the passionate support of some well-known faces, we want to challenge perceptions.

As Larry Lamb says in one of the films, it is time for employers to "look past the rigid pre-set hiring criteria".

We know from our research, *Veterans Work: Recognising the potential of ex-service personnel*



which was produced as part our One Million Futures programme, that when organisations do employ veterans the results are incredibly positive.

Nine in ten organisations that have employed veterans see them not just as holding a few specialist skills but, crucially, as performing well across a range of areas particularly relating to communication, planning and time management, team-working, leading and inspiring others, and being able to pick up specialist knowledge and solve problems.

So it is probably no surprise that more than seven in ten organisations with active ex-military recruitment programmes would definitely recommend employing veterans. Crucially, many of the skills that veterans possess are in areas where organisations are experiencing gaps. In fact, if you map skills shortages and the skills ex-service personnel possess, there is an almost perfect match. Any employer struggling to find the right staff should also bear in mind that there are plenty of them – it is estimated that former service personnel make up the third largest talent pool in the UK. Fortunately, more and more employers are getting the message with a growing number of signing up to the Armed Forces Corporate Covenant - Deloitte included.

But there is only so much one employer can do which is why we are asking employers to share these films with their clients and supply chain.

As we remember the service our armed forces have given to the nation, why not consider the service they can give your organisation.

The *Veterans Work* films and report can be viewed at www.veteranswork.org.uk.

The Deloitte Military Transition and Talent Programme has helped 2,500 ex-service personnel through quarterly insight days, and seen 150 recruited into Deloitte, which has been awarded a Gold under the Employer Recognition Scheme from the Army.

CORPORATE FINANCE THEMES FOR THE YEAR AHEAD

Over the course of the last year, we have commented on key M&A topics which business owners should consider.

We have commented on a number of M&A themes over a series of articles. This column summarises these topics.

Timing an exit and dealing with unsolicited acquisition approaches

Owners often delay planning the sale of their company because they are caught up in the day-to-day operational demands, or because they find it difficult to identify that the time is right to exit their business. Planning for an exit is a vital part of ensuring optimal value is achieved and shareholders should obtain professional corporate finance advice if they receive an unsolicited approach from a buyer.

The challenges of Brexit for M&A

Whilst Brexit is having some impact on the M&A market its overall impact remains limited. In most cases, it is business as usual as ambitious shareholders and acquirers remain keen on M&A. Q1 2018 recorded the highest level of M&A on record and although there may be some slow down arising on Brexit, we expect this to be short lived.

Cross-border M&A

There is a positive outlook for cross-border M&A activity continuing as overseas trade and private equity funds remain keen to invest in good quality assets. US and European buyer activity in the UK has increased to an all-time high.

Development capital and bolt-on acquisitions

Successful companies often reach a point where they can no longer maintain growth by relying on existing resources and an injection of fresh capital is required to continue growth or pursue acquisition strategies. Acquisitions can often be seen as the most transformational strategy to achieve company growth, and when correctly implemented is unrivalled as a way to rapidly expand your business, diversify into new services and markets.

Private equity and its softer benefits

The region is increasingly recognised by investors as a source of companies with great growth potential, and we have seen very strong interest from private equity investors for a number of North East companies. A significant benefit in securing investment is what a private equity investor can bring to the Board table. The skills, experience and strategic knowledge of the investor can be just as crucial for the business as the cash injection.

As an award-winning corporate finance boutique, Cavu Corporate Finance offers high-quality strategic advice. We have advised a number of regional shareholders and businesses in the recent past including the shareholders of property software business Kykcloud on a sale to US-based Accruent, consulting engineers Patrick Parsons on significant development capital investment from LDC, wealth



Shawn Bone

management business Fairstone on the £25m investment from Synova Capital and support services business Fastflow Group on securing significant investment from Elysian Capital. We are differentiated through our strategic M&A approach, our depth of knowledge of private equity and trade buyer markets and our focus on delivering high quality partner led advice.

www.cavucf.com

NORTH EAST ACCOUNTANCY FIRM NAMED AS FINALIST FOR LOCAL INDUSTRY AWARD



An awards ceremony to celebrate the success of the North East finance industry over the last 12 months has recently announced its finalists, with Morpeth based Wellway Accountants up for a top award.

The firms' director, Richard Thompson, has been named a finalist in the category 'Finance Director of the Year' for 2018 – a whopping achievement having only entered for the first time this year.

Applicants were to be nominated or put themselves forward with a written submission which was then put to a panel. Following the nomination deadline, the judges reviewed all entries and successful applications/nominations were put forward to a judging day, where those shortlisted attended an interview with the judging panel in April. The winners will be announced at an awards dinner next month.

The ceremony will take place on June 28th at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead to recognise excellence within the fields of finance, accounting and tax from all

industry sectors operating in the north east.

The North East Accountancy Awards has been running for 12 years and have some serious contenders when it comes to previous winners. The judging panel is also made up of very strong and successful business people from the industry.

Richard Thompson speaks of his shock and admiration at being named a finalist "I was put forward for this award by a member of staff, Beth, and when she told me I was very honoured, but I didn't really think anything would come of it.

"When Beth told me I had made the final I was speechless, I really can't believe it. I just do what I do because I enjoy it. Myself and the team are always striving and working hard to provide our clients with the best service possible, but to be recognised for these achievements is a great feeling."

The company, which started trading in 1994, has seen their business grow over the last four years by 37% and hires a total of 11 staff offering advice on all aspects of personal and business tax and financial affairs.

www.wellway.uk.com

DOES IT ALL ADD UP?



"The answer to the ultimate question of life, the universe and everything is 42"*. It's a number. And numbers are everywhere. But it's the interpretation of numbers that really matters.

When you are running your business the numbers that crop up the most are those monetary values. The income, the direct costs, the overheads and any permutation of those to produce the information you need. The important thing is that you get that permutation correct. We all know that numbers can lie, you just need to look at a set of statistics to know how many variations are possible.

Some numbers can't lie. Your bank statement will always balance, a supplier invoice will show an amount due and your sales invoices show the amount you expect to be paid and so the entries that lead on from there must be correct. But those amounts will usually be allocated via an accounting system to a code used to collect together all other similar items. That code is usually a number and giving it the right number can give you very valuable business insights.

It's not just monetary values that count. Using other numbers can be extremely helpful to obtain information, spot trends and help you to plan your business activity. Your stock turnover both in quantity and time will give you an indication of how something is selling. Your Facebook 'hits' will tell you how many people or businesses you have reached. And the numbers on your demographics will tell you how to best direct your advertising.

But when you are looking at the numbers make sure that the numbers you are using are as accurate as possible. Using those ten little digits well can be extremely helpful, getting it wrong can mean that nothing adds up.

*Although Douglas Adam's choice of the number 42 was allegedly totally random there are a whole list of events associated with the same number. Did you know, for instance, that Titanic was travelling at a speed the equivalent of 42km/hour when it hit the iceberg? So you need to use the numbers correctly to make sure your business doesn't sink.

To discuss your 'Business Guide to the Galaxy' call CS Accounting on 0191 4879870 or email info@csaccounting.co.uk

LOCAL BUSINESSES COME TOGETHER TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

Two entrepreneurial businessmen have united with other businesses in the region to form the fastest tax and financial service platform for seafarers and yacht crew across the globe.

Former City workers Marcus Sinkinson and Brad Kelly both age 24, from Durham and previous students of Durham Johnston Comprehensive have created Flovio – a tax and financial services web portal for people who work on superyachts, cruise ships and other watercrafts.

Flovio is a unique hub in which local experts, including Robson Laidler Accountants, have come together to create a one-stop shop for seafarers who have specific non-resident compliance regulations in tax, wealth management, mortgages, foreign exchange, property, life insurance and legal services.

Marcus Sinkinson said: "Having come from a yachting background before working in London, there's always been a passion for the industry. We decided to leave our jobs in the City and come back to our roots to set up this unique hub with other local businesses.

"We trialled Flovio for a short period and proved the concept worked, we're now focused on building a strong client base. We'll be on location in Antibes this summer, meeting crew and making them aware of how we can help, both ourselves and our partners are excited for what the future holds.

"Clients can register with us for a set fee and have access to a host of professional services dedicated to



(left to right) Robson Laidler's Martin Wardle, and Flovio's Brad Kelly and Marcus Sinkinson.

their industry. With the specific regulations seafarers have to adhere to, bespoke advice is often needed. With our membership they get access to all these services and we also include a seafarers tax return."

Experts in non-resident tax from Robson Laidler Accountants in Jesmond are servicing the tax area of the portal. Martin Wardle tax director at Robson Laidler said: "If you are a seafarer there are specific tax rules. It can be a rather complex area, and these people may need guidance and support from experts like ourselves and the team at Flovio to help ensure they meet regulations and we maximise their tax efficiency.

"The guys at Flovio impressed us with their passion for creating a totally unique platform in a niche

market. There is so much innovation right here in the North East. I find it inspiring that Marcus and Brad had great jobs in the City and have come back to the North East to set up this innovative business."

Brad Kelly said: "We pride ourselves on keeping it local, we've found the North East to be a truly fantastic place to start a business that is often overlooked by many. Every aspect of our business has been grown here, from web development to KYC checks, this is all done locally. However this is just the start, we already have our sights set on the Australian, US and South African markets, making our hub compliant with those country's revenue and customs regulations." For more information visit: www.flovio.co.uk

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RECRUITMENT CHALLENGES FOR SMES

SMEs are the lifeblood of the UK economy but, despite accounting for 99.3% of the private sector and providing 60% of all employment, they often struggle to recruit the very best people in to their business.

Often in the early stages of growth, SMEs don't have an in-house HR function, which makes the hiring process all the more difficult. This is where the services of recruitment experts come in, who offer specialist support, tailored to help organisations that operate across niche sectors.

In the North East, we are home to many fast-growing recruitment firms, which are supporting the region's many small and medium sized businesses, not to mention large companies and multinationals.

"As SME's grow they don't always have an understanding of the nuances between the various specialist recruitment markets, which means that when they are looking for the best people in an unfamiliar field, it can be very difficult to find and attract them," says Bryony Gibson, Bryony Gibson Consulting.

Andrew Mackay, Coleman James, highlights cost as the biggest barrier for SME's looking to compete regionally, nationally or internationally: "Reluctance to invest can be detrimental as forming a partnership with a niche recruiter will save both time and money in the long run, and deliver candidates that give SMEs a competitive edge. In addition, the recruitment process should be thorough, consistent and timely. Procrastination and lack of ability to make quick decisions often means SMEs lose out because exceptional talent doesn't hang around."

Mark Ions, Ions Talent Partners, acknowledges the need for effective strategic planning when it comes to recruitment: "Talent Management is one of the biggest headaches for ambitious companies across the North East. Regardless of size, understanding where the talent is within your business is paramount to both current and future recruitment strategies."

David Blair, BMC Recruitment Group, places the company's values at the heart of an effective recruitment model: "Stick rigidly to what you believe good looks like, as it will eventually lead to great. For every entrepreneur that tells you he trusts his gut, there will be 99 who tell you they trust process more."

However, Steven Rawlison, Samuel Knight International, believes the challenges facing SMEs isn't about the processes in place, it is the shift in industry, particularly across the energy and rail sectors: "The average age within this industry is around 50 years old, and most people tend to retire at around 50 to 55. We are now seeing the impact of this shift change across various STEM sectors."

Michaela Reaney, Gradvert, also stresses the importance of having a "strong skills pipeline" for businesses, while acknowledging that employers need to start off their recruitment strategies by analysing "what's needed to attract, develop and retain talent."

Maureen Brown, Sullivan Brown, suggests staying up-to-date with the correct interview techniques is vital to hiring the right person, and regular training with hiring managers is essential. Conducting exit interviews is also crucial as "the insight can be used to help you attract the right people."

Meanwhile, Duo Global Consulting's Laura Weaving cites the importance of building relationships with potential candidates: "In order to recruit the highest quality people it is important to build relationships with prospective employees ahead of time, so when roles arise, you already have established relationships for quicker recruitment into the business."

Communication is key to effective recruitment, according to James Blackwell, Ronald James Group: "You must keep adding value to the customer. The only way this can be achieved is by listening to what they really want and finding a way to give it to them. Regardless of your industry, giving more value than you charge in terms of a fee is one of the most important lessons I have learnt."

It's estimated that the cost of a bad hire is around 15x their base salary, so without the luxury of large budgets and precious time to repeat the process if the wrong hire is made, the importance of recruiting well for SMEs simply can't be underestimated.

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

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An Entrepreneur Interview with..

JAMIE BROWN

Francis Brown

Tell me about your background in business?

After graduating from Newcastle University as an agricultural engineer, I secured a place on a graduate training programme with SCA Packaging, in Hartlepool.

From there, I joined the family business, Francis Brown, which was founded by my great grandfather in 1903, where I have been for the last 26 years.

Now in its fourth generation, how was the business formed?

It's funny, actually, we were having a discussion recently with my father about the origins of the business and we learnt that my great grandfather was involved in an accident at a shipyard in Stockton, which led to the creation of the business.

As a result of the accident he was unable to walk as freely as he once could, so set up the company making small scale wiring fabrications that he could do while sat down!

Francis Brown soon progressed from manufacturing and fabricating wiring products, such as potato picking baskets, rat traps to anything you can imagine, including dartboard numbers to wire mesh guarding for windows and machinery.

It soon progressed to manufacturing sheet metal guarding for refinery and chemical plants, steel plants, as well as applications for the local shipbuilding industry.

From our lighter fabrication days, we have since moved to building pressure vessels for the chemical industry, oil and gas, renewables, including offshore wind and tidal energy, as well as to the waste energy plants across the UK. We are also involved in large scale construction projects in many of the UK's cities, including London.

In your own words, describe what is Francis Brown?

Francis Brown delivers safely manufactured, high integrity welded & fabricated products to the energy, chemical and construction industries. We oversee the entire project management of contracts we are involved in. Our team provide the design right through to assembly and installation at a customer's plant or say on the deck of a ship.

Crucial to this is the experience in our team and their attention to the all-important documentation, planning and clear communication.

Tell me about how you became involved in the company and your progression

I joined Francis Brown in 1992 as a contract manager, before progressing to become a production director and then managing director.

Over the last two years I have taken on more of a CEO role within the company and appointed a managing director - the first time in the company's history that a 'non-Brown' has held such a position.

Today the company employs around 100 staff, which shows how far we've come.

What is your proudest moment with Francis Brown?

We received an initial enquiry from AMEC in Darlington, which was an A4 fax of a sketch of brackets it required – 4,300 to be precise! They were going to be used as part of the Eurostar maintenance depot in London.

The contract quickly grew, as we worked on the installation, to become the largest one we've handled. At that time it was a bold step to send our guys to London to carry out the work.

Coincidentally, at the same time, bigger buildings came up for sale near to our site, and with the volume of work we were carrying out, together with the profitability, that allowed us to purchase the buildings and expand. This was a defining moment in the company's recent history and transformed us completely.

Is there a particular mistake you have made while in business? And how did you overcome/learn from it?

We had a competitor to one of our customer's approach us about doing some work. The firm was prepared to issue a purchase order, while we visited its factory in the US to understand the design, so I didn't think anything of it to process the PO immediately and trusted the company.

Suddenly, there was a change and its Board decided to carry out the work from the US, so the trip was essentially wasted. I have since learnt that whenever you have a bird in your hand, it is very valuable, so always try and keep hold of it.

What is Francis Brown's USP?

Our values and the flexibility that we bring to the table. We have a very capable and experienced workforce, which we would be nothing without.

How has the firm grown and what do you attribute this to?

Dedicated commitment by the family and our employees to continually improve and be the best we can be, this has allowed us to be a trusted partner and develop long-term relationships with our customers that have been established over the last 114 years.

Do you live by/do business by a certain motto?

I don't have one in particular, only that you've got to show chameleon-like instincts and adapt to your surroundings, such as not focusing on just one market at a time, which can be dangerous.

What are the future plans of the business?

We've taken bold steps with the appointment of an MD, which has allowed me and my brother to look at further opportunities, putting us in a great position to develop the business to its next phase. Huge opportunities are on our doorstep, particularly in the chemical industry, which is investing again, as well as major developments in offshore wind.

Jamie Brown is a member of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, a group of like-minded people who come together at inspirational events to share best practice, create valuable connections and help each other to grow their businesses.

For more information, visit www.entrepreneursforum.net

SUPPORTING THE NEXT STAGE OF GROWTH

BMC Recruitment Group, the Newcastle-based search consultancy has announced a number of recent promotions and appointments to bolster their team and support the next stage of BMC's growth plans.

Established by chartered accountant, David Blair, BMC Recruitment Group has gone from strength to strength - the business has successfully achieved 100% year-on-year growth for the second consecutive year, is working with seven of the North East's eight largest businesses, and from an international perspective, secured two exclusive international projects, highlighting BMC's extraordinary progress in just over two and a half years.

With clients such as Nissan, Sage, and Procter & Gamble, and a network of high profile candidates alike, BMC has rapidly expanded into a wide range of sectors, supported by a sixteen-strong team.

Leading the technology division, is Aqueel Ahmed, who recently joined the business as Principal Consultant, building upon BMC's established presence within the technology sector. Aqueel brings wide-ranging expertise and understanding of the North East technology market to BMC.

Aqueel said: "There is a real buzz in the North East technology sector - the tech market is going from strength to strength, I am delighted to join BMC at such an exciting growth phase and look forward to working with BMC's long-standing clients as well as developing new relationships."

Will Smith joins the business after a number of years within Operations and was attracted to a career at BMC by the ambitious business strategy upheld by David and the team.

At the age of 28, Will was already managing a 70-strong team and was a widely recognised name in the financial services industry for best practice operations. Will is BMC's first consultant to join the business from outside the recruitment sector, and having led his previous company's most recent business venture, is set to make promising headway in the world of recruitment.

In his new role, he will be responsible for developing



Senior Consultant, Will Smith from
BMC Recruitment Group

the Sales and Marketing offer at BMC and will play a key part in building client and candidate relationships.

Commenting on his appointment, Will said: "The first thing you notice at BMC is the passion, energy, and professionalism displayed by the team - they are so driven by David's vision and it's amazing to see. The business has achieved so much in a relatively short space of time - I'm delighted to join such a forward-thinking business. As one of the most respected recruitment firms for professional search consultancy, I look forward to what I can achieve here at BMC."

David Blair, Managing Director of BMC Recruitment Group said: "Will is a very exciting addition to the BMC team and is in a unique position to carve a very successful career in recruitment, he shares

our vision for delivering high-quality consultancy to our clients and candidates alike. Our recent appointments and promotions highlight the incredible growth and success at BMC so far, I'm delighted that Aqueel and Will have come on board at this pivotal stage in BMC's growth, there is no doubt that they will enhance the strength of the BMC team and will play an important role in BMC's latest developments. I look at the hires we've made in the last 6 months and I'm genuinely excited about how talented the team is and what we can achieve over the next 2-3 years."

BMC also welcomed a number of promotions, with Craig Chamberlain being promoted to Managing Consultant, heading up the Finance team, and finally, Nigel Spurr, also from BMC's Finance division who has recently been promoted to Senior Finance Consultant.

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BMC RECRUITMENT GROUP



OPERATIONS MANAGER APPOINTED AT HINDLEY CIRCUITS

In a further demonstration of its dynamic investment programme, Cramlington-based electronic assembly services specialist Hindley Circuits has announced the appointment of Mark Thorman as operations manager.

Mark is one of a number of key appointments being made across the business, which has also committed to ongoing investment in technology and equipment. Backed by private investors, Hindley has doubled its turnover in a year.

Mark will now play a lead role in the planning and implementation of process improvements. He will make recommendations on techniques and

processes that will ensure even greater efficiency within the business as it drives forward.

Among his roles, Mark will work alongside quality manager Dr David Ellis to ensure a smooth transition from international quality standard ISO9001/2008 system to ISO9001/2015.

Mark said: "Hindley is a growing business with a clear vision and direction and I am excited at the prospect of positively influencing that. Taking a strong business model and growing it in a manner that develops much greater levels of efficiency in a cost effective way is what I do."



FAMILY BUSINESS PROGRAMMED FOR SUCCESS

Ashington-born David Simm owns training and automation solutions company Scantime, and now his talented son Chris is moving the company forward into a bright future.

Scantime has opened a state-of-the-art training centre based in Gateshead. David and Chris are now building further on the company's success with more staff and Chris taking on a lead role.

Chris has been working at Scantime for nearly 10 years and has been appointed Company Director. He now specialises in Industrial Programming, PLC Automation Control & SCADA Design. Chris has also worked on projects for multi-national companies such as GE Aviation and OneSubsea.

Chris said: "My father has an amazing drive to train the engineers of the future which he's passed onto me. With his passion for teaching, our dedicated team and custom-built training facilities, we're looking forward to helping some of the most talented engineers develop these sought-after skills."

Scantime has quickly established itself as a leader in the electronics sector by designing software for Offshore Oil & Gas companies. The firm's training is now being taught to engineers and students in over 40 countries via their website www.scantime.co.uk.

TOMLINSON HALL SUPPORTS EDUCATION ON TEESSIDE

Billingham-based pump distributor and manufacturer Tomlinson Hall is helping to support the scientists of the future by donating £2000 to Billingham South Community Primary School.

Tomlinson Hall was recently named Engineering Firm of the Year 2018 at the North East of England Process Industry Cluster Annual Industry Awards. The company received £2000 to donate to a local school of its choice to support STEM-related projects.

Tomlinson Hall have donated the money to Billingham South Community Primary School. It has helped to fund the school's Science Week and provide valuable resources to enrich its pupils' educational experience in STEM subjects.

Tomlinson Hall is an approved global distributor of many leading pump brands, such as DEPA, ELRO, and Grundfos. It offers a total service to industry, including pump selection and supply, site visits, problem solving, servicing and repairs.

Colin Simpson, Business Development Director of Tomlinson Hall, said: "We were delighted to be able to donate the prize money to Billingham South Primary School and support the growth of science and engineering in our local community."

Edwin Squires, Head Teacher at Billingham South Community Primary School, said: "We are so grateful for the generous donation from Tomlinson Hall. We hope to continue our partnership with them and are already exploring possible collaborations for the near future."

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Mike Bowers Managing Director at Cellular Solutions and Samantha Davidson Managing Director at Horizonworks

OUR JOURNEY WITH...CELLULAR SOLUTIONS

Samantha Davidson, Managing Director of leading B2B marketing agency Horizonworks, explains how they helped a business communications and systems provider to reinvigorate its brand and strengthen its profile in its target sectors.

Founded in 1995, Sunderland-based Cellular Solutions helps businesses to improve communications, operations and processes. It offers communications and business systems – including mobile, landline and software solutions – to companies ranging from start-ups and SMEs to large, multi-site organisations, helping them at every stage of their journeys.

Over the last two decades it has built up a strong reputation for providing close customer support to businesses, embedding itself into organisations and enabling clients to save time and money by offering a wide range of specialist business communications and business systems services under one roof.

However, Cellular Solutions identified that it needed to re-evaluate its marketing, articulate its service proposition more clearly and raise its profile in new and existing target markets across the North. The company appointed us to act as its outsourced marketing team to develop a marketing and brand strategy and deliver the marketing plan.

As the company's marketing partner we created a marketing strategy and integrated campaign plan to support the firm in strengthening their

position as the provider of choice in the North East for business communications and systems. This involved developing a clearer brand proposition to clearly articulate Cellular Solutions as a trusted partner which works hand in hand with organisations. This was achieved through refreshing the brand and visual style, developing new messaging designed to resonate more effectively with its target markets, and creating a new website and a suite of marketing materials to support business development activities and build brand profile.

Furthermore we developed a more distinct identity for the company's business systems division to ignite new opportunities in sectors including manufacturing, engineering and logistics, and identified new opportunities to increase engagement with networks including the North East of England Process Industry Cluster (NEPIC) and North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA).

We deliver the company's full marketing plan on an ongoing basis – this enables Cellular Solutions to access our team of marketing experts who specialise in a range of disciplines including digital, PR and creative.

Mike Bowers, managing director at Cellular Solutions said: "We pride ourselves on being a trusted partner to North East businesses, increasing efficiency and productivity and we like to work hand in hand with like-minded organisations. Working with Horizonworks has helped us to strengthen our position in target markets such as manufacturing and engineering. Furthermore, I feel the revised brand, visual style and website really encapsulates the essence of our organisation."

Horizonworks specialises in working with businesses from the manufacturing, engineering, automotive, technology and innovation-led sectors. We offer marketing, strategy, PR, creative and digital services – all under one roof – to ensure all elements of marketing work together to generate the best results for our clients.

Horizonworks has a diverse portfolio of clients including US based AmeriWater, a premier provider of water treatment equipment, The Expanded Metal Company, an expanded metal mesh manufacturer and Arcinova, a contract research and development company which serves the pharmaceutical sector and the Advanced Manufacturing Forum (AMF), the largest manufacturing forum in the North East.



SUNDERLAND BUSINESS BRINGS HOME GOLD GONG FROM PRESTIGIOUS NATIONAL AWARDS

Local company, Geo Journey, based in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear have recently won a Gold Award in the MadeForMums Award 2018 by their members and judges who put the products under the test to announce the very best in products and services.

Industry experts, real mums, dads and their children, along with celebrity parents including Ferne McCann and Cara De La Hoyd joined the MFM judging team to scrutinise all the shortlisted products, whilst at home-testers shared their experiences using the products in daily life.

There were three awards available in the category, bronze, silver and gold, with Geo Journey scooping the gold award from Bookabees and Mini Bakers Club by BKD.

Geo Journey aims to inspire children to learn about the world in the most interesting and creative ways. It provides a subscription box which is unique and educational which aims to teach children about different countries, starting with an explorer kit and following monthly with fun packages and post including letters, photos and cool souvenirs from company mascots Geo and Atlas.

The company, which started trading in March 2017, have seen their business grow over the last 12 months, with interest for their products from learning institutions, parents, grandparents, guardians and parenting groups to name a few.



MadeForMums is the largest parenting review website of its kind with a huge 12 million-page views each month.

Geo Journey's Co-owner, Christina Armstrong, said "We are absolutely overwhelmed that we won the gold award in this category. We were up against

some huge competition, and to see us win is a great sense of achievement. We're really excited about the future."

Her sister and business partner Fiona commented "Huge brands, some of which have recently had large investments had entered the awards so to see little old us win gold is amazing and we couldn't be more proud!

"One of the testers actually contacted us personally to order the whole subscription for her children so we knew she must have liked it."

All finalists are also automatically shortlisted for the NEW Editor's Choice Award and given individual judging feedback on their entered product. Gold Winners will further receive showcase editorial coverage on MadeForMums, a click-to-buy link on the MadeForMums website, and major social media promotion.

Geo Journey is actively seeking investment to take the business to the next level. The Made for Mums Awards should provide a solid platform on which to grow the brand further.

TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES IMPACTING THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY - BIM SHOW LIVE 2018

The BIM Show Live is an annual event that brings together BIM and digital construction experts across the globe. Everything new in the world of digital construction and advanced technologies is covered and this year, Newcastle upon Tyne was the hosting city.

Henry Riley attended the event for their third year. Over the course of two days, we listened to a variety of speakers and BIM experts who delivered carefully formulated content offering real insight into the progress of BIM within the construction industry. We paid particular attention to information relating to cost consultancy, project management and information management in order to help us improve our current ways of working and BIM offering.

Henry Riley have spent time over the last five years incorporating BIM processes and standards into the business through various initiatives such as better information management including the use of Master Information Delivery Plans (MIDP), Common Data Environments and Naming Protocols. We are now keen to continue developing the understanding and use of Level 2 BIM standards which was a key topic at the BIM Show Live event.

Key Headlines

The Conference started off with a message that we endorse; a focus on BIM Level 1 and ensuring compliance with its requirement. If information can't be shared in an organised and structured way, it would be impossible to exchange information successfully when undertaking a BIM Level 2 process.

BIM was praised for already having a positive impact on the industry by creating integrated project teams and a more fluid and cohesive process of design and management which has allowed designers and other professionals to work collaboratively when managing, designing and costing construction projects.

There was also a focus on embracing the Fourth Industrial Revolution and highlighting the importance of pushing technological boundaries in order to provide professionals with the tools they need to improve and make more intelligent 3D models.

The point was made that there is more confidence within the industry on the use of models for quantity extraction, but the fear of change is preventing all



Paul Nixon, Partner of Henry Riley, gives his thoughts on the topics discussed and how the technology is impacting the construction industry.



parties from making this a business as usual approach to exchanging information.

The successful implementation of Building Information Modelling is often a front-loaded process and if the work is put in at the earlier stages of the project a much more fluid process will be encouraged as the project progresses.

Discussion Points and Learning Outcomes

BIM Show Live 2018 was overall very successful and invaluable to us as a business. Having closely listened to the speakers throughout the two days, it is clear that although there is still some way to go before BIM is fully adopted throughout the industry it is vital to know that we are moving forward.

Key learnings include:

- Take the time to understand and discuss the parameters of the model and object naming methods with the designers early on to enable successful data sorting and mapping with NRM.
- Allow time to create cost plans and pricing documents that can be fully integrated with the native and federated models
- It is recognised that there isn't necessarily a one size fits all solution for successful 3D costing. The advice is to discuss it with the team and establish what the cost consultant would like to gain from the model. Only then can you decide the best way to achieve it.
- Consistency in models is absolutely crucial – if data is not consistent or incorrect then it can be untrustworthy and essentially useless.
- Overcoming the initial fear of change (a key factor in the slow uptake) and embracing the impact of technological changes and understanding the benefits to cost consultancy, project management and information management services is essential to increase knowledge and efficiency.



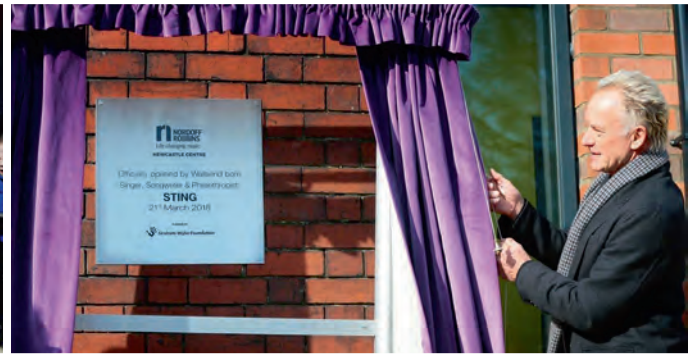
THE LAST SHIP DOCKS IN NEWCASTLE

Superstar Sting gave the Graham Wylie Foundation a massive boost, with a special VIP performance of his musical, *The Last Ship*, during its run at Northern Stage.

Funds from the night – which included an after show party at Wylam Brewery where Sting performed some of his biggest hits – went to support the new Nordoff Robbins music therapy centre in Newcastle, the first outside of London.

The centre, which has been created and supported by the Graham Wylie Foundation, was officially opened the following day by Sting, along with the Kaiser Chiefs.

Find out more about the foundation visit www.grahamwyliefoundation.org.uk or follow @GWFoundation







THE POWER OF POSITIVITY

Getting punched in the face or knocked down isn't a pleasant feeling. But once you get over the initial shock and pain, how do you react, do you punch the person back, or get up, dust yourself down and then try and address why you got knocked down?

Obviously I am figuratively speaking to demonstrate that life provides knocks to us all, which can seem so unfair and unjust, and sometimes it is just down right wrong with miscarriages of justice sadly occurring. And it may not just be one knock, it could be several at the same time.

But it really is how we react, that not only dictates what happens next, but whether you end up using the experience to improve life or make it worse. An eye for an eye only makes people blind.

Taking the moral high-ground is such a challenge, as it is natural to try and seek payback. If your employer dismisses you, doesn't give you the much deserved promotion, or in business someone steals your idea, of course you should deal with things properly and professionally to protect you, your IP or whatever the right recourse is. However, holding a grudge, wasting time on pursuing an individual or organisation, or thinking how you can affect your revenge is such a drain on you, affecting your

wellbeing and those around you.

In a world filled with war, turmoil, divisiveness; it is so hard to comprehend the pain and suffering of fellow humans. However, we all have our own trials and tribulations that shape who we are. In the North East we are known for our hospitality, friendliness and a word we hear all too often, resilience. Whilst regularly getting kicked can eventually lead to becoming more resilient and immune to getting kicked, what is far more beneficial is actually learning from the experience to make sure you stop getting kicked and move on.

The single largest contributor factor to success and progression is having a positive approach. Understandably there are a whole host of others too, having a plan and persevering significantly help, yet every single successful person demonstrates one consistent trait, positivity. Looking for the positive in what we do and establishing ways of making things better is something that I have focused the last 20 years on, whether it is in the

North East or further afield creating the Primary to Prosperity campaign.

Oddly, or maybe not so, people ask me what I do, which is a legitimate question. The challenge I have is I do too much, so all of sudden the question doesn't solicit a simple answer. However, what I do share is that I either fix things or make them better, which is how I set benchmarks on what I get involved in. If I cannot add value I am not interested, always trying to do what I enjoy and enjoy what I do, positively.

Positivity has the power to transform who we are, how we see things and react; it is scientifically proven to even impact our health. A positive mind over matter works, regardless of our circumstance. So let us all stop punching one another (figuratively speaking) and start seeing the positives in every member of our community.

We live in an incredible region filled with opportunity, let's positively make it better.

Ammar Mirza CBE is the founder and chairman of Asian Business Connexions, Board member of North East LEP and holds various other positions across the private, public and third sectors.

FROM PRIMARY TO PROSPERITY



PROSPERITY



The programme, developed and delivered by employers, offers free professional support to individuals to enhance personal profiles and job prospects.

A five day mini-MBA is offered, delivered by academics and professionals providing theoretical and practical enterprise advice.

The Big Learn is a fully funded campaign that provides an opportunity for businesses to support lifelong learning by accessing accredited industry recognised qualifications.

Using a recognised distant learn model which ensures participants learn at a pace and time to suit them.



Working with those most distant from the labour market, including long-term unemployed, the two-week boot camp delivered by Asian Business Connexions (ABC) holistically addresses barriers to employment including improving self-confidence, problem solving, team working, resilience, alongside professional skills to enter the world of work, consider training or even self-employment. The programme is delivered by employers and offers volunteering and work experience opportunities.

PEERZ Academy is a secure online learning platform that allows verified mentors to deliver lesson content created by expert teachers for GCSE and A'Level Students. PEERZ provide an effective and affordable alternative to costly private tuition; pairing the latest online technology with high impact educational strategies.



Cadet Apprenticeship Pathways (CAP)

CAP seeks to align 'work ready' cadets aged 16-18 with employers, supportive of their continued progression as a cadet and at 18 years old as either an Adult Volunteer or Reservist, whilst satisfying an employers need for a reliable, respectful and trustworthy young employee.

The initiative provides an honest brokering service to join up young people to employers, including offering Degree Level Apprenticeships.

PIE introduces the world of work and local businesses to young people. Connects businesses to education, provides volunteering opportunities for parents, and upskills teachers in enterprise. Linked to various initiatives including Enterprise Advisors, Gatsby Benchmarks, Engineering and Coding, PIE helps realise ambitions and raises aspirations to address industry skills shortages.



PRIMARY

The Primary to Prosperity Campaign aims to help realise ambitions and raise aspirations through a cohesive and collaborative practical approach. There are a whole host of organisations and individuals that have come together to make an impact on helping transform lives. To get involved or see how the campaign can help you please email info@ammarm.com



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in association with Gainford Group

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Michelle Rainbow

HELPING EACH AND EVERY YOUNG PERSON INTO THE NORTH EAST WORKFORCE

North East LEP Skills Director Michelle Rainbow talks about how the business community can support all young people into work.

Our ambition here at the North East LEP is to help young people in the region prepare for the world of work. And that means each and every young person. All the work we do with schools, colleges and employers is focused on meeting the needs of each and every young person, including those with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

It's a startling statistic that just 6% of people with a learning disability are in paid employment* and yet more than 65% of people with a learning disability want to and are able to work**.

How do we start to turn this around and ensure that all young people in the North East have the opportunity to experience the world of work, receive high quality careers guidance and have clear routes into employment?

How can we make sure businesses are able to access the widest pool of talent possible and reflect the communities they serve? And how can businesses make sure they're not overlooking potential employees who can bring real benefits to an organisation?

We've formed a working group made up of

businesses, careers leads from schools (both SEND specialist schools and those with a SEND provision) and representatives from the third sector. We're also working closely with the Leonard Cheshire Foundation and host their North East presence, working together to support young people to develop their careers.

The working group aims to uncover and tackle the challenges faced by the SEND sector when it comes to transitioning from education to work. We are also sharing examples of best practice with employers and offering guidance for schools and businesses on how to best support young people with SEND to successfully enter employment.

Nationally, one great example of best practice is the National Grid. Their focus is on building a workforce that meets the needs of the business and that also helps to create a fairer and more inclusive society where everyone can reach their full potential. Their EmployAbility programme which provides supported internships for young people with SEND has seen fantastic results - 60% of interns have gone into paid employment, compared with a national average of only 6%, and they have a 100% retention rate for intern recruits.

Every business can benefit from better engaging with young people with special educational needs and disabilities. Young people have a valuable contribution to make to our workplaces and businesses like the National Grid have seen wider benefits across their entire workforce such as a boost to overall performance and morale, and increased coaching opportunities. 95% of the employee volunteers for National Grid's EmployAbility scheme said they felt more positive about the company.

If you'd like to find out more I'd encourage you to register for our free event on 15 May at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead when we'll be hearing from the National Grid and the Careers and Enterprise Company who will be sharing more detail about their successful model. You can book a free ticket via Eventbrite - search for 'Introduction to the SEND employer toolkit'.

We're also looking for more businesses to join our working group. Whether you're already successfully working with young people with SEND or you would like to help champion the right of each and every young person in our region to access the world of work, we'd love to hear from you.

Get in touch via www.nelep.co.uk.

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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

JAYNE HART

Owner, HR Department



Did you always envisage a career in the HR industry?

Not at all, my move into a HR career was very accidental indeed. I was plodding along in a rather dull office job within government when all of a sudden, I found myself seconded into managing a team of staff during the foot and mouth epidemic of 2001. No management experience at all but all of a sudden, I was a thousand miles out of my comfort zone and loving the buzz of managing people in a crisis situation. Around this time, riding on my new-found confidence, I went for a promotion. At the interview I was asked, did I want IT, HR or Finance. So, I plumped for HR based on the fact I am useless with IT and was number blind! The rest is history and my career in HR went from strength to strength. Usually well outside my comfort zone, which prepared me well for what I am doing now, building a HR outsourcing company.

What is your favourite aspect of your job?

With HR it is so unpredictable because of the nature of people and we simply don't know what will come in next on our HR Advice line! With employee issues it can also get very complex as there are often many strands to a disciplinary or a grievance and understanding how they all fit together, and the legislation and risks associated can be very challenging, but I love this part of the job. Knowing I have mitigated the risks of a tribunal is very satisfying. Working with SMEs I can also support the business owner with issues that are often causing them distress and costing them money, no one likes to deal with a tricky employee and often relationships have broken down. So, if I (or my team) can bring the issue to an end for the owner and treat the employee with respect, then that's a job well done.

Tell us about the services you offer?

We offer a HR Department to a small business who would not normally have the resources to recruit a full time HR Manager, despite the fact the SME still has the legal responsibilities under employment legislation as a bigger corporate with a full HR team! So, this means everything from recruiting the first employee, putting in place employment contracts and a staff handbook through the whole life cycle of an employee - disciplinaries, grievances, redundancies but also the nice stuff such as HR strategy to support business growth.

I base our success on our clients considering their Account Manager to be 'their' HR Manager and very much part of the team. We pride ourselves on the local and personal service that the large national HR companies simply do not have.

What is your proudest achievement to date?

Children, husband and cat a given. I think it is that I have built a quality local business that now provides local jobs and training opportunities to graduates just starting out in their HR career. Never in my dreams did I imagine that I could achieve this, and I am rather proud of this.

What have been your biggest challenges?

Being a business owner is by far the biggest challenge. There have been many times, especially in the first couple of years when I had no salary coming in and growth was slow and sales erratic, that I could have easily taken up an interim role or gone back into employment, but I knew that deep down I would make a success of it and I believed in our business model, so persevered. I found the whole area of sales incredibly difficult at first and understanding the numbers also frustrated me. I am fortunate in that I have a very strong and supportive franchise network behind me so that on the dark days I always had someone to turn to who had gone through exactly the same challenges and come out the other end.

How do you see the industry evolving in the next 5-10 years?

There will always be people doing jobs of some sort (probably alongside Robots!) and people cause issues that will cause their managers pain. That's a given. However, the way people are employed will change, people will not be committed to one employer - they will work for many. This is what we see with the 'gig' economy, with more and more people making a living by being self-employed. Legislation at the moment is not keeping up with this and there is a lot of confusion and loss of workers' rights. One of the key questions will be how to ensure that our system of employment rules are fit for the fast-changing world of work, and in particular ensuring that workers get their due protections and entitlements.

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

During my HR career, I have always had people

who I looked at and thought "I like what they do - I can learn from them" in fact I would go looking for these people. I have applied the same principal as a business owner, I think it is important to surround your self with good people who you can learn from and be challenged by. I would like to give a shout out to Neville Tynemouth, Andrew Pickersgill and Craig Hart who have tirelessly supported me with my sales skills and my numbers!

As for heroes, I'm not sure how to answer that as there are so many people out there doing amazing stuff and are heroes in their own right. I do have a bee in my bonnet about the use of the label 'inspirational' so it's a good job you didn't ask me about this - the word seems to be used at business events so loosely, inspirational speaker...inspirational talks...maybe I am just hard to please!

How would you describe yourself in 3 words?

Resilient, determined, genuine.

How do you like to unwind?

I am not good at this at all and need to get better. I am addicted to Coronation Street (shh as this is a secret), I love a good comedy night at the Customs House in South Shields and I am a bit of a groupie of local Shields band "Rivelino". On a serious note I did hit a bad patch last year when all I was doing was working and the pressure took its toll on me which was scary. Since then I have had weekly personal training sessions and have joined Haven Point Gym and have found the boot camp style of exercising really good to help me switch off from work and to create positive mental health.

Who would be your 4 ideal dinner guests?

South Tyneside comedians - Sarah Millican and Chris Ramsay for entertainment, Super Vet because, well, he is super vet and probably my nanna just because I don't think I had enough dinners with her when she was around. I would need 5 though as I would also want my husband Craig to be there to ensure I went steady on the wine.

HEEL AND TOE



Doug Long CEO of Heel and Toe

When was the Charity founded?

Paul Bannister decided to try to establish a charity to provide therapy for children with cerebral palsy after years of frustration in trying to find suitable therapy for his daughter Hannah, who has the condition. He decided early in the charity's journey 'That No Child Should Be Denied Therapy Due to a Lack of Money'.

Heel & Toe Children's Charity was established in June 2008. The not for profit organisation was granted charity status on the 4 September 2008 and the centre was opened on the 4th October 2008, offering free Conductive Education Therapy for any child with cerebral palsy in an annex based at the Meadows School in Spennymoor County Durham.

The charity now delivers conductive therapy free of charge for hundreds of children with cerebral palsy from across the region and offers physiotherapy, intensive weekly block physiotherapy, speech and language, occupational therapy and Special Educational Needs tutoring (SEN), from our base at in Pelton near Chester-le-Street.

Which area do you cover?

We support hundreds of children with cerebral palsy and their families from across the North East and we have some parents who travel from North Yorkshire and over from Cumbria.

What type of fundraising events do you have?

We have a packed calendar of events throughout the year. We don't receive any government funding, so we are reliant on the generosity of fundraisers and people donating to continue our vital work. Our events include our annual sponsored children's walk which many of our children and families take part in, a skywalk in Keswick, a corporate golf day at Ramside Hall, Sportsman's Dinner at the Hilton Hotel in

NewcastleGateshead, 12,000 foot sky dive, Annual Charity Winter Ball, 160 runners in great north run, 300 children in mini and junior great north run, a cycle ride, endurance events including Total Warrior and Rough Runner, and Back to the Eighties night. The ideas come from our fundraising team and are often things they do themselves in their spare time, so everyone brings their family and friends and we aim to raise lots of money.

How do you get involved?

We would love to hear from anyone who would like to fundraise for us, they can contact our fundraising team on 0191 386 8606 or email info@heelandtoe.org.uk We also have different packages for people or businesses who would like to donate for example sponsoring a child or making us their charity of the year.

What have been the Charity's proudest moments so far?

There have been many, our growth has been so rewarding to see how many families we are helping and supporting with therapy. When we started in 2008 we were in a portacabin in Spennymoor helping three children, and this has grown to 130 children a week from our centre in Pelton. Seeing the children achieve their milestones is also incredibly special whether it be crawling, walking, holding a pen, they are such important steps for the children and their families and give them such a boost that they can keep making progress and achieve their full potential.

What are you currently working on?

We are continuing with our main campaign, the Footprints Appeal, which was launched to raise £600,000 to build a Hydrotherapy and accommodation centre in Pelton on a site we

purchased. The building will have a hydrotherapy pool for children to have sessions delivered by our therapists with their families, which is unique to the North East and very much needed. The pool will also be offered to the community to use.

It will also have therapy rooms, a Gait analysis lab, rebound therapy on a trampoline, and accommodation for families who are travelling from outside of the region. We are reliant on donations and we have been incredibly busy working on fundraising in many ways, so we can open our new centre to coincide with our tenth birthday later this year.

Tell us about your main trustees and patrons?

We have seven Trustees including our chair Paul Gilsean, who are all successful local business people with a passion for our charity. They have combined knowledge and experience which they bring to their roles to guide us. We also have three patrons including Blackburn Rovers striker Danny Graham, Metro Radio DJ Brian Moore and Anne Wood creator of Teletubbies and In The Night Garden - who was born in Spennymoor - just like our charity - and wanted to be involved after hearing of the thousands of youngsters in the region who struggle with their disabilities every day. We also have a new layer of support in our nine ambassador who promote the charity in their professional positions and in their personal lives.

What does the future hold?

The future is very exciting! We celebrate our tenth birthday in October this year and we hope to celebrate this milestone with the planned opening of our second centre – the Hydrotherapy Centre in Perkinville. This will be such an achievement and make such a difference for so many children with cerebral palsy and their families.

GATESHEAD COLLEGE REMAINS IN POLE POSITION

By Judith Doyle CBE, principal and CEO of Gateshead College



Judith Doyle CBE, principal and CEO of Gateshead College

Sterling work in the business community has helped a North East education provider retain its position as the best-performing college in the region...

In the last month we've been celebrating the news that Gateshead College has been ranked as the number one North East college for the fourth year running and the second in the country based on the achievements of our students; a high point in what is proving to be an exciting year for us at the college.

Latest figures from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) show Gateshead College achieved an overall achievement rate of 93.9% in the academic year of 2016-17 – almost 10% higher than the national average and only 0.1% below the top-performing college in England. We're also in the top ten colleges in England for our work on apprenticeships, which have helped dozens of local businesses get the skills they need to grow and develop.

This is a fantastic reflection of the work and commitment of my colleagues who put everything they have into making sure students succeed. What is most important to me, however, is that our achievement rates have risen each year for the last three years and we've consistently been ranked in

the top ten colleges in England during this period. This drive to continuously improve, even when we are at the top of our game, is what makes the difference and what is helping students of all ages and backgrounds to progress to higher education, embark on a successful career or start their own business.

This year so far we've also seen industry-driven programmes such as PlanBEE, designed to help the construction industry tackle specific skills shortages through a higher level apprenticeship, and the unique Bus Driver recruitment programme delivered in partnership with Go North East win awards on the national stage. Both programmes are great examples of our ability to adapt and create training which plugs skills gaps and deliver what employers want. This approach has also led to new relationships with businesses such as Greggs and Virgin Money and I'm excited to see how they develop.

Engagement with Go Grow, an ESF-funded programme that has seen Gateshead College and our partners deliver almost £15m of training in

the last year, has also been impressive. Newcastle Airport, Gentoo, Beamish Museum and a host of small businesses from plumbers to boutique hotels have benefited from the programme, which is designed to help companies strengthen the performance of their business through staff upskilling.

The role colleges like ours play in our region is critical. Our work is diverse, we provide opportunities for everyone, whoever they are and whatever their background, and in doing so help companies recruit employees with the talent, work ethic, skills and qualifications to drive their business forward.

This is why it is excellent to be celebrating this great news about the performance of our college and most importantly our students; their achievements are the greatest demonstration of our hard work. And we won't rest on our laurels; we are now looking to how we can make things even better because there is always room for improvement.

ARE GOOD SALES PEOPLE BORN OR BRED?

How do we make our youth more employer ready and equip them with the necessary skills that our businesses need?

First, we need to debunk the myth that sales people are born and not bred.

Can you really turn anyone into a good salesperson? Well, science has recently proven that a natural propensity for selling but it's not a genetic pre-disposition.

Epigenetics, the very latest field of research in DNA human science aims to understand the changes in gene behaviour. The most recent papers confirm that within everyone's DNA some strands of proteins can be either activated or deactivated throughout someone's lifetime depending on their human experience.

This means that the type of life we live, be that the experiences we are exposed to, how we respond to those experiences, the lifestyle choices we make or the emotions we feel actually do affect our DNA. This change in our internal genetics increases or decreases our propensity to not only specific diseases (for example, arthritis) but also changes in personality and behaviour.

Thereby, supporting the belief that there is a potential salesman in all of us.

So, if we accept that scientifically we all have the propensity to develop persuasive and influence skills, what then can we business leaders do to support the development of these skills with the more inexperienced members of our organisations?

1. Provide solid training from day one. Include sales training in your induction and as part of ongoing career development. Sales should be part of your culture and not just a department.
2. Allow open access to supportive peer communities. Could you introduce a job sharing or internal mentoring/coaching programme into your business encouraging the more experienced people to nurture the talent and skills of the newer team members.
3. Build a success based environment. Catch people doing things well. Make a habit of sharing good news. At CS I send out a weekly email (or sometimes text) which starts with the words ... "And this week we're celebrating." Success breeds success, so make it a habit within your team.



Nicola Cook, CEO of Company Shortcuts.

To watch a video on how to improve the sales productivity in your business follow this link; companyshortcuts.com

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WORKING DADS AND SHARED PARENTAL LEAVE



In today's world of work, it's becoming increasingly common for more parents to share childcare and parental responsibility equally, allowing mothers to return to their career following the birth of a child.

This means workplace procedures for shared childcare are evolving, and it's important for businesses to be aware of the relevant policies and laws when negotiating parental leave and flexible working for fathers. Here, Paul Lott of Hadrian HR explores Shared Parental Leave (SPL).

Businesses must first understand what paid paternity leave is, and how this applies to parents in work. Paid paternity leave of two weeks was first introduced in 2003 for fathers, and from 2011 extended paid paternity leave, called Additional Paternity Leave, has been available. In 2014, the Shared Parental Leave Regulations 2014 were implemented, and with effect from 2015, new parents have had the opportunity to take SPL.

The right to SPL applies to parents in work, including those who are adopting, same-sex couples, co-habiting couples, and couples bringing up a child together even if the baby is from a previous relationship. Under the rules the mother, or the partner claiming adoption pay, must still take the initial two weeks after birth, or when they are matched with the adopted child, or four weeks if they work in a factory, but the rest of the leave period can be shared between the parents in any way if they meet eligibility criteria.

However, despite these positive attempts to encourage equality of treatment within working families, it is apparent that the introduction of measures such as SPL have not yet managed to fully achieve the positive aims that it set out to achieve. In fact, a recent report entitled 'Fathers and the Workplace' produced by MPs on the Women and Equalities Committee has identified

workplace policies have not kept up with the social changes in people's everyday lives.

For businesses looking to commit to equality for working parents, it is important to not only be aware of SPL but also flexible working, and how a working father can be offered a part-time position to balance childcare with his spouse if he so wishes. Businesses should be conscious to advertise all open positions as flexible to parents, offer better workplace rights for fathers who are agency workers or casual workers, and arrange better paternity pay for working dads.

Another issue with SPL is financial circumstances. It is apparent that many couples who may like to utilise the availability of the leave cannot afford to, and in many situations the financial ramifications mean that there is no option but for the father to remain at work on full pay while the mother is on maternity leave.

Two cases, *Ali v Capita Customer Management Ltd* and *Hextall v Chief Constable of Leicestershire Police*, considered the issue of SPL, and could impact on this situation going forward, were referred to the Employment Appeal Tribunal (EAT). In both cases, the employers paid enhanced pay during maternity leave, but not during SPL, and male workers claimed that their employers had discriminated against them because of their sex by denying them the opportunity to take SPL on full pay.

The Judgement in the first of these cases was handed down by the EAT, in April 2018. It was determined that the first-instance Employment

Tribunal had been incorrect when stating that the purpose of maternity leave was childcare, and instead the EAT stated the primary purpose of maternity leave, as established in the Pregnant Workers Directive, is to protect the health and well-being of a woman during pregnancy and following childbirth, whilst parental leave is for parents/adopters to care for their child, and that the level of maternity pay was inextricably linked to the purpose of maternity leave.

The EAT identified that SPL was given on the same terms for both men and women, and therefore there was no direct discrimination when paying maternity pay at a higher rate, and instead that a higher rate of maternity pay fell within a provision contained within the Equality Act 2010, which allows for special treatment afforded to a woman in connection with pregnancy or childbirth.

On the basis the *Hextall* case follows suit, and subject to the outcome of any subsequent appeals, employers with similar policies will not be required to pay enhanced payments during SPL on the basis that similar claims of discrimination may be brought, and this will remain a discretionary decision. This outcome may therefore have the unintended consequence of acting as a further deterrent to the greater uptake of employees applying for SPL.

Whilst it is clear that attempts to remove the barriers preventing balanced treatment for working families continue to be made, including proposals to extend SPL to include working grandparents, there is still some way to go.

GRADVERT: IMPROVING BUSINESS PERFORMANCE BY IMPROVING PEOPLE



Newcastle-based Gradvert works with businesses across the UK to improve business performance by improving people. Here managing director Michaela Reaney talks through their partnership with PAB Coventry.

Family-run business PAB has a long history of working with the automotive, aerospace, rail and defence industries. Taking projects from inception to completion, PAB uses its years of expertise and knowledge to offer a range of quality services in laser cutting and metal forming projects.

Working with top brands such as Aston Martin and JLR, PAB prides itself on advising and supporting customers through the whole process, never compromising on quality and delivering against cost, quality and budget.

The People Challenge

After a successful period of growth, PAB were looking to diversify and take their expertise into new areas.

Gradvert started working with PAB in December 2016 to support them with their ambition to develop their talent and skills across the business in order to achieve their growth plans.

Gradvert helped to create this change and develop a culture of continued development, working at all levels to create the change needed.

In particular, a management programme was needed to address project planning, with the goal of improving the percentage of projects that were delivered on time.

PAB also wanted to develop the business and people management skills of its newly-appointed team leaders and hone the skills of senior management.

The Solution

Gradvert provided a solution to develop talent across the organisation at team leader, management and senior management levels.

Gradvert designed and delivered a five day

Management Development Programme that had two main areas of focus:

1. To develop the capability of PAB's managers and allow them to become stronger at people management.
2. The second was more commercially targeted and focused specifically on Project Management.

Gradvert was able to breakdown and redesign the project management process, focussing on time, quality and cost, and implement a set of best practice guidelines to reduce delays.

Additionally, the programme provided the opportunity to deliver the mandatory skills needed to motivate and engage teams.

We then progressed to delivering a 3.5 day development programme for newly appointed team leaders within the organisation.

This helped them to understand their role and how to balance their time between leading and delivering on projects.

Team leaders also developed the ability to motivate, communicate and manage conflict, and deliver projects on time and to a high standard.

Finally, we moved on to design and deliver a five day programme for PAB's senior management team.

The senior managers were given training to help them to lead and manage at a more strategic level. As well as making them more commercially aware, the programme allowed them to greater understand and contribute to the business planning process and ensure they have the ability to capacity plan and interpret profit and loss.

The Impact

The redesigned project management system vastly improved the percentage of projects completed to deadline.

PAB now operate to best practice guidelines for project planning, which has halved the number of projects that are delayed.

The team leaders who took part in the programme to improve their people management skills have an increased level of confidence. Recently they were able to use their knowledge of the business on the shop floor, combined with their new business skills, to recommend to senior management changes which have been implemented to improve safety and ensure projects are delivered on time.

PAB is now in a stronger position than ever and is planning to expand further into other sectors, including transport, rail and defence, as part of a continual growth process.

They Said...

Danny Wheldon, PAB managing director, commented: "As a family business, we are passionate about supporting our workforce at every level."

"After a very positive period of growth for our company, we felt it was the right time to invest in the training and development of our staff to develop their talent and skills across the business and allow us to diversify and expand into new areas."

"We were thrilled to partner with Gradvert and are delighted with the superb programme they delivered."

For more information on Gradvert, please visit www.gradvert.com

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPRENTICESHIPS

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares her thoughts on why the new apprenticeship standards and levy are good news for your business.



If, like me, you believe that access to the best jobs should be based on attitude and ability, not the resources to pay for higher education, then you should be embracing the recent changes to apprenticeship schemes.

Developed by employers for employers, the new standards and apprenticeship levy will increase accessibility and improve the focus on knowledge, skills and behaviours so that both young and old people can gain professional qualifications and build fantastic careers.

In a very informative article by Victoria Cavell, of Tolley Exam Training, it was cited that there are now over 1,500 different apprenticeships available in over 170 industries, including many at higher and degree level.

This variety means that apprenticeships are no longer only suitable for school leavers. With over 2,600 employers taking the lead to set the new standards - which incorporate ethics, integrity and adaptability - they are now designed to also reduce spend on retraining and upskilling staff who support business growth.

For levy paying employers (those with a pay bill over £3m), the only way to use the levy is to spend it on training apprentices. Non-levy paying companies can benefit from the Government co-investing up to 90% of apprenticeship training costs, provided they meet the eligibility criteria and offer genuine job or development opportunities.

Non-levy paying companies must also be willing to support financially with exam fees and be able to release apprentices for a minimum of 20% of their work time to attend 'off-the-job' training and study sessions (although in some instances this can be

done at night).

In tax accountancy, this means the ATT qualification can be done as part of the Level 4 Professional Taxation Technician apprenticeship and the CTA qualification can be done as part of the Level 7 Taxation Professional apprenticeship.

The Big 4 accountancy firms have been incorporating school leaver programmes and apprenticeship opportunities alongside their more established graduate programmes for some time now. As global leaders, they take attracting the best people seriously and, rather than debating whose responsibility it is to bridge the skills gap, they are embracing the challenge and facing up to a talent shortage by training people themselves.

For many years, passing your GCSEs, studying for A-levels and going to university became almost compulsory if you wanted a successful career in business. More recently however, the huge rise in tuition fees has put pay to the degree being a realistic option for a lot of less affluent families; but intelligent recruiters understand this doesn't mean those people don't have a lot to offer.

Apprenticeships are a proven way to engage with new talent and develop your team, often building a

strong sense of loyalty in employees that will benefit an organisation for years to come.

As anyone who has started a new job knows, there's no substitute for learning by experience and apprenticeships certainly give people the time to do this while receiving valuable qualifications and proving that they can add value to a business.

The future of your business is down to the ability of the staff you employ so, if you haven't already, you really should be asking yourself whether your approach needs to change if you're going to harness the full potential of our region's most talented people.

Although the reputation of apprenticeships is still not as strong as it should be, the new apprenticeship standards are effectively "talent attraction tools" that will aid recruitment and provide qualifications and work-based learning that appeals to the ambitious and talented.

Apprenticeships are all about learning new skills, whether that's in a new role or an existing one and, as cost effective ways to equip people with the tools you need to grow your business, they should be at the heart of your talent management strategy.

If you work in tax & accountancy and are looking for a new challenge, or need someone to help drive the business forward, get in touch: bryony@bryonygibson.com | (0191) 375 9983.



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THE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY – ONE YEAR ON

In conversation with James Neilands,
Apprenticeship Levy specialist at Gradvert

April 2017 saw one of the most significant shifts in the provision of apprenticeships our country has ever seen.

The introduction of the apprenticeship levy cemented the government's ambition to create three million new apprentices by 2020, reviving this valuable route to employment.

One year on, what difference has it made? Well that all depends on who you speak to.

For many businesses, the apprenticeship levy remains a confusing and challenging area to navigate. Sir John Timpson, chairman of high-street chain Timpson, compared it to 'nothing but a tax'.

For many companies though, the introduction of the apprenticeship levy has opened up a world of opportunity. Many staff members previously considered ineligible can now undertake meaningful training, not just new apprentices. Existing staff and employers can become directly involved too.

Alongside my work at Gradvert, I also run a company called Skills Office that provides a complete and affordable business support package, including MIS / E portfolio systems for new training providers and employer providers, which enable them to deliver effective and impact driven training.

One year on from the introduction of the levy, I still talk to lots of businesses that have yet to make good use of the contributions they have made. In many cases businesses have either been poorly advised about how they could use the funds or don't know where to find a trusted source; someone that can explain things in layman's terms (without industry terminology) and help them to devise a strategy on how to use the funds towards their overall business objectives.

There are of course many reasons why people have not utilised the funds yet but the most common feedback I receive is that it's too confusing and whilst many businesses want to do something with it, it's been put on the back burner.

This is where Gradvert delivers such a fantastic service. They have a solid understanding of how the levy works and we work very closely with companies, on an individual basis, to really understand what it



is that they want to achieve from the opportunity, exactly what training and support is required and how the desired impact can be achieved within the remit of the apprenticeship levy.

One area where Gradvert excels, is the investment in a complete 360° degree business analysis, putting the employer's people strategy at the heart of the process. They strive to achieve their mission to improve business performance through improving people.

They never lose sight of the fact that it's 'people who make the difference' and with such an approach, Gradvert add real value. Gradvert invest in consultants to support organisations to create effective strategies, which in turn leads to businesses making good use of the levy funds and understanding how to gain demonstrable returns on investment in their people.

For those that have taken full advantage of the apprenticeship levy, the impact can be transformational. Levy paying businesses – those with a pay bill of £3m and over – benefit from a £15,000 allowance towards the costs of training, as well as a 10% top up (of their monthly levy contributions) from the government. Non-levy paying businesses can obtain up to 90% funding for their apprenticeship training, so there are clear opportunities for businesses.

It's clear to see from figures published by DfE (Department of Education) that month on month apprenticeship starts are below expectation; currently more than 22% lower than this time last year. The reasons for which could be debated. However, I believe it's partly due to many levy-paying companies not yet making use of the funds.

Businesses should be vigilant as the clock is ticking and funds not used for training within a two-year window will no longer be accessible by the employer. Gradvert have already helped many businesses on the journey towards making the right decisions and are perfectly equipped to support anyone looking for answers.

We, as training providers and consultants within the industry, play an important role in educating the business community about the apprenticeship levy. Established and experienced organisations like Gradvert and Skills Office can advise on issues like compliance, safeguarding and quality assurance, to name but a few. These are all an essential part of the process to be a successful and quality led provider. Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills) is really clamping down on training providers, including those who have recently joined the register, who are not fit for purpose. It's essential businesses work with accredited and experienced providers, with a strong track record, who put the learner first and deliver a quality led provision.

On going changes to the levy, like increasing apprenticeship qualifications to Masters degree-level, and sharing Levy funds between companies, will make the scheme more attractive to some employers.

It will be interesting to see where we are in another year's time. I'm confident as more businesses plan their apprenticeship strategy, seek the proper advice and use the levy in the right way, we'll see an increase in apprenticeship numbers and more examples of employers who have had significant improvements in business functions and performance.

For more information on how you can maximise the Apprenticeship Levy in your business you can visit the Gradvert website: www.gradvert.com/apprenticeship-levy

You can also find more information on the Skills Office website: www.skillsoffice.co.uk

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN BUSINESSES AND FUTURE WORKERS



Newcastle NE1, the city's Business Improvement District, recently teamed up with The Bank of England to educate young people in finance and the economy as part of its NE1 Can initiative.

NE1 Business Network Manager, Louise Liddle, talks about the success of the partnership and why the programme is important:

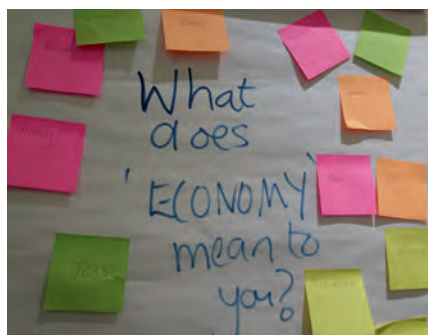
"In 2018 Newcastle celebrates the 90th birthday of possibly its most famous landmark, the Tyne Bridge. When it was built in 1928, it drastically improved connections between the city and the rest of the country by bridging the gap between North and South.

"Facilitating long-lasting connections in order to create successful partnerships is something that was very much on our mind when we set up the NE1 Can initiative.

"Like many cities in the UK, Newcastle's youth employment rate has stagnated for a number of years. There have been a multitude of work schemes and programmes designed to solve the problem over the years, but none have made significant impact on the statistics.

"But looking at the statistics at the same time as supporting real life businesses searching for employees and people in need of employment, we realised that there is no better way to improve the situation than to bring the two together so that the next generation is as equipped for work as possible.

"NE1's unique access to 1,400 employers across the City allows us to encourage a whole range of members to engage with young people in a tailored and meaningful way to support their business



needs from a talent and skills perspective now and in the future.

"This is done by facilitating business-led workshops, hands on workplace experiences and a range of quality employer encounters delivered on business premises, designed to demonstrate important skills and valuable information that aren't necessarily covered in the classroom, as well as making lasting introductions.

"Through its strong links with schools and youth organisations across the region, NE1 Can has already facilitated several major projects this year, in particular teaming up with The Bank of England in order to help young people develop a better understanding of economics, banking and finance.

"We want to ensure that young people grow up with a greater understanding of the terminology

of economics and business, because there is surely nothing more daunting than stepping into the world of work and not understanding the jargon and your own financial wellbeing?

"Other employers we have supported through our projects include Virgin Money, to deliver a day of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) in the context of business, McAleer, Rushe and The NBS, as they open up the Construction sector. We have also worked with Pizza Express as they look to demonstrate careers in hospitality. So far the programme has delivered in excess of 2400 quality employer encounters for more than 700 individual young people.

"It is always great to see so many young people taking an interest in the events, it is obvious that they understand the benefits of this extra help. Having the involvement of such important institutions as The Bank of England and leading employers adds a whole other dimension to how we can raise aspirations of young people across the region.

"Building the bridge between young people making career decisions to secure future employment, and employers looking to secure their future workforce, is the most effective way to safeguard the local economy for generations to come. The people, and the jobs, are out there, we see it as our responsibility to link the two."

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for more details visit: www.exclusivebusiness.net or to book a place - email Linda@exclusivebusiness.net

A MENU FOR ALL SEASONS

By Michael Grahamslaw



Having totally over-indulged over the Easter period, I decided to continue in a similar vein by taking an old business friend out for lunch at Jesmond Dene House.

The Garden Room is part of the restaurant which really comes into its own in the springtime and boasts some lovely views out over the hotel's quaint English gardens and sun-dappled lawns.

To reflect the change in the weather, the restaurant frequently updates its menu and we were looking forward to a new selection of modern British a la carte dishes.

Being open to both hotel guests and non-residents alike, there always appears to be a steady murmur about the dining area and today proved no different. The restaurant offers all-day dining from 12 o'clock onwards and isn't constrained to fixed sittings which is a huge bonus. Diners are free to drop in as they fancy and it's this flexibility which makes it great for an informal lunch or business tete-a-tete.

Nicely settled in, we sipped on a crisp bottle of Sauvignon Blanc whilst looking over a menu brimming with fresh new ideas.

A real haven for foodies, dishes often feature a number of unique combinations. For instance, starters included the Hand Dived Scallops with Smoked Bacon, Puy Lentils and Garden Apple alongside the Braised Pig Cheek with Homemade Black Pudding and Pickled Plums.

We deliberated over these for some time before eventually choosing the melt-in-the-mouth Chicken & Duck Terrine with Pickled Mushrooms

and the Steamed Mussels in a White Bean Sauce with chunks of Salami.

For my main course, a tranche of Roasted Cod sat atop a bed of Sautéed Spinach and Crushed Potato which was surrounded by a moat of Curried Mussels. A smartly presented dish, this looked great and tasted even better with the curry sauce proving a tangy and aromatic accompaniment.

Other eye-catching main plates included the Roast Venison Saddle with Bacon and Celeriac and the Whole Lemon Sole with Pink Pepper Butter, yet my business pal couldn't be tempted away from the 250g Fillet Steak with Peppercorn Sauce which he confessed had been winking at him all along!

You see, Jesmond Dene also do the basics very well and even offer a "Simple Food Menu" featuring hearty classics such as the Club Sandwich, Cod & Chips or Aberdeen Angus Cheeseburger.

What really impressed us about the food was its rich appearance. Bold, evocative colours really leap out at you from the plate and clearly demonstrate the freshness of the ingredients.

Desserts were similarly inviting and well worth the extra calories. The Dark Chocolate Sphere is a signature dish whatever the season and provided a memorable finale. A jug of warm chocolate sauce was poured by our server over a scoop of Salted Caramel Ice Cream which created an orb-like effect and a real sense of drama.



Across the table, yours truly waded in to an epic Rhubarb Cheesecake on a Shortbread, biscuit-y base with a Cinnamon-tinged Vanilla Ice Cream. Woweeee!

From this visit, it's clear that Jesmond Dene continue to showcase their culinary flair with bold and innovative new dishes. Whether you're a true foodie or simply looking for a new place to visit, this place is a real must try especially going into the – dare I say it – warmer weather!



BUSINESS LUNCH CLUB

...Inspiring conversation over a fine lunch...



With thanks to our March lunch speaker, Gary Lumby OBE, his insightful presentation on delivering a successful growth strategy for small businesses resonated with the audience and prompted lots of questions; another lively and engaging lunch event.

Booking now for Monday 4th June

Speaker - Jonas Caino MBA – Rainmethods Group

Jonas Caino is an MBA trained, highly talented, driven and energetic sales professional with 20 years of sales and sales management experience within the IT and data centre space. Jonas recently published the Amazon bestseller, *Make Rain: 180 Powerful Insights into How Rainmakers Sell Their Way to Financial Success*. Who is the Rainmaker? Come along and meet Jonas and find out how the rainmakers do it, questions ready, this is going to be an exciting insight into sales success.

Venue - The Crowne Plaza, Stephenson Quarter, Newcastle upon Tyne

Date - Monday 4th June, 12 noon **Price** - £35pp + VAT to include a two-course lunch and coffee



Find out more - book a place - email Linda@exclusivebusiness.net

Diary Date: Monday 2nd July - Speaker: Simon Bourne The Hand Dyed Shoe Company

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INSPIRING CONVERSATION OVER A FINE LUNCH



THE WAITING ROOM

An event was held to officially open The Waiting Room, a micropub in Durham Railway Station.

The venue has regenerated the former ladies' first class waiting room in the station, which dates from 1872 and is the first venture by Ouseburn Leisure Group. It serves a range of local real ales and gins.

The Waiting Room underwent a six-figure refurbishment, supported by a grant from the Railway Heritage Trust, to allow it to open. Graeme Robinson, managing director of Ouseburn Leisure Group, said he is already looking to open further venues after the initial success of his first.

Sarah Smith, head of licensing at Sintons, secured the license for The Waiting Room.



AKZONOBEL LAUNCHES SECOND UK DULUX ACADEMY IN NORTH EAST

In a bid to help tackle skills shortages in the construction sector, global paint manufacturer AkzoNobel has opened its second purpose-built Dulux Academy at its new facility in Ashington.

The new customised training centre will aim to build on the success of the company's first Dulux Academy in Slough, which trained 1,600 decorators in its first year.

Offering a wide variety of courses in disciplines such as decorating prep and basic painting and decorating through to wallpapering, woodcare and advanced painting techniques, AkzoNobel's ambition is to train and upskill 10,000 UK decorators by 2020.

"We're incredibly proud to have the second Dulux Academy housed in Ashington," said Jeff Hope, head of manufacturing unit at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"With up to 12 spaces available per programme, the Academy provides a unique teaching and learning environment for those in the decorating trade. Featuring a dedicated workshop where learners can get hands-on with practical-based assignments as well as a classroom area for theoretical based learning, the Academy also has its own kitchen and dining space, meeting rooms and a breakout room, which contains all of AkzoNobel's latest virtual reality technologies.



A training course in session at the new Dulux Academy at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"The courses on offer to practiced painters and decorators, as well as those just starting out in the industry, are designed to provide attendees with all of the expertise and know-how they need for business success."

Officially opened in September 2017, AkzoNobel Ashington is the company's flagship UK production centre and home to the market leading paint brand, Dulux.

"It's fitting that the company's newest Dulux Academy has been placed in Ashington," Jeff added.

"AkzoNobel has made a significant investment in the North East through the construction of the plant in Ashington. The opening of the new Academy is just further reinforcement of the company's belief in the region as a great place to do business and in the talent of its people."

A prospectus containing full details of the range of courses on offer at the Dulux Academy can be found online at academy.duluxtradepaintexpert.co.uk. To make an enquiry, email duluxacademy@akzonobel.com.

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WARD HADAWAY SUPPORTS NORTH EAST BUSINESSES

Law firm Ward Hadaway has played a major role in the creation of a new £120m fund to help support the growth of hundreds of businesses across the North East.

Experts from Ward Hadaway's Corporate and Commercial teams provided legal advice on the The North East Fund Limited. This continues the firm's long association with regional investment funds, which covers a total of almost £300m funding for businesses.

Colin Hewitt, Partner and Head of Commercial at Ward Hadaway, led the firm's team on fundraising and commercial support, alongside Corporate Partner Richard Butts, Banking & Finance Partner Julie Harrison and solicitor Rosie Moore.

Colin said: "The fund is excellent news for the North East's business community as its predecessor has been a vital source of finance in the region over the past eight years. It's expected that it could help more than 600 companies, creating more than 3,500 jobs."



HAY & KILNER BREAKS INTO ADVISERS TOP TEN

Investing in its corporate and commercial team has helped North East law firm Hay & Kilner break into the list of the region's top ten legal advisers for merger and acquisition work.

The Newcastle-headquartered firm has been ranked eighth in the latest Experian review of the region's corporate market.

Recent projects for the team have included the management buy-out of North East construction firm P F Burridge & Sons, the sale of property business Van Mildert and the acquisition of Indigo Software Ltd.

Hay & Kilner's corporate and commercial team has also previously been highlighted in the The Legal 500 as delivering 'first-rate advice that is thorough and comprehensive'.

Established in 1946, Hay & Kilner is one of the North East's leading independent law firms. The company provides a full range of legal services to businesses and individuals from both within and outside the region.

WATSON BURTON PARTNERS WITH THE SOCIAL MOBILITY FOUNDATION



Newcastle-headquartered Watson Burton has announced that it is now working with the Social Mobility Foundation to support North East students who wish to develop legal careers.

The Social Mobility Foundation, which has an office in Newcastle, provides opportunities and networks of support for 16-17-year olds from low-income backgrounds.

Watson Burton will now be mentoring four students as part of the charity's APP City programme. The law firm will also be offering work experience to students through the foundation.

The APP City programme supports high achieving students from low-income backgrounds into competitive universities and the top professions. It provides mentoring by professionals, tailored skills sessions and career workshops, university application guidance and work experience with high profile employers.

As part of its work with the Social Mobility Foundation, Watson Burton is hosting a Careers Insight Day on May 30 at its offices on 1 St James' Gate, Newcastle.

NEWCASTLE LAW FIRM ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNER

Newcastle law firm Mincoffs Solicitors has promoted Wills and Probate specialist Louise Miller to Partner.

A graduate of Northumbria University, Louise qualified as a solicitor in 2006. She has previously worked for firms Bywaters Topham & Phillips and Hadaway and Hadaway, before joining Mincoffs Solicitors as Head of Wills, Probate and Trusts in 2011.

Louise has particular expertise in advising on

wills, estate planning, trusts, probate, powers of attorney and court of protection matters. She has also been recognised by the Legal 500 for her work and was quoted as being 'brilliant and extremely professional'.

The move follows a period of sustained growth for Mincoffs Solicitors, a leading commercial law firm based in Jesmond, Newcastle. Louise's promotion takes the number of partners at the firm to 10 as she is the third partner to be appointed in the past 18 months.



Mincoffs Solicitors is a progressive full service law firm with a commercial, pragmatic and straight talking approach.

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NORTH EAST EMPLOYERS ADVISED TO ACT IN RESPONSE TO SPIKE IN TRIBUNAL NUMBERS



Sarah Hall

After new figures showed a sharp spike in the number of employment tribunal claims being lodged, North East business owners are being advised to take proactive steps to ensure they're not the next ones to find themselves facing claims.

That's the response of Sarah Hall, Partner in the employment law team at Hay & Kilner Law Firm, to data from the Ministry of Justice which shows a 90 per cent rise in the number of single employment tribunals claims being made in the final quarter of last year, compared to the same period in 2016.

The increase followed on from a Supreme Court ruling July 2017, which found that the fees imposed by the Government for anyone wanting to pursue an employment tribunal claim were unlawful.

And with practical experience showing that the workplace issues leading to claims have often escalated to crisis point before the HR department is even aware of them, Sarah Hall is advising businesses to ensure that all those responsible for managing employees are equipped with the skills

to handle and hopefully diffuse people issues at an early stage.

Sarah Hall says: "The cost to businesses in terms of the management time and money involved in fighting an employment tribunal claim can be very significant, and with the number of claims increasing so sharply, it is essential that businesses take steps to ensure their employment practices are comprehensive and up to date, and that their managers are fully trained.

Employment Tribunal

Across the UK, the number of tribunal claims more than halved from 191,541 in 2012-13, the year before fees were introduced, to 88,476 in 2016-17, but after the removal of fee, the new upward trend is expected to continue this year and beyond.

In response to the need to address workplace situations which could lead to tribunals, Hay & Kilner has developed HR Showcase, a bespoke training package for owner/managers which uses interactive role plays scenarios to highlight how individuals and management teams can prepare themselves and their staff to manage them.

Sarah continues: "Offering business owners and managers hands on experience in a realistic environment of how they can minimise the risks inherent in managing a workforce will help them make stronger, more proactive decisions when any issues arise for real.

"Employers can expect to see a continued increase in the number of tribunal claims, so anything that will help avoid claims is well worth knowing."

For further information on our HR Showcase training package, please email helen.ward@hay-kilner.co.uk, or call 0191 232 8345

PROTECTING YOUR ASSETS IN A DIGITAL AGE



The majority of us are living our lives in a digital age. As of the fourth quarter of 2017, there were 2.2 billion monthly active Facebook users and as at the end of September 2017, Instagram had 800 million users. The usage of social media and digital assets will only continue to increase, but research shows that just one in four adults has organised their financial information well enough to allow their executors to handle and discover these assets easily on death.

More and more assets are being held online rather than physically, hence why they are referred to as digital assets. Most of us have:-

- Photos on social media apps such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram
- Music downloaded from iTunes
- Blogs and online content
- Emails and email accounts
- Loyalty points such as airline points
- Internet payment sites such as PayPal
- Bitcoin and cryptocurrency (this is a digital wallet with monetary value).

Few of us give any thought over what happens to our digital assets on death, or even to how they are discovered by our executors. As a result, this can lead to arguments and hostility for those you leave behind. Who will become the keeper of your photos, blogs, music and what will happen to your money held within the digital wallet?

Some social media accounts such as Facebook have a legacy setting which allows you to choose someone to look after your account when you die, which will give that person time to download your memories and pass them to loved ones. Not many people know

about this. Other websites prohibit you from passing on your login details to other people, such as your executors, and on your death they will simply close the account once notified. Data then held by those websites will simply be lost.

Loyalty providers set their own rules on whether points or cashback accrued can be passed on when you die. Sometimes an executor can claim these, but time can be of the essence and knowing they exist in the first place is crucial in making this happen.

When making a will, you should give consideration to your digital assets.

You should:

- Review the assets and information you hold digitally in online accounts and make a list of those assets for your executors. The Law Society recommends this and is known as a Personal Assets Log. The Personal Assets Log should be stored with your will. You should not include passwords or any login details in your will because your will becomes a public document to view once a grant of representation is issued
- Review the information and assets held in online accounts and consider how they should be

administered following death. Within the terms and conditions agreed to when you created an online account, there may be terms on which assets can be administered on death. There are some websites which make specific provision for another person to receive data from your account after your death, if you agree to this in advance. Your executors will need to know where you have bitcoin or other types of cryptocurrency so that it does not lie undiscovered

- Print off copies, or download onto a USB stick, any photographs and documents that are only stored digitally and keep them in a safe place where your executors can find them
- Give careful consideration when leaving technology such as computers or mobile telephones to individuals, as often your personal information and photos are stored.

Knowing how your digital assets will be dealt with on your death and the effect of these on your will requires careful consideration. As part of drafting your will, a professional advisor will guide you on provision for your digital assets and how best to pass these onto the people you would like to receive them.

Paul Collingwood is an Associate in the specialist Wills and Probate team at law firm Sintons, based in Newcastle. To speak to Paul about this or any other matter, contact him on paul.collingwood@sintons.co.uk or 0191 226 3713

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FIZZ IN THE CITY

Mincoffs Solicitors recently held yet another successful Fizz in the City event at the Crowne Plaza, Newcastle. The ladies networking group is growing rapidly, with many of the region's inspiring business ladies coming together to develop their networks.

Fizz in the City is just one of a series of events planned to mark Mincoffs Solicitors' 70th anniversary celebrations.

The next Fizz in the City will be held in the Summer - keep an eye out on social media for updates!

@mincoffs #FizzFriday
www.facebook.com/mincoffs







ANALYSE THIS

Joe Torre, apprentice solicitor at Muckle LLP, cuts through the social media storm swirling around personal data with some legal dos and don'ts for direct marketing.

Data Protection has been in the spotlight again in recent weeks, due to chaos caused by the Cambridge Analytica and Facebook fiasco.

The world is waking up to just how precious personal data is, how powerful it is when harnessed by direct marketing, and how costly it can be if it's not managed properly. Facebook lost \$35bn in market value the first day the drama emerged.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) does not define direct marketing but the Data Protection Bill does, classifying it as 'the communication (by whatever means) of any advertising or marketing material which is directed to particular individuals'.

This applies to all types of marketing and promotional work, whether you're marketing for a commercial business, a not-for-profit organisation or a charity. So what should we take note of?

Sugging

Sugging means selling under the guise of research. It occurs when a company contacts individuals for market research, thus avoiding direct marketing rules, when it actually intends to sell goods or services, or gather customer leads to market to later. This is not allowed and direct marketing rules must be followed if this is your intention.

Sound familiar? The storm surrounding Cambridge Analytica involves a relatively small number of Facebook users, who thought they were signing up to a simple survey. In fact it may have led to the personal data of up to 87 million people being used for direct marketing.

Consent

Businesses will, in the vast majority of cases, need to gain a person's consent before they can send marketing texts or emails. Organisations will also require adequate consent to pass on customer details to another organisation.

GDPR-compliant consent is defined as an affirmative indication signifying

agreement which is freely given, specific and informed.

In short it must be very obvious that a person has consented to direct marketing from your business, and we expect this will be carefully monitored by the Information Commissioner's Office.

Steps for businesses to take...

1. Make sure your marketing lists are up to date

Only include people on your list who have given genuine lawful consent, or who you have a legitimate interest to contact (e.g. existing customers on a 'soft opt-in' basis). There is no point having someone on your marketing list who has shown no interest in your company in years. You can read more about this in our article last month.

2. Review your marketing activity and relevant consents

For each person, or data subject, you must ensure that you can show the consent you have, and evidence of this consent being given.

3. Don't neglect internal communication

It's not uncommon for businesses to market to their own employees, like a retail store offering staff discount on its products. The same external legal need for consent applies internally.

4. Create a suppression list

It is just as important to create a list of those who've opted out of receiving direct marketing, making sure they are no longer contacted by your organisation.

5. Consider entering the Corporate Telephone Preference Service (CTPS)

If you don't want your business to receive unsolicited marketing calls, register your company on the CTPS and prevent unwanted phone calls.

As Facebook has shown, it pays to make sure your personal data is managed properly and GDPR is here to help.

To learn more or for help getting your business ready for GDPR, email data@muckle-llp.com or call 0191 211 7777

muckle^{LLP}



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THE POWER OF THREE

We speak to the dynamic and forward thinking management team that is Sarah J. Reid, David Place and Phillip Moir at Richard Reed Solicitors, a leading law firm in Sunderland celebrating its 70th year.

Tell us about yourselves

SJR: I've been with the firm since 2003 and since becoming an owner and Director, I took over the reins of the Managing Director role in 2017. I've also served as Secretary to Sunderland Law Society for 14 years. I'm a family lawyer specialising in private family cases especially divorce and financial. As a trained collaborative lawyer, I help separating couples find a bespoke solution to the issues that matter to them on separation in a supportive environment and outside of the court remit.

DP: I joined the firm in 2016 and become an owner and Director in 2017. I was the Treasurer for Sunderland Law Society for 18 years. I am also the Assistant Coroner for the City of Sunderland having been appointed in 2003 and a Director of Sunderland BID. I specialise in all aspects of family law especially Special Children Act cases where the child suffers Non Accidental Injury.

PM: I joined the firm in 2008, made partner in 2011, Director in 2012 and owner in 2017. I specialise in all aspects of dispute resolution work, from landlord and tenant to contested probates and everything else in between. I also deal with commercial work in terms of advising businesses and business owners with regards to their legal needs.

What is your team's core strength?

The ability to capitalise on each other's strength is what keeps us together. The ability to adapt to change, work together, share similar interests and common goals is another key factor. Combine that with dynamism, experience, the ability to listen to staff and share in their happiness and an open door policy that promotes a culture of support and understanding, the result is a team willing to go the extra mile for their firm, their clients, and their staff.

In your opinion, what makes Richard Reed Solicitors different?

A firm is only as good as its people and we believe we've got great people. This is a firm that is adapting to change and has a willingness to listen. When it comes to our clients, we make sure their trust is rewarded. When it comes to our community, we're energetic and dynamic in engaging with them. We allow staff the time to support their communities; some are school Governors and Trustees. We've got a friendly and happy environment to work in as well as a culture of openness, support and understanding.



Shot on location at Wynyard Hall

In the next 5 years, what do you hope to achieve?

We want Richard Reed Solicitors to be the leading and the 'go to' law firm in Sunderland.

What is role of employees in the firm's success?

One word? Crucial. They are the firm, they are the success. Each is as important as the other. Each is essential to the success of the firm. Each one is an asset. We talk to our staff regularly and try to involve them in our decision making where appropriate. We have Heads of Department with their own remit and control over their departments, reporting back directly to the directors.

What's your best career memory?

SJR: Successfully concluding my first collaborative case, noting that the outcome meant the separating couple moved on, with their dignity intact, little animosity, and able to discuss things constructively, seeing the real impact of a mutually supportive environment to discuss issues on divorce. I know that couple will attend their children's graduations, weddings and grandchildren's christenings together.

DP: One, being successful in a case that was reported as one of the leading precedents for emigration which remains the case to date. The second, being appointed as Assistant Coroner in 2003 (at the age of 29), the youngest judicial

appointment, as per the Law Society.

PM: The first being my first trip to the Royal Courts of Justice and obtaining a successful outcome for my client in proving that a Will was valid. The second occurred more recently when I obtained damages for an elderly couple who suffered injuries in a fire and I brought a claim against their Landlord who had maintained a position of denying liability for a number of years.

How do you like to relax?

SJR: With two young children, there isn't much time to relax! My time in the office is structured such that it enables me to spend more time with my family. Knowing I'm supported in this by my management team is incredibly helpful. I love reading (member of a book club too!), spending time with my children and swimming. I'm also a VP at my local Women's Institute.

DP: With a young sporty daughter most of my time is devoted to her activities. I am able to play football on a weekly basis. I love socialising with friends and family and I love to travel to see the world. Time permitting!

PM: Well, two highly energetic young boys keep my wife and I on our toes! So when I am able to have some time to myself, you'll find me on a golf course trying and generally failing to improve my handicap or watching sport.

Headed by leading lawyer, Lyn Rutherford, our specialist Family team provides advice in all areas of family law. These range from pre- and post-nuptial agreements to relationship breakdown, including advice on separation, divorce, financial provision and child maintenance, as well as co-habitation or civil partnership disputes.

When life takes an expected turn, we are there for you.

For confidential advice at a time and place to suit you, contact:

Lyn Rutherford
Head of Family
T: 0191 281 6151
lrutherford@mincoffs.co.uk

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PROTECTING YOUR BUSINESS – RESTRICTIVE COVENANTS

Employees with access to confidential information, such as customer details, strategic plans, products or financial details, can cause significant damage to employers when they leave, if they join a competitor or set up their own business.

Restrictive covenants are one of the ways to try and prevent this.

What are they?

Restrictive covenants are contractual clauses which aim to prevent former employees from carrying out certain activities that could damage their former employer's legitimate business interests. However, their aim cannot be to prevent competition in itself. As such, they must be carefully drafted and tailored to the particular business and employee.

Types of restrictions

There are a range of restrictions an employer can consider such as:

- Non-compete clauses which prevent the former employee from working in a competing business.
- Non-solicitation clauses which prevent a former employee from approaching previous clients and customers for business.
- Non-dealing clauses which prevent a former employee from carrying out work for a client or customer (even if they have not directly solicited business from them).
- Non-poaching clauses which prevent a former employee from trying to recruit former colleagues to work for their new business or employer.

Limitations

Restrictive covenants should go no further than is necessary. Therefore, it is important that all restrictions are limited in terms of duration and scope. Generally, the longer the restricted period, the less likely they are to be enforceable unless there is something particular to the business that would justify it. Common periods for restricting employees are 3 or 6 months after the employee has left. It is also sensible to limit the prohibited



Claire Rolston and Yvonne Atherton

activities so that a non-solicitation clause only refers to customers or clients with which the employee dealt within, say, 12 months before the termination of employment.

Imposing and introducing restrictions

Where it is appropriate to restrict an employee, restrictive covenants should be included in the contract of employment at the start of the relationship and employers should ensure that they keep a copy of the signed agreement.

Where a previously unrestricted employee is promoted or is given new responsibilities that means restrictions become appropriate, then it is important that the contract is updated to include these. An employer should also provide consideration in the form of a one off lump sum payment.

It is also important to note that where restrictions have been put into a contract at the outset when they would not have been appropriate or enforceable (due to the employee's position), an employer will not later be able to rely on them should that employee's responsibilities increase or their role changes. This is because the reasonableness of restrictions are judged at the time they are entered into.

Enforcing restrictions

Restrictions are enforced by way of an injunction. This is an equitable remedy and will only be granted where it is fair to do so. A court will assess

the reasonableness of the restrictions and decide whether an injunction should be granted in all the circumstances. A court cannot change the wording of restrictions to be more reasonable (and therefore, enforceable).

Enforcing restrictive covenants is time consuming and expensive. The risk of needing to apply for an injunction will be reduced where the restrictions are properly drafted as this will minimise any argument that they are not enforceable.

Restrictions will also be unenforceable if an employer has breached the contract by paying the employee in lieu of notice when they do not have a contractual right to do so. It is therefore important that that the contract works as a whole.

Tips for employers

Consider:

- what business interests you need to protect.
- the employee's role.

Ensure:

- restrictions are carefully tailored for that employee.
- that a pay in lieu of notice clause is included.
- that contracts are signed and copies retained.
- Review contracts to ensure that the restrictions still meet your requirements.
- Introduce restrictions for previously unrestricted employees if circumstances change.

If you need advice on how to protect your business, please get in touch with Claire Rolston or Yvonne Atherton at hello@clrlaw.co.uk or on 0191 6030061

GETTING TO KNOW...

As marketing manager at Gordon Brown Law Firm (LLP), Wendy Peffers helps to build the firm's presence in the region and its reputation as a firm of real people and expert lawyers. Outside of work, her passion is walking, and she loves to explore new routes and challenging terrains, from nearby Northumberland to faraway China.



Wendy Peffers

What is your passion outside of work, how did you get into it and why do you enjoy it so much?

I have always enjoyed walking in and around Northumberland, and we are very lucky to have some beautiful places and beaches in the North East. After my Great Wall of China trek, I spent a couple of weekends with friends walking Hadrian's Wall which I enjoyed very much. It was hard to believe I was so close to home sometimes.

How would you describe yourself in three words?

Outgoing, friendly and loyal.

What would your autobiography be called?

Never Give Up.

What do you look forward to most at the end of the week?

Relaxing, going to the gym and spending time with family and friends.

If you could have dinner with anyone dead or alive, who would it be, and why?

My Grandad, as I never got the chance to meet him but I love to listen to stories about him.

What is the best book you've ever read, and why?

Call Me Elizabeth by Dawn Annandale; I found it astonishing that in this day and age there is an increasing number of women in a similar situation to "Elizabeth" who sadly have to turn to prostitution to make ends meet.

If you could have one superpower what would it be, and why?

To fly, as I could visit all the places I have on my bucket list, and it is a long list!

What was your dream job as a child?

Air Hostess.

What is your greatest achievement?

Running the Edinburgh Marathon in 2017.

What is it about your role at GBLF that inspires you?

The ever changing world of law and marketing. I have worked in a law firm for 25 years and the way firms need to embrace marketing is very different to how it was back when I started; I'm looking forward to seeing what the future of the industry will bring.

How long have you worked at GBLF for, and what attracted you to the firm?

I have worked at GBLF for 10 years, since I came to the firm in 2008 via a merger. It is an excellent firm to work for as there is a huge focus on training and personal development. We pride ourselves on being real people which we have developed into a successful marketing campaign.

With offices located in Newcastle and Chesterle-Street, GBLF offers a range of legal services and advice across all areas of family, residential conveyancing, wills and probate, dispute resolution, corporate and commercial law. Its dedicated team of solicitors understand that each case is unique, and provide bespoke advice and guidance to individuals and organisations.



Sarah Crilly

WHEN IS IT “TIME UP” FOR MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS?

The complexities of determining spousal maintenance claims by the courts are explored by Ward Hadaway family law expert Sarah Crilly.

The recent trend of cases dealing with the issue of maintenance by one spouse or the other after divorce has seen a major U-turn.

Ordinarily after long marriages, the party who was weaker in terms of income, employment chances and earning capacity could benefit from court orders which provided for them being maintained for the parties' joint lives. Even after medium-length marriages this could sometimes be the case, especially where there were young children.

However, a recent Court of Appeal decision has echoed two Court of Appeal decisions from 2015 which made it clear that maintenance should be terminated as soon as it is “just and reasonable to do so”.

A woman given nearly £10 million after she split from her husband had her maintenance brought to an end by senior judges. On Appeal the court overruled the maintenance for life and said they should cease after three years.

She had actually appealed the initial order asking for an additional £23,000 a year. The Judge felt that she would not suffer undue hardship by terminating the maintenance and said “Any extension of the sharing principle to post separation earnings would fundamentally undermine the court’s ability to effect a clean break”.

In 2015, two cases involved a husband banker and trainee Pilates instructor and an equine surgeon and housewife respectively.

The banker earned approximately £170,000 net per year and the wife was expecting to earn £23,000 net. The wife sought £60,000 per year for 27 years. The Judge awarded £30,000 per year until 2025 when the wife would be 50.

In the next case the husband earned £150,000 per year whereas the wife had been a housewife. She received £33,200 a year for herself which was initially for joint lives but which was reduced on Appeal to six years, after which it would cease.

A number of interesting points came out of both cases, not least the expectation that once children had reached a certain age, a mother would be expected to work and further that a working mother would be a good role model for the children, even saying “vast numbers of women with children just get on with it”.

In the second case, the Judge felt that the wife had made no effort to get a job without good reason and had been evasive about her efforts to find work.

In every case the court must consider a termination of spousal maintenance.

Although Parliament’s intention has always been that parties following divorce should be subject to a financial clean break wherever possible, that could not be the case after long marriages where one party had not worked and remained at home to care for the children.

Most cases we see involve parties who are both

working and have similar incomes but in the higher money cases, the disparity in incomes can be substantial.

Now with changes in society and employment law, spouses are expected to work no matter what their age and the family courts are now catching up with reform expected of the matrimonial legislation in the not too distant future. The Divorce (Financial Provision) Bill is before the House of Lords and suggests that a term of periodical payments should not exceed five years unless serious financial hardship is likely.

Millions of single parents hold down a job and raise their children. Latest statistics show that there are three million single-parent families in the UK and over half of single parents (nearly 60%) are in work.

Courts are now saying that once children are aged seven, mothers can begin to work part-time and make a financial contribution. They are also saying that the amount of maintenance will be restricted to needs and standard of living will not be a deciding factor.

Being dependant on your spouse is now quite an insecure position to be in. Even if you can demonstrate a degree of hardship in making the transition from maintenance to independent living, that will not be sufficient to make a case for continued support. After medium and long marriages, a maintenance order should not be taken for granted.

FAMILY MATTERS - CHILD MAINTENANCE

By Catherine Lowther, Solicitor

At Swinburne Maddison we have a highly experienced and well-respected family law team, which provides a full range of legal advice on what can often be sensitive and stressful matters including divorce and separation, domestic abuse, pre and post-nuptial agreements, financial and children related matters as well as custody proceedings.

Agreeing child maintenance payments is often difficult but is something that we are regularly asked to advise on.

In an ideal world, both parents would be able to sit round the table and come to an agreement that suits both parties, however this rarely happens for all sorts of reasons. To assist parents in determining the amount, the government has created an online calculator to provide guidance.

To arrive at a payment the following considerations are factored in:

- How many children will need to be paid for
- Whether the paying parent receives any benefits
- The paying parent's weekly gross income (before Tax and National Insurance but after pension contributions);
- How many other children live in the household of the paying parent (excluding the child for whom maintenance is to be paid);



- How many nights per year the child stays with the paying parent

Child Maintenance Service (CMS)

When parents cannot agree the amount of child maintenance, the CMS is able to step in to calculate and arrange payment.

To do so it will find out the paying parent's yearly gross income from information supplied by HM Revenue and Customs and consider the above factors.

Once a figure is arrived at the CMS can provide further assistance by arranging the payments and/or, collecting payments from the paying parent and passing them to the other parent.

If this is the route you take there are fees attached to the services offered by the CMS. To use the calculator, visit www.gov.uk/calculate-your-child-maintenance.

If you need any further advice on child maintenance or any other child related matter, we understand and are well qualified to guide and advise you.

For further information please contact a member of the family law team on 0191 384 2441 or info@swinburnemaddison.co.uk

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Alexandra Besnard

CONSEQUENCES OF NON-COMPLIANCE WITH THE GENDER PAY GAP REGULATIONS

Alexandra Besnard, Associate Solicitor at specialist employment law firm Collingwood Legal, discusses the implications for employers who failed to report their Gender Pay Gap by 4 April 2018.

The deadline for employers with 250 or more employees in the private or voluntary sectors to publish their gender pay gap ("GPG") figures was 4 April 2018 and over 10,000 companies complied with their reporting obligations.

From the data published, the national median pay gap was reported at 9.7%. Broadly, the results indicate that 78% of companies pay men more than women. The finance sector appears to have the largest reported GPG with the average woman in this sector earning 35.6% less than the average man. The transport and storage sector and accommodation and food services reported the smallest GPG which is thought to be down to a large proportion of staff being paid the national minimum wage. Overall, only 8% of companies reported no GPG between men and women.

Interestingly, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission has noted that over 1,500 companies did not publish their GPG data by the deadline. So, what are the consequences for those companies who did not comply with the reporting obligations?

Enforcement action

When introduced, the GPG Regulations were widely criticised for not containing any enforcement methods or sanctions for non-compliance and

perhaps those 1,500 companies that did not publish their GPG data on 4 April are thinking that they will avoid any consequences. However, the explanatory note to the GPG Regulations states that a failure to comply with the GPG Regulations will constitute an "unlawful act" within the meaning of section 34 of the Equality Act 2006. This section allows the Equalities and Human Rights Commission ("EHRC"), the equality regulator, to take enforcement action.

In its publication "Closing the gap: enforcing the gender pay gap regulations", the EHRC sets out its means of enforcement. Informal resolution is preferred in the first instance and those companies that have not complied with their reporting obligations can expect a letter from the EHRC reminding them of their obligations and requiring them to comply with their reporting duties within 28 days.

In the event that an employer does not comply after this initial correspondence, the EHRC has the power to carry out an investigation into whether the company has committed an unlawful act (i.e. a breach of the GPG Regulations). If the EHRC concludes that an employer has committed an unlawful act, it may issue an "unlawful act notice" which will require the employer to prepare a

draft action plan within 14 days, setting out how it will remedy its continuing breach and prevent future failures. If an action plan is not received from the employer, the EHRC can apply to the court to make an order compelling the employer to provide an action plan within a specified timescale. An employer will commit an offence if it fails to comply with the court order and does not have a reasonable excuse for doing so and in such circumstances, it could be liable to pay an unlimited fine.

Reputational damage

It is not only enforcement action by the EHRC that creates a risk to businesses. Employers should consider the potential damage to their reputation for failing to comply with the GPG reporting duties. "Naming and shaming" by the media of those who do not comply creates bad publicity and non-compliant employers could lose talent as potential new recruits may be discouraged from applying for roles within their business. There is also a risk that existing employees may be wondering whether the business has 'something to hide' and the non-publication of GPG data could lead to employees asking some difficult questions.

If you require specialist advice on the Gender Pay Gap reporting or equal pay in general please contact me on 0191 282 2886 or at alexandra.besnard@collingoodlegal.com

UNLIMITED FUTURES FOR ALL YOUNG WOMEN

By Claire Parry, Week2Week Serviced Apartments

As I list the statistics below, you'd not be alone in thinking that these were released by a government or private teaching institution. Well, ladies and gentlemen, you'd be wrong, as these impressive statistics are the latest figures showing the impact of the mentoring programme organised by The Girls' Network, a charity that started operating in London in 2013 but has spread to many of the inner-cities in other areas of the country.

- 100% of girls grew their network of professional women
- 95% of girls increased in their resilience.
- 89% of girls grew in their key communication skills.
- 100% of girls reported doing as well as they'd hoped, if not better, on their end of year academic results.

So, what is the intention of this charity and where did it originate? Well, two ladies, both secondary school teachers, based in North London noticed that many of the girls in their care often faced multiple barriers in class and decided to help those individuals the best way they could. They realised that many girls were facing several challenges - like pressure to conform to ideals, lack of confidence and self-belief - while experiencing a lack of professional female role models in their networks, they decided to try and make a change to the girls' lives, and change they did!



The two teachers; Charly Young and Becca Dean piloted a one-to-one mentoring scheme for 30 girls back in 2013 and, based on research showing

that conversations and personal relationships could have a huge impact on challenging stereotypes and expectations, put in place the structure to change the lives of the girls involved, forever.

Their vision was that girls would benefit from a greater access to opportunities, but also the confidence to seize those opportunities and skillset to thrive in them.

As word spread of this success, more and more professional women asked to get involved and before they knew it, the charity, The Girls' Network was set up, and to say it has grown at an incredible rate would be an understatement.

The charity now operates across London, Portsmouth, Brighton, Greater Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and the West Midlands, with plans to expand even further over the next few years. The charity now helps empower over 1200 young women each year and that figure is set to multiply over the coming years, with plans in place to grow into every city in the UK.

If, like me, you are equally as impressed with these statistics and feel the need to become involved, then there are opportunities for women in business, like me, to support their charity and give something back. I personally felt very inspired at what this great charity is trying to achieve and couldn't wait to become involved, which is why I am now a mentor for them and offer my services in the Newcastle area.

If this is something that you would like to be involved in, feel free to give me a call to discuss further at Week2Week Serviced Apartments on 0191 281 3129, or alternatively, log onto their website, www.thegirlsnetwork.org.uk for more information.

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PROPERTY LAWYERS MOVE IN WITH REMOVALS FIRM



Sue Toomey, a specialist property lawyer with 25 years' experience, is expanding her law firm into a unique new location.

Toomey Legal, based in Corbridge, is opening a new office on a business park in Cramlington. The new location, Fergy Space, is run by Fergusons Transport, a Northumberland family removals firm, creating an exciting and mutually beneficial link between the two related businesses. The expansion will allow for the recruitment of new

staff and Sue has already set the ball rolling by bringing in new staff member Wendy Bailey.

Toomey Legal was founded in 2015 in Corbridge and is renowned for its work across a broad range of property law matters, particularly with commercial and residential property law. Committed to providing a personal service, the business also specialises in dealing with rental issues and has a solid reputation with seasoned investors.

SENIOR APPOINTMENT FUELS COMPANY GROWTH

A leading North East property firm has welcomed a new head of department as the company continues its rapid expansion.

Chartered surveyors and estate agents Bradley Hall has appointed Jonathan Rudge as head of its land, development and new homes team.

Jonathan, a former partner at international consultancy Cushman and Wakefield, will oversee all of Bradley Hall's strategic and site-specific development advice to occupiers, investors, developers and public policy makers.

His appointment will also see the launch of the company's land, development & new homes department, which has been introduced to continue to grow the firm's ability to provide specialist advisory services to property developers and house builders of all sizes.

The new team will also be supported by senior surveyor Josie Streets, who specialises in new build homes. With seven years of experience in the industry, Josie also joins the firm following a successful career at Cushman and Wakefield.



SILVERSTONE CHOOSES LEEDS TO OPEN ITS SECOND OFFICE



Building surveying and project management specialist Silverstone Building Consultancy has chosen Leeds to open its second regional office, building on the success of its head office in Newcastle city centre.

The firm was established by co-directors Richard Farrey and Ben Hunter in 2009 as an independent building consultancy operating in the commercial property sector. It has since grown to employ 12 members of staff.

The opening of a Leeds office will enable the firm to extend its geographical reach and serve its clients more effectively.

The expansion has been facilitated through the appointment of a new director, Ben Rennocks, who will manage Silverstone's Leeds office. Ben was formerly a director within the Project Management team at CBRE's Leeds office. He will be joined by building surveyor Jack Margerrison, who already works at Silverstone's Newcastle office.

REFURBISHMENT TRANSFORMS OFFICES INTO NEW APARTMENTS

A refurbishment project has brought to life a group of vacant offices, creating new and spacious apartments in Morpeth.

Leading North East property firm Bradley Hall managed the refurbishment of the contemporary apartments at Davidson House, based at 21-23 Bridge Street in Morpeth town centre.

Ricki Hutchinson, Building Surveyor at Bradley Hall, said: "We have achieved our aim to provide new homes for the people of Morpeth. The properties are now available to rent through the Bradley Hall residential property team, providing a modern space for those looking to be based within the ideal location of Morpeth town centre."

The apartments are surrounded by a range of amenities and popular retailers including Costa Coffee, The Black Bull, Superdrug and Barclays Bank. They are also close to Sanderson Arcade and are within half a mile of Morpeth's bus and train stations.



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Ian Tew

HOW TO AVOID A COMMON PITFALL OF RENTING A COMMERCIAL PROPERTY

Ian Tew, Partner at Knight Frank Newcastle, shares his expertise on dilapidations.

I've been working as a surveyor on behalf of both tenants and landlords for over 20 years now and I have come across all sorts of scenarios.

Moving into new commercial premises is such an exciting time. Imagine seeing your seedling of a business grow to a size where you now need your very own commercial property, or you've outgrown where you are and need something larger. Would you be thinking about repairs to that building in five years' time? Of course you wouldn't. But you should be.

When you leave a commercial property you are expected to pay for or deal with any defects or disrepair noted against the terms of your lease. These are what are known as dilapidations.

A hefty dilapidations bill at the end of your lease is the stuff of nightmares. But the good news is, it doesn't have to be that way.

There are some simple things you can do to mitigate unwanted and unplanned-for costs.

Before the lease:

- Think about the age and condition and the state of disrepair at the start. A surveyor can help you establish the condition and advise what work is needed to fix the disrepair.
- Do your sums. How much will the repairs cost that need doing prior to occupation ?
- Be aware that a Full Repairing Lease (FRL) often requires a tenant to repair an element whether it was in repair, or not, at the start of the lease. The date you move in is often not as relevant

as you think.

- If there is disrepair then ask your solicitor to limit the repairs via the wording of the lease.
- If the property is not brand new, then always, always, insist on a schedule of condition from the landlord. This will help reduce your obligations for repairs. But be aware of where this works and where it doesn't – which is often misunderstood. For example, a schedule of condition may identify a door, where there is some deterioration at the base, which at the end of your lease is now completely rotten. It would not be possible to return the door to the condition as identified at the start of the lease and to comply with terms, the door may have to be completely replaced.
- Get advice from both legal and property professionals.

During the lease:

- Do your best to keep on top of maintenance. Service the boiler, get a glazier to replace the cracked window, repaint the windows etc.
- Be proactive and consider getting an assessment of the likely dilapidations several months before you plan to exit.
- Don't get caught out by time - if you intend on leaving the property give yourself enough leeway to sort out any repairs.
- Put enough money aside to undertake required repairs or to pay for the financial settlement when you leave.

At the end of a lease:

- Create an exit strategy well in advance, considering your options – it may be more cost effective to do any repairs yourself but that may prove impractical because of time constraints or the fact you are still in occupation of the building.
- Ask the landlord as early as possible about their intention for the property after you leave, and their expectations. If the landlord's intention is to redevelop, or refurbish, there may be no dilapidations liability.
- Consult a solicitor, a building surveyor and potentially, a valuation surveyor – this will undoubtedly save you money on a claim from a landlord.
- The dilapidations schedule will normally be served under the protocol set out by the Property Litigation Association and endorsed by the courts. This should be served within a reasonable period of time (normally 56 days) after the lease has ended. Make sure you follow the protocol as closely as you can.

Dilapidations, unfortunately, are part and parcel of leasing commercial premises. But every lease doesn't have to end with an eye-watering bill. With some good advice and planning, it can be dealt with successfully so that you can happily, and without hardship, move out of a property and onto to pastures new.

Ian Tew works in the Building Consultancy and Project Management team at Knight Frank in Newcastle. He can be contacted at ian.tew@knightfrank.com 0191 594 5012.



The Court Undercliff Hall, Cleadon Lane, Cleadon

3 3 3

The Court is a highly imposing house which creates very impressive living within such a special environment. This stunning Grade II Listed home has been extensively renovated, reflecting its Victorian era, and the magnificent grounds of approx. 1 acre include a one bedroom Garden Cottage.



Price Guide: £1.245 Million

Ashleigh Sundin

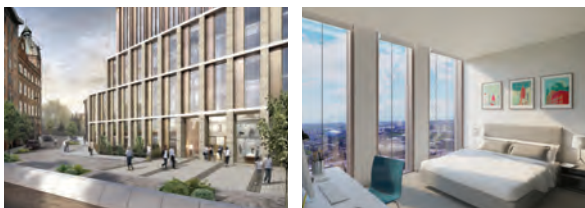
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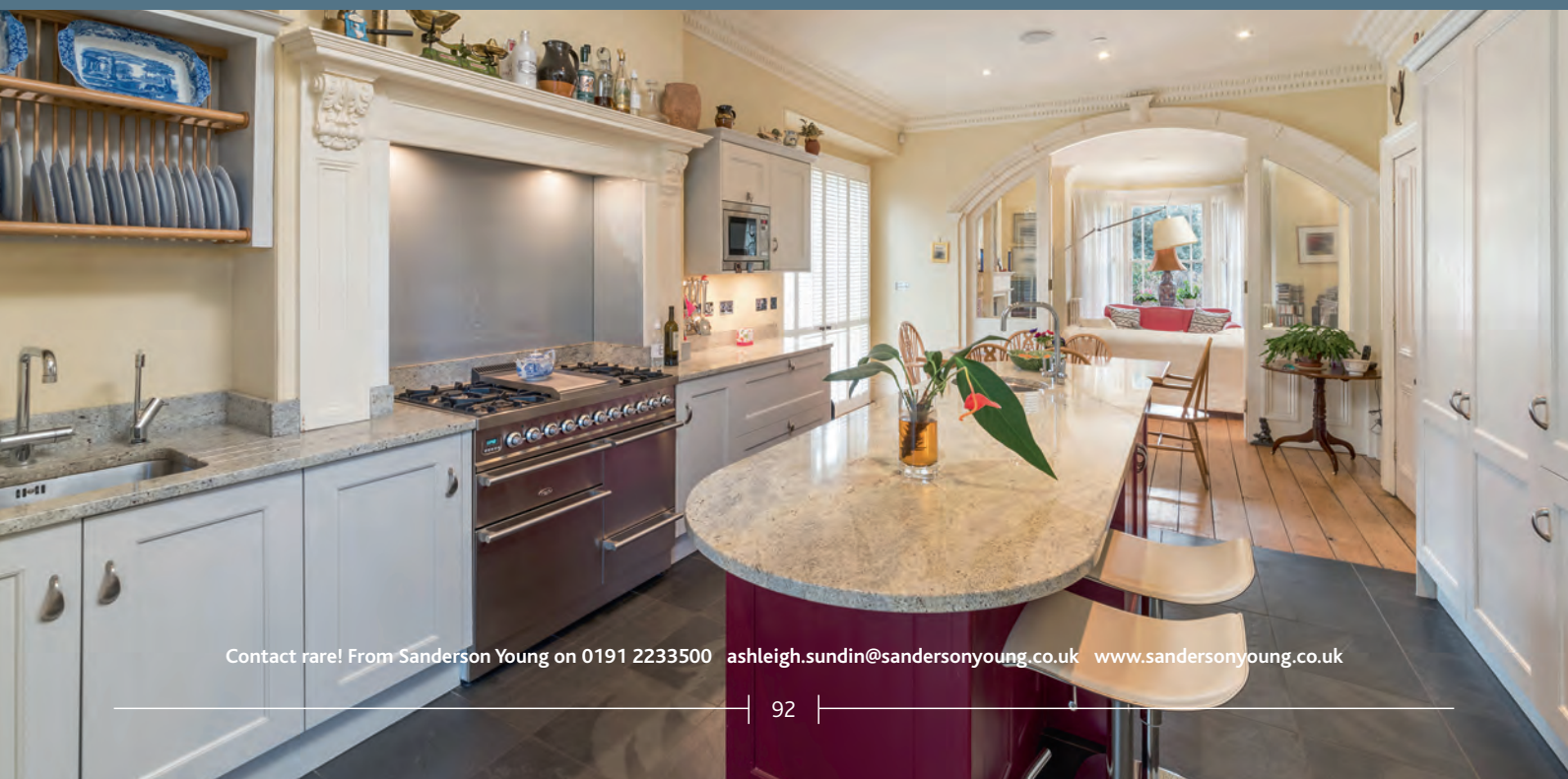


THE GROVE, GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £1.995 MILLION

This stunning family home enjoys a beautiful location on a fabulous corner site in the heart of Gosforth. The highly impressive property has been extensively renovated and sympathetically restored and improved with the addition of an outstanding Bill Hopper architect-designed wing to the rear, with its contemporary design contrasting well with the original Georgian architecture. The styling and internal layout is magnificent with accommodation including five bedrooms, four bathrooms and an outstanding kitchen leading to a stunning reception room with double height glazed window overlooking the Japanese garden; further accommodation includes a formal drawing room, a fabulous working office created from the former headmaster's study and a family lounge. Externally, there are beautiful landscaped gardens, a double plus garage and parking for several cars. This is a truly unique and very special home.



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

EXTENDING PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS - THE ANSWER TO THE HOUSING SHORTAGE?

By Jon Tweddell, Director of JT Planning



Jon Tweddell

Government is doing several things to help improve the supply of new housing. This is a good thing.

One way to increase the number of homes in rural areas is to allow suitable agricultural buildings to be converted into houses. A simplified route is currently available, without having to do a full planning application – this is known as 'prior approval'. There are other prior approval routes for other types of building too, including converting offices to residential.

As of April 6, government increased the number of homes that can be created from an agricultural building from three to five. They say 'several hundred' homes are created each year through the conversion of such buildings, and these changes are expected to increase this number.

I welcome any idea that creates more new houses and simplifies the planning system. While this alone will not address housing shortages in all areas, it will have a cumulative impact in rural areas. This, along with a package of other schemes, will definitely help.

I do think there are some teething problems with these new/amended powers. At a local level, I

find some authorities are still mounting onerous requirements on applicants.

On the face of it, the level of information required is limited, which saves time and cost. However, once prior approvals are submitted to a council, many still request a long list of additional drawings and reports which very much flies in the face of the spirit of the legislation. At JT Planning, we have experienced some submissions that have essentially become planning applications because of the level of detail and onerous requests for additional information. This wasn't the intention of the new powers.

These are also good examples of how this process works very well. JT Planning recently agreed a prior approval to convert a North Shields office building into 25 residential apartments. It sailed through planning at North Tyneside Council and didn't require a high level of detail.

I also accept that there are other problems. Many local authorities are concerned that prior approvals avoid the need to consider matters such as

affordable housing – essentially, none is required. Cumulatively this can have an adverse effect on the supply of affordable housing in rural areas.

I genuinely think this is a fair point. The system already grossly under-delivers affordable housing in many areas so the prior approval process isn't going to make this situation any better. However, there are limitations and restrictions on the use of prior approvals which means their use is not necessarily widespread in all areas.

It is crucial to have a balanced housing market and delivering new affordable housing where it is needed, remains a key policy aim for most local authorities.

Overall, the idea that new housing can be delivered in a simpler, quicker, more cost-effective way is good for applicants and is good for the housing market. We still need to tweak the details to ensure that onerous requests for costly additional information is not allowed.

For more details visit www.jontweddell.co.uk

HOW CHASING THE 'CHEAPEST' RATE COULD ADD £650 TO YOUR MORTGAGE



BH Mortgages director, Lewis Chambers, shares his experts advice on what to look out for when searching for the 'cheapest' mortgage rates.

The mortgage market is currently a hive of activity as homeowners rush to take advantage of the current climate of cheap borrowing, with many remortgaging amid the threat of rising interest rates. Most lenders are currently offering 'cheap' rates to attract custom and compete against one another, however, with hidden fees and charges taken in to account, many of these deals are not what they seem.

When looking to remortgage, homeowners often make the mistake of chasing the lowest rate, but it's important that they look beyond the initial and attractive promotions which the banks offer. If you are taking out short-term fixes and paying extra fees every two or three years, the total additional cost over a 25 year period could be significant.

When lenders lead with low rates, they often come with high fees attached, and the initial quoted cost of getting a mortgage can end up a lot lower than the true cost. We are firm believers in the fact that borrowers should not be blinded by 'cheap' rates.

Our recent research has shown that chasing the lowest mortgage rates could end up costing, on average, more than £600 extra than the real best value deals after costly fees and charges are considered. In one case the allegedly cheapest rate costs £650 more over the course of the two years - and some arrangement fees can be shockingly as much as £2,000. Taking out a new fixed-rate deal with arrangement fees every few years could massively increase the cost over the full term of a mortgage, which is why it is important to find a bespoke deal which is right for you.

Our comparisons have shown that even the nations biggest banks are promoting misleading deals which could confuse many homeowners and buyers.

Looking at two-year deals, which are by far the most popular type of mortgage, the offer which Barclays are promoting is the lowest rate is actually £649 more expensive than its best value deal, while for Santander the difference is £577. Royal Bank of

Scotland had the smallest gap of £100, although the cheapest rate is still more expensive overall. Additionally, Nationwide's lowest rate is £384 more expensive than its best value deal, Lloyds Bank's is £331 and HSBC's £299.

To add to that, if the bank rate rises to 1%, borrowers on variable rates could pay as much as £500 more every year - those looking to avoid the increases would do well to check the small print in their mortgage offer.

These clever promotional tricks are also used to fool popular online comparison tables, as the notionally cheapest rates appear at the top of the tables and don't include the fees and extra costs added to each deal.

It is crucial that those who need to remortgage consider fixed rate mortgages before the bank rate rises. The current mortgage market is offering many combinations of rates and charges which create the best possible deal for each customer.

If you are looking for expert mortgage advice, contact our professional team for high quality and friendly simplified solutions by calling 0191 260 2000.



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Image: Kayley McKnight in the Heaton Property office.
Photograph by Dan Aziz.

SHOOTING THE STAFF

Organising a photo shoot for our newest staff member, Kayley McKnight, was not rocket science but it meant I had to ensure everybody knew where they had to be and when.

This done, I sent out an email headed "we are ready to shoot Kayley" only to be informed that I had probably blipped the radar of the security services and may expect a visit from some big, unsmiling types in search of a body.

Lesson learned. Think before you hit 'send'. A lesson which provides a handy if slightly tenuous link to Kayley's role here at Heaton Property. Kayley will be largely responsible for compliance with our Code of Conduct, ensuring the interests of our landlords and tenants are fully protected.

Like any reputable managing agent our code is determined by a recognised professional body, in our case ARLA Propertymark. The code covers every aspect of our business from how we handle tenants deposits to how a tradesperson receives a works order. Protection for landlord and tenant are paramount.

All very well but there are a small number of managing agents who's only code of conduct is their own. Astonishingly for a profession taking money and covered by the Consumer Rights Act, currently someone can step out of prison today and be a managing agent tomorrow. Fortunately, this is about to change.

In April the Government announced its response to consultations on industry regulation and client money protection in England. If approved this will mean managing agents will be required by law to adhere to a code of conduct and to employ at least one person with a higher qualification. Step forward Kayley who has a National Federation of Property Professionals qualification.

A new and independent regulator will oversee agents working practices and will have enforcement powers to deal with rogue agents. There is a suggestion of criminal sanctions for agents who severely breach the code.

For once our industry is supportive of new legislation. David Cox, Chief Executive of ARLA Propertymark recently said "We are hugely supportive of these proposals. After 20 years of campaigning, the Government has finally listened to our call for proper regulation of the industry."

"For the last two decades, successive Governments have passed significant amounts of complex legislation on landlords; none of which have been properly policed or adequately enforced. These announcements demonstrate a very sensible shift towards focusing on the root cause of the issues affecting the sector rather than trying to find legislative solutions to individual problems."

As someone who has regularly railed against ill-thought out legislation in our sector this is something of a novelty – full support for new legislation. While legislative protection for landlords and tenants is welcomed I am also aware it will mean no extra work for myself or our staff. As ARLA Propertymark members we have been compliant with the code of conduct since day one.

I leave the last word to American businesswoman Cathy Englebert, CEO of Deloitte who said "Our goal is to set the gold standard when it comes to compliance." That should hold true for any successful business and if it takes legislation to turn that truth into fact, I for one welcome it warmly.

Damiano Rea is the managing director of Heaton Property, which was setup in 2005. The company specialises in professional property lettings and tenancy management in Newcastle upon Tyne and the surrounding areas.

BOOSTING SUPPLY AND SUPPORTING DEMAND IN THE REGION'S HOUSING MARKET



The newly appointed head of land and development for Bradley Hall, Jonathan Rudge, discusses the status of the North East housing market and the region's development sector.

The development sector, and specifically the residential development sector, has never had greater focus in the Government's policy agenda. In the Housing White Paper Theresa May talked of the need to 'fix our broken housing market', addressing the decline in home ownership and committing to a long-term target of delivering 300,000 new homes across the UK.

This target goes far beyond anything proposed before and indeed would see a significant increase on current output across the country. To achieve this, the Government has introduced a raft of new measures that aim to boost supply and support demand.

While there has been much debate as to the pros and cons of these policies, and their application here in the North East, we have seen a significant increase in house building over recent years.

Several new entrants have emerged in the development sector, as well as an increase in both house prices and land values. This activity has not, however, been equally shared across the region. For some locations, such as the urban areas of Tyne and Wear and the attractive market towns along the A1, we have seen development activity close to that seen pre-recession which has encouraged a highly competitive market for new land and property.

Outside of these areas, activity levels drop significantly and there remain locations which have seen little to no new development. In such towns and villages, the viability of new schemes remains challenged and few developers have sought to actively pursue new sites. Here, new government policy has had little impact. This polarising market has brought both opportunities and challenges to our client base.

For land owner clients across both public and private sectors, the demand for new development sites has provided one of the few opportunities with which to generate capital to invest in their business or projects. Whether it be a vacant building or underperforming industrial estate, our clients have sought to use changes in the planning system to their advantage and increase value by pursuing a change of use.

For developer clients, the demand for new homes has clearly supported a positive increase in activity, however, new competition has meant that house builders are now having to seek land in new areas. In these instances, the challenge is about understanding the commercial opportunity of new sites, who the likely purchasers of homes will be and what values are achievable. In addition, we have also seen the positive return of several regional developers, aiming to deliver sites

overlooked by the national house builders and often delivering a high quality, niche product. For these clients, the challenge has been about securing land and development finance at a level that enables them to efficiently manage their cashflow through development and still deliver an adequate commercial return.

Finally, for Local Authority clients, not only have they sought to generate value from their own assets, but they also clearly act as the delivery agency for much of the new government policy. They therefore play a vital role in encouraging new development and managing the planning process but have had to do so while incurring substantial cuts to budgets brought about by reduction in public funding. This has brought significant challenges and frustrations to the delivery of a more streamlined planning process.

While the Government's encouragement of new development is welcomed and providing a positive impact on some areas of the North East, there remains significant challenges to delivering new development across the region. Understanding these challenges and the means to address them is therefore vital for our land and development clients as we look ahead to the rest of 2018.

For information from Bradley Hall's specialist land development and new homes department, please call 0191 2328080.



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MAKE AN ALLY OF YOUR PLANNING OFFICER

By Chris Pipe, Director, Planning House

Once you submit an application a planning professional (known as your case officer) is allocated, they seek comment from consultees and neighbours, carry out a site visit and ultimately make the recommendation on your proposal.

There can be numerous people commenting on your application, however it's up to the case officer to decide whether any issues raised are so significant as to influence their decision.

Planners inevitably have to make subjective judgements about your proposal therefore working with your case officer can improve your chances of having it approved. I have said previously that some planners are worth their weight in gold and if they have an issue with the proposal but are in your corner hopefully they'll work with you to find a solution.

Under Pressure

Your Local Planning Authority is likely to be under resources which can often mean that your case officer will deal with a heavy work load, which along with the pressure of hitting an eight-week deadline for most applications means their time is limited. Don't presume you'll be able to get hold of your case officer quickly if you ring or email or that they will be up to speed with your scheme until well into the application process. Your application will be uploaded onto the Councils website so in the first few weeks defer to this for any responses. If anything needs addressing, contact your case officer to discuss their view of the comments.

After three weeks I advise contacting your case officer to ensure they have all the information they need, or to see if they'd like to arrange a site visit. However, be mindful that site visits are often done without arrangement, therefore don't be surprised if the officer declines to meet you.

Be aware some officers are helpful and informative, others evasive. Ultimately your case officer is there to process your application and is under no obligation to discuss your proposal with you, meet you on site or to keep you informed of every step in your application.

Communication is key to establishing rapport but this is not done by harassing your case officer, think and act strategically.

Planning Politics

Local councillors can be helpful if things aren't going well with the planning officer. Some are willing to give a 'push' to officers to speed up decisions or communicate with applicants, others will not. However, be aware that this could destroy any rapport you have established with the planner and is therefore a risky strategy.

When your case officer is opposed to your proposal, on occasion councillors can call an application to committee for decision, however this procedure varies from council to council.

The Decision

Recommendations are made by the planning officer through a report which brings together any comments received, assesses the proposal against the development plan policies for the area and any other material planning consideration. These reports are generally signed off via a scheme of delegation. Some applications go to planning committee, where Councillors make the decision, whilst informed by the officer's report they don't necessarily have to follow the recommendation.

Ideally you should aim for a positive recommendation from your case officer, however if they don't agree with your proposal don't be agitated or as I've heard many times remind the officer that you pay their wages. If relationships do break down or there is an impasse consider instructing a planning consultant to help you. Planning Officers are professionals; however, this doesn't mean their recommendations are always correct.

My ultimate advice make an ally of your planner don't treat them like a barrier as if their response to your scheme is marginal, developing a rapport with the case officer can potentially increase your chances of securing approval.

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A Darlington-headquartered PR agency is celebrating a period of rapid growth following a string of successful new client wins throughout the UK.

Harvey & Hugo Ltd has taken on five new team members to meet demand for its brand-building services of PR, social media and content marketing, after winning new business in Milton Keynes, London and the North East.

Digital creative Matthew Hammond joins the team to specialise in animation, video and graphic design whilst ambitious brand building specialist Lizzie Turner-Jones has been appointed as account manager, following her significant experience in the food and drink and professional services sectors.

They are joined by two experienced PR and social media executives to strengthen the innovative agency's core services. Sian Ellidge joins after a 15-year journalism career along with Katie Chapel, who worked for almost 15 years at Dogs Trust.

Rebecca Robertson completes the new appointments to bring the team to 11. The talented PR graduate has joined as business development executive and will help to attract more clients to Harvey & Hugo, as well as to its newly-founded training school Hugoversty.

NEWCASTLE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP EXPANDS TEAM

New client wins have led to the recent expansion of marketing agency Cool Blue Brand Communications, in a move which aims to service new work and continue to deliver great work on behalf of its growing client list.

With offices in Newcastle, Middlesbrough and London, Cool Blue now has more than 38 specialist staff delivering fully integrated marketing communications campaigns and brand and digital services.

Joining the Newcastle team are Victoria McCartney, Mark Thomson, James Liosi, Katie Armstrong, Isobel Surridge and Mari Olsen. Three new appointments are also taking place in London.

With a background in creative advertising and marketing, Victoria has joined Cool Blue as head of brand. She will now cover brand services for new and existing clients.

Mark has joined the company having worked both in-house and for agencies. He will be responsible for expanding capability into emerging technologies such as virtual reality and artificial intelligence.



Tanya Garland, Managing Director of Cool Blue, said: "We're proud of our reputation for cutting edge methods and great ideas. For example, we recently developed our own app 'In-situ' which has proved a real hit."

NORTH EAST MARKETING MANAGER RECEIVES RECOGNITION



Barratt Developments North East's Marketing Manager has been recognised at the English Women's Awards for the North of the UK.

Becky Mortimer, 29, was nominated in the Rising Star category, and received the highly commended accolade at the awards ceremony which was recently held at Manchester's Mercure Hotel. The recognition acknowledges her continued achievements throughout her career in the construction industry.

The awards were attended by hundreds of influential women across the North of England. Designed to celebrate the achievements of female entrepreneurs, the awards provide a platform for women in business to inspire

others and share experiences, whilst also helping to raise funds for charity partner Smart Works.

Becky joined Barratt Developments in 2015 as Marketing Manager for the North East. Starting in a new industry with the role, Becky quickly demonstrated a strong ability to deliver tangible results in a highly competitive market and soon became the Regional Marketing Manager for the whole of Northern England.

Becky said: "It's an honour to have been given this recognition. I hope that it will inspire other women in business and demonstrate how much opportunity there is for them, particularly within the construction and housebuilding industry."

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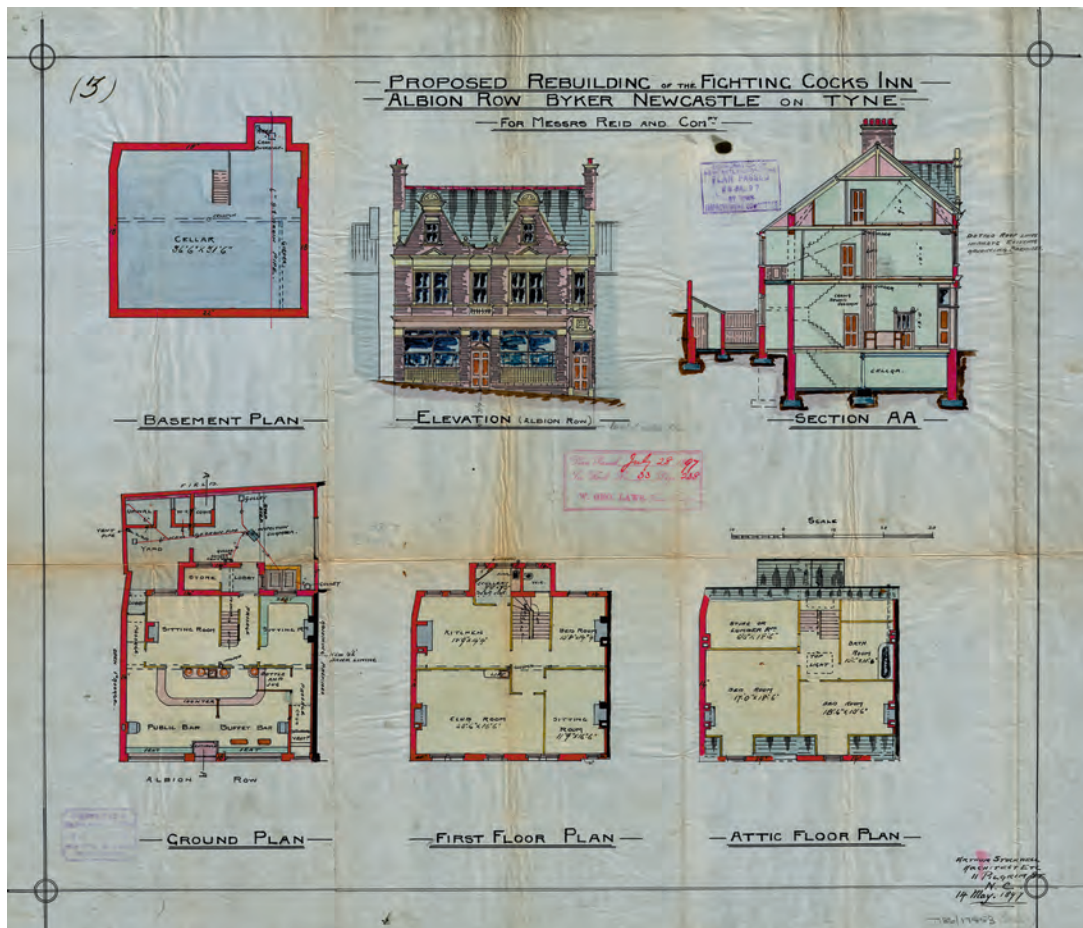
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BREWING UP A GREAT CAMPAIGN

Thoughts by Founder of Karol Marketing, Stefan Lepkowski

It is a common misperception that great creative communication campaigns reveal themselves in a divine moment of inspiration. In my experience, they take perspiration and time.

We might have a sudden idea, but to form every aspect of a winning campaign around that spark takes serious graft. At Karol we have to get our collective heads together to work out every detail, making sure nothing gets missed and that everything fits together.

Recently, we've been working on ideas for a campaign that will help set our own business apart from the crowd. We wanted to celebrate the way Karol think, the work we do and why it resonates with audiences.

My goal was to tell a story that would engage people with Karol as a brand. I wanted something that would make the visit of everyone who comes through our doors, be they a journalist, a client or a business partner, a memorable one.

We began looking for our own 'Purple Cow' moment by thinking about what makes us different. Purple Cow moments are based on the idea that if you saw a Purple Cow in a field, you'd immediately stop, take a photo and share it with everyone you know. So we thought about what great Karol stories we could tell and what people's first impressions of Karol are. That's when the nucleus of an idea began to form; the first thing that makes an impact on visitors to

our offices is the fact that it is a pub – well, an old one.

When I first found Karol's offices in the heart of Newcastle's creative Ouseburn district, 'Ye Old Fighting Cocks' – as it was then – made a huge first impression. Whilst it was boarded up with signs calling for a new landlord, I could see it was a tall, imposing building, with plenty of space and amazing views right down the Tyne and into Newcastle. I knew it was the creative space I'd been looking for. Our building is important to us; it's a point of difference, and the fact it's such a contrast to regular city offices says a lot about who we are. That's why many of the pub's original Fighting Cock mascots still sit proudly in our reception.

In order to explore how we could celebrate our building, we began by researching its history. Our work started with a visit to the Tyne and Wear Archives to find original plans and historical correspondence for the pub. Looking at these documents, we realised there were many similarities between the building's old use and the new. Both are fostering grounds for great ideas and both are places for conversation. I could see so many dots that could be joined up.

But it wasn't just a similarity, but a point of difference between the building's uses that provided the perfect opportunity. What brings people through our doors now are award-winning campaigns. But

what used to bring people into our building was beer.

What if, we thought, we told the Karol story - with beer?

So we brewed up our 'Old Pub' campaign in order to give every guest to our offices a specially designed Karol Marketing beer pack - three local beers inside a rustic (and 100% recyclable carry case) for people to take home as a memory that's as delicious as our ideas.

We partnered with Brinkburn St. Brewery, an independent microbrewery on our doorstep, to develop our own special brew. It was thirsty work, but after a few tastings we managed to craft 'Geordie Inspiration'. But Karol campaigns always have more than meets the eye, which is why we created a fun, pun-riddled label for our inspirational ale. The carry case, which houses our 'Geordie Inspiration' – just like the Old Pub houses us – was the perfect place to tell the story of the Old Pub's journey from housing beer drinkers to PR thinkers. It's our 'Tale told in Ale.'

When the team and I put all these pieces together, we knew the various elements of our Purple Cow had crystallised and we knew exactly what field to put it in. By taking a photo with everyone who comes in to meet with us and posting their images to social media, we can celebrate every great visitor, idea and conversation that gets started at The Old Pub.

It's real hard work to make great ideas work. But without great ideas, life would be un-beer-able.

FLOWING WITH IDEAS,
FIZZING WITH INSPIRATION...



BRINKBURN STR. BREWERY'S STEW SOUTHERN HANDS OVER KAROL'S FIRST CONSIGNMENT.



PRIDE OF PLACE! GEORDIE INSPIRATION CENTRE STAGE ON KAROL'S RECEPTION DESK.



MISSION BVI FUNDRAISERS STEPH AND BECCY COLLECT THEIR BEER!



JEFF FROM JIGSAW DESIGN COLLECTS ALE SPORTING HIS OWN HANDYWORK!



NOTHING'S CHANGED! KAROL'S BEER DRINKING CREW IN 2000.



QUEUE 'EM UP. BOTTLES OF BEER AWAITING THIRSTY MOUTHS.

GETTING YOUR MESSAGE OUT THERE

How to work effectively and ethically with online influencers.

As well as the traditional press release, many businesses and brands are turning to influencer relations to engage with their target audience. But, working with bloggers, vloggers and other social media stars can be a minefield, with a lot of rules and regulations to follow. Here, Anne-Marie Lacey, Managing Director of Filament PR, discusses what you need to be aware of to protect your business and brand reputation.

The term 'influencer' is a bit of a buzz word at the moment and the field of influencer relations is certainly a hot topic in the media. It's being debated on a national scale, with the ASA announcing a review into how paid-for influencer and native advertising is signposted online, saying that misleading posts damage consumer trust in advertising, and that filters back to the brands participating in this bad practice too.

Some people think of influencers as what might be described as the old-school opinion leader; you secure a piece in a national newspaper for a spokesperson to talk about a topic of relevance to that sector. Alternatively, a third-party with considerable clout may mention your brand as a point of authority in a wider piece about a specific industry issue. This endorsement is clearly earned – no cash, goods or other deals of a monetary value exchanged hands.

But, if talking about bloggers and vloggers in terms of influence, often the story can be quite different. Of course, some bloggers will write about things that have been brought to their attention, and they may share the content your brand has created. However, there are a growing number bloggers, vloggers and social media stars who request



Anne-Marie Lacey

payment for their work in helping a brand reach their audience with its key messages. This is not earned but paid media, and as such, any work in this area should be disclosed following the rules and regulations set down by the ASA and CAP Code.

Influencer relations is a minefield. As a relatively new and emerging discipline, there are very few businesses and brands who fully understand the rules for ethical influencer relations when working with bloggers, vloggers and the likes.

These influencers receive numerous pitches from PRs and comms teams on a regular basis offering payment for non-disclosed posts and paid follow links in a bid to boost what appears to be a brand's organic SEO, but this clearly flouts the ASA regulations, the CAP Code and not to mention Google's Regulations too.

I firmly believe it is our job as professional communicators to ensure that it is our responsibility to get it right when we are engaging with bloggers and vloggers as part of an influencer relations programme on behalf of our clients and the brands we represent. That's following the

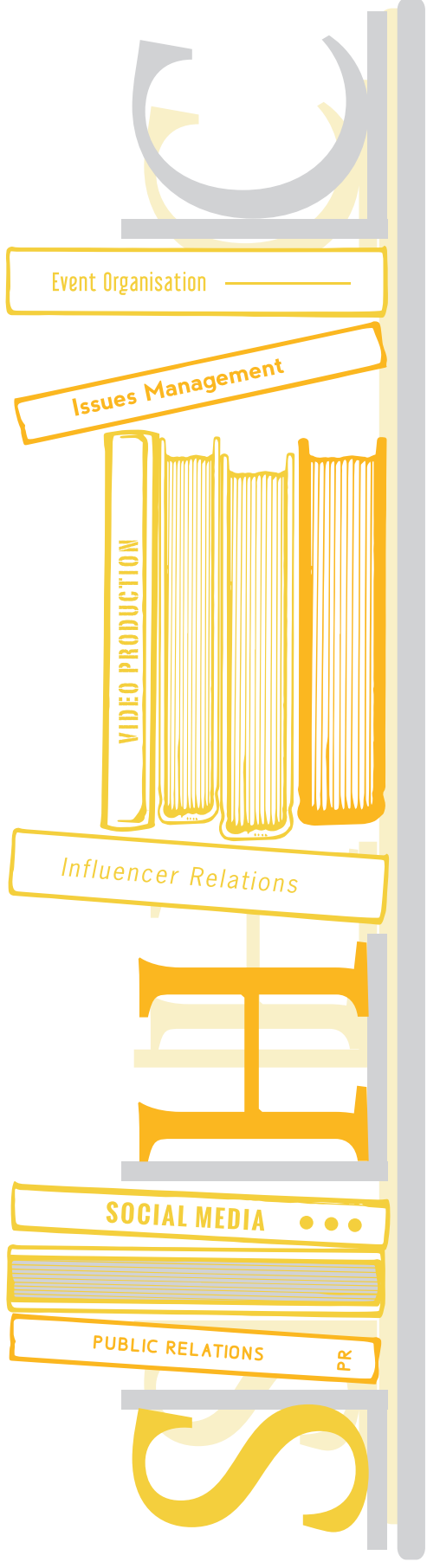
ASA guidelines, the CAP Code, the regulations of individual platforms and of course, as a Chartered PR Practitioner of the CIPR, that's following the Code of Conduct too, to ensure that me and my team are best-serving the brands we represent and their reputations we work so hard to protect.

There's no doubt engaging with bloggers strategically can be great in helping to achieve your strategic business objectives, but please heed this word of warning: use their expertise and tap into their audiences but also ensure you are not asking them to engage in unethical activity. Ultimately, the responsibility and potential repercussions lies with us all.

Anne-Marie is collaborating with Debbie Sharratt, an award-winning PR and Marketing professional who is also now a successful blogger, to deliver a number of courses to help businesses, brands and communicators work more effectively and ethically with bloggers and other social influencers. For more information, visit nesma.co.uk.

Disclosure: A version of this article first appeared in Influence Online, co-authored by Anne-Marie Lacey and Debbie Sharratt.

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IT'S TIME TO LET YOUR CUSTOMERS DO THE TALKING

Throughout their 12 years in business, full-service agency The Works has seen social media change the relationship between brands and their consumers. Here, they discuss the power of User Generated Content and why it should always be considered when planning marketing campaigns.

Being transparent with your customers is key to an organisation's success, and nothing does more for your brand than making authentic connections with consumers. That's why User Generated Content (UGC) is now one of the most valuable forms of marketing, because the content comes directly from your brand advocates.

UGC includes any piece of content created by a person about a brand, which they then share online with their followers. Whether you recognise it or not, there is UGC out there for almost every brand, and it's something everyone should be embracing. Rather than treating your customers as just that, you should be looking at them as partners, who can assist with marketing campaigns and support your brand story.

From A-list celebrities tagging their new clothes on Instagram, to your friends showing off their latest meal on Facebook, people now use social media to predominately talk about brands. Most people have high quality camera phones and are active on a vast amount of social media platforms to share everyday moments with their followers. The internet is full of UGC videos, product selfies and reviews from bloggers.

This type of content is particularly predominant on Instagram, where brands can easily repost content from users' accounts (providing they have permission, of course!) GoPro is a great example of this- they repost one photo each day on Instagram from users who use the hashtag 'GoPro'. Offering consumers photo of the day recognition, the campaign motivates users to post high-quality images, while giving GoPro some impressive, and more importantly authentic, content to post. With the recent introduction of shoppable Instagram posts, which allows consumers to buy a product directly from the tagged post, the whole process of brands benefitting from UGC just got a whole lot easier.

According to a report from Adweek, 85% of users surveyed found visual UGC to be more influential than content made by brands directly. No matter how hard brands try, it's usually UGC that goes viral. Mainly because authentic photos and videos from users allow brands to show off their products in the 'real world', which is so much more relatable and trustworthy. We're not saying the old-school approach of (dare we say it) 'in your face' advertising doesn't work anymore, but the more natural, less invasive content that's straight from the horse's mouth is clicking more with consumers,

particularly the younger generation who tend to trust personal recommendations over anything else.

User generated content is quickly becoming the foundation of any integrated content marketing strategy, with hashtags and ways of getting consumers involved becoming a vital part of campaign planning. If your brand isn't using it, then you're missing out on key opportunities to let your customers promote your products and services for you. Starbucks is well known for its Red Cups around Christmas, but two years ago, it handed content and creative power over to consumers. Users got involved by simply uploading photos of their own Red Cup designs beside a particular hashtag. Starbucks received thousands of entries- that's thousands of user generated photos to be used throughout the campaign before a final cup design was chosen (which created even more opportunities), without them really doing anything themselves.

Based on predictions from the International Data Corporation, consumers' content will outperform marketers' content by 2020. If you embrace UGC, your customers will essentially do your marketing for you by becoming brand ambassadors, without even realising it.

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

EPIC IMPACT ON A SMALL BUDGET

Is there a magic formula for marketing success which doesn't involve having to spend copious amounts of money? Ben Maughan, managing director at Chester-le-Street-based digital start-up, Epic Social, muses over how marketers can make a big impact on a tight budget.

In years gone by, marketing managers looking to make an impact on the launch of a new product or promote an event wouldn't look past print and outdoor advertising in order to spread the word. However, in today's world of instant gratification, where technology is ever-changing and consumers can access media on-the-go 24/7 via their smartphones, there are lots more options available and it can be difficult to know where to start.

Marketeers with a large budget tend to opt for integrated campaigns, comprising a number of different elements in order to maximise exposure. A great recent example of this is the Grand National 2018 campaign. In the lead up to the event, the Grand National had a strong digital advertising campaign, reinforced with traditional, large-scale print and

billboard ads and a social media presence to create maximum impact. For those working to a smaller budget however, how would you seek to replicate this?

Our advice would be to look at your brand, decide who your audience is and then work within your limits. Yes, huge neon billboards over commuter routes may look great and attract motorists' attention, but there are far more thrifty ways of engaging equally as many people.

Targeted social media advertising can help you to engage with a very specific demographic on a very reasonable budget. Using built-in analytics, you can track exactly how many interactions your advert receives in real-time, so you can monitor the effectiveness of your campaign and your return on investment, something which is much less scientific with outdoor advertising.

At Epic Social, we specialise in providing results-driven, highly creative, content-based advertising solutions for clients operating across a wide spectrum of industry sectors including retail, hospitality, automotive and professional services.



Ben Maughan

To find out more about how we could help you market your business, visit www.epicsocial.co.uk

ALL BUSINESSES CAN CREATE GREAT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

So why is it essential for us to understand customer experience?

Because it is the experience rather than the function that people remember. And it is the experience that people will talk about to their friends. No-one bothers to talk about their train journey from Newcastle to London to their friends – unless something happens on the way. Good and bad!

Was the train delayed, did the toilets work, was there food on board, was it noisy, peaceful, enjoyable, awful?

How many times do you ask how someone's holiday was and they completely forget to tell you about the destination (unless the hotel was A-M-A-Z-I-N-G!) but they will tell you about the awful journey they have had courtesy of such and such an airline.

We need to map our customer journeys – from their first contact with us, throughout our service provision and then again thank them and check everything is okay at the end.

I am writing this en route from Glasgow to Newcastle.

The first train was cancelled which meant I missed



Veronica Swindale

my connection at Edinburgh. The next train to Edinburgh was delayed because the cooling system wasn't working.

I was hungry as when I'm travelling first class I do depend on the train operator to provide my breakfast and supper. The morning train had offered me a bread bun and jam so by 5.30pm I

was starving! However, the friendly lady who kept bringing me cups of tea and my favourite biscuits has held me in the right mood to write this article.

So, I stepped off the train a relatively satisfied customer because I have got from A to B and a load of productive work done on the way. Never mind the roast duck and glass of rose I had received on my London to Newcastle trip earlier in the week with a different operator.

The litmus test is – do we book with that rail operator again? Do we have any choice? Or next time will I drive?

Customer Experience is just one of the courses we have recently added to our 1-day skill sessions. These courses are aimed at increasing know-how, in practical, short bursts in open learning sessions or taken in-house to teams. Allowing participants to share best practice and interact with experts in their field.

Whatever sector your business operates in, customer experience is a vital gauge of success.

Do you understand the little things that matter to your customers and know how you will find that information out?

Veronica Swindale, Director, Chartered Marketer, FCIM and CIM Ambassador of the North 2017
Whether it's working on your current skill set or exploring a new area of expertise nesma has all your marketing and communication know-how covered. www.nesma.co.uk hello@nesma.co.uk



MEDIAWORKS RECAPS ON ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL FINANCIAL YEAR

The financial year 2017/18 saw Mediaworks achieve record levels of success for their digital marketing agency. Here, the agency recaps on what has been an outstanding 12 months for the business:

In 2017, Mediaworks celebrated its 10th year as an award-winning digital marketing agency. Before it even began, the year was already shaping up to be monumental, yet the outstanding success we have achieved over the last 12 months has exceeded all expectations.

As our profile grows, our reputation for delivering results and digital excellence has helped us continue to work with some of the biggest brands on a regional, national and international basis. Over the past 12 months, we have continued to work with brands including Yorkshire Water, QUIZ and Stagecoach, while also beginning work with River Island, UK Power Networks and Northern Powergrid, to name a few.

The year saw us work on a number of exciting campaigns, including developing The Royal Mint's Great British Coin Hunt app to support the release

of their new quintessentially British 10p coins. This challenging project used image recognition technology and artificial intelligence (AI) to create a user-centric, intuitive application, which launched to great success — the app achieved 7,000 downloads in the first 24 hours.

Our continued success has led to the further expansion of our digital marketing team. We have recruited across departments to ensure we have the skills and talent required to continue to deliver exceptional results as the number and size of client accounts increase. Most notably, this has seen us double the size of our PPC team in a single year.

The hard work and determination of our entire team has seen us deliver some outstanding client results in the past year and beyond, even attracting industry recognition. Our success saw us scoop the Best Use of Search award at Big Chip 2017.

Most recently, we have been shortlisted for Best Creative Company at the North East Business Awards and Best Integrated Campaign at The European Search Awards, while also racking up nominations at the UK Biddable Media Awards 2018, Northern Digital Awards 2018 and Northern Marketing Awards 2017. What's more, Mediaworks was also named in the Prolific North Top 50 Integrated Agency list.

With the new financial year already underway, we aim to continue this success and better our achievements. We have already kicked off April with a further four recruits joining our team, as we continue our growth plans. With our dedication to digital and a hard-working, talented team, the only way is up for Mediaworks over the next 12 months.

Want to see your own digital success grow? Contact Mediaworks on 0191 404 0100 or email info@mediaworks.co.uk.

Christian Cerisola



CHEAP PINTS AND WET KORMA JUST WASN'T CUT OUT FOR SOCIAL MEDIA

Every time it comes to writing columns on communications, it feels like a fresh social media storm brews just in time.

So huge thanks to Wetherspoons pubs boss Tim Martin for announcing, just in time, that he's dropped all his company's social media activity. 'A waste of time and money,' according to him.

Of course, by the time this goes to print, we'll probably know the real story around this and whether it was actually a considered ploy or whether the growing rumours around some of their practices around the use of Facebook and in its email marketing were entirely ethical.

Are we now all going to follow suit? Well, I'd hope it makes you all consider what you're getting from your social media activity and whether you're approaching it in the right manner.

Wetherspoons probably doesn't tick all the boxes for rich Instagram feeds. A bowl of curry and a pint of Fosters probably aren't quite what we'd want to show off to our friends and followers. Let's be honest, are we going to check in on Facebook at the local Wetherspoons on a Saturday night with the other half, or are we more likely to only do that when we're at a far loftier venue for #DateNight?

It's small wonder Tim Martin thought they may only be getting limited returns from it when you consider Wetherspoons' approach. They've

taken what might loosely be termed the Ryanair attitude to things; a low budget, value proposition shorn of frills and the little extras. Wetherspoons is unashamedly about cheap pints and value food that fills the belly. They're unlikely to be troubling the Michelin judges anytime soon, and for their customers that's absolutely fine. They don't expect foam reductions with their korma or Sommelier's presenting their berry-flavoured Strongbow in fine crystal.

You'd be a fool to dismiss the massive success of Wetherspoons, but think long and hard before following them headlong into ditching your social media. Are you that same style of company that would be happy to cut off open and honest communication lines to your customers? So many forget, or ignore, the fantastic opportunities social media platforms offer you to listen to what people are saying; about you and your brand, about your competitors and about your industry. It staggers me that people don't do this enough.

It's small wonder its outspoken owner thinks they get nothing from social media. I'm sure its bar managers are offered some sort of guidelines on appointment, but trying to consistently control

some 900 individual accounts in this manner – most pubs had their own separate Twitter and Facebook accounts – must be hellish.

There are countless others who adopt this approach and generate big successes. Check Starbucks. Hundreds and hundreds of specific store accounts, but with some consistency and common goals coming from on high. We all love our personalised cups from them, don't we? Very sharable. Even more sharable when they get it dramatically wrong. Be under no illusion that they know full well that incorrect spellings get shared far more than the right ones.

For so many other businesses, who don't have vast customer-facing operations like Wetherspoons, a well-thought out approach to social media content and engagement is a vital lifeline to existing and potential customers. A chance for everyone to feel in tune with the brand, understand what it stands for and generate and accelerate that all-important word of mouth.

Social media is a brilliant way to make customers advocates of your brand. Don't overlook that because someone's made what might turn out to be a decision made for all the wrong reasons.

ASK SILVER BULLET...

“HOW CAN WE USE GENDER PAY GAP FIGURES FOR MARKETING?”

By the time this article sees the light of day, all companies employing more than 250 people are meant to have published their GPG statistics – in essence, the percentage difference between male and female pay, although the six calculations required include different aspects of pay statistics including bonus payments.

If all this is sounding daunting, the legislation is fortunately only aimed at the 10,000 or so largest firms who employ more than 250 employees and will most probably have substantial in-house HR departments.

After figures were released in April, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that men earned 18.4% more than females and the legislation is an attempt to understand and then reduce this figure. The picture arising from companies that have submitted data is not promising – EasyJet reported a GPG of 45%, Virgin Money 38%, yet Ladbrokes was just 2.5% - all three firms reported that men and women in the same roles are paid equally, meaning there are far more males than females in the better paid jobs.

So, given your GPG data is not flattering, what can you do? The first point is companies should definitely obey the regulations and publish their date - whilst there's actually no immediate financial penalties for non-compliance, continual non-compliance may well be investigated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) which could result in fines.

There will undoubtedly be a flood of GPG statistics released after the authorised date in the hope that individual poor results can be overlooked in the general picture, but this misses the essential point of using GPG as an opportunity and catalyst for change. GPG reporting hasn't been introduced to single out employers for public ridicule, although, the revelation



Jen Macdonald, Account Manager at Silver Bullet Marketing Ltd

from beauty brand, L'Oreal UK, who has marketed their cosmetics under the slogan "...because you're worth it", that there's a 35% GPG despite the fact that their workforce is 84% female, won't have gone unnoticed. Rather it is to understand the differences and then consider ways to bring parity – as such just the exercise of assembling the data will highlight many issues to receptive management.

We are fortunate to work closely with HR consultant Steve Duncan who has vast experience and expertise on the topic. He advises, "Definitely publish as directed, however large the gap may be – there'll probably be worse figures coming out dependent on different sectors. Honesty is the ONLY policy here!"

"The picture and opportunities across different sectors is interesting – construction, for example, generally deemed a male oriented industry, has an average GPG of 18% and aims to reduce this to 15%, whilst hospitality, again, generally considered a more female led industry, is actually worse."

"Whilst everyone accepts equality of employment, there's a huge difference between equality of opportunity and equality of outcome and it requires a change of culture to tackle the barriers to create real equality – adverts and open days need to stress the organisation's commitment to this policy with policies like shared parental leave, flexi-time to facilitate child care, provision of crèches and other initiatives, but also have to accept that the pool of skilled female brick layers, for example, is highly limited so to only fish here is to limit outcomes."

So, publish the data, accept it as a snap shot of the present position but use this to progress the company and be open with prospective customers about the position. At some point, it is highly likely that a pre-set GPG performance will be a pre-requisite for public funded contracts, so if you're competing in this market, you may as well start changing things now!

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

YOU'VE "HIGHLIGHTED" OUR BUSINESS - HIGHLIGHTS PR

Highlights PR is a successful PR agency run by Keith Newman. Uniquely, their office is a boat based on the River Tyne.

Each month in this section, I highlight a business or organisation that I've helped with their PR and media presence. This month is slightly different as I'm talking about me!

Highlights PR has just turned 10 years old and we have many clients ranging from business start-ups to multinational firms and utilities. We don't do hard sell or offer packages that promise the earth. What we do though gets results and enhances our client's reputation in the media helping to boost sales or raise awareness.

I'm exceptionally proud of our success rate and at the number of clients who come back to us time and time again for no nonsense PR.

Highlights for Highlights PR over the past 10 years include looking after The People's Kitchen's Christmas campaigns for the past six years, working with the Sunday for Sammy team, getting worldwide coverage for a Northumberland based oil and gas engineer, managing an ongoing contract to provide press and media coverage for a major utility company and so much more.

Above all though, I love to see or hear my client's reaction when I tell them they are in a newspaper or magazine, have a radio or TV interview or are being talked about positively online. It's a great feeling and I'd love to share it with you.



For a no obligation chat about your PR and a coffee on-board Highlights – the floating office, call Keith on 07814 397951 or email Keith@highlightspr.co.uk



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P.S. Free torch for every new customer (lol)

STAYING POWER...

Longevity in business is something to be admired. In this 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...

JOHN McCABE

Managing director of Fusion PR Creative and president of North East England Chamber of Commerce

Did you always envisage a career in the industry?

Almost. My career started at Northumbrian Water in what we'd now consider an apprenticeship. I spent the first six months in revenue before moving into the PR department and it wasn't long before I and they discovered I was better with words than I was with numbers.

What is your favourite aspect of the job?

My work has taken me into places and introduced me to people I could never have imagined it would at the start of my career. The meetings in Downing Street, beers with a former prime minister, being quizzed on Donald Trump's use of Twitter by the US ambassador to the UK...I'm saving it all for my memoirs.

What has been your career defining moment?

It was and remains an immense privilege to be elected and serve as president of North East England Chamber of Commerce.

How do you measure success?

We talked about this in the office just the other day. One of the few things I enjoy about getting older is the sense of perspective that comes with the advancing years. Status symbols and material possessions mean little or nothing to me compared to life experiences and being able to put my head on the pillow at night knowing I've at least tried to do the right thing.

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

Technology has changed many of the tools of the trade but the fundamentals of delivering effective strategic communications remain the same. Take media relations for example. When I started out I'd find myself stuffing

press releases and photographs into envelopes and posting them to journalists. The process has changed almost beyond recognition but the objective remains the same. I attended a dinner a couple of years ago where the guest speaker was Geoff Mulgan, chief executive of NESTA, the global innovation think-tank. I first met Geoff about 15 years ago when he was director of the Government's strategy unit. His after dinner speech was on the subject of smart cities and in the Q&A session that followed he was asked if he was starting out again, what profession would he pursue. I was surprised when he answered 'PR' but as he explained this above all others is an industry that will always require more natural than artificial intelligence. Technology continues to change our methods but I've seen nothing since to persuade me Geoff was very far off the mark.

How has your skillset developed accordingly?

I'm sure it has...I hope it has...but in creating and building Fusion I've focused more on bringing the right people with the necessary skills and experience into the team. I'm something of a technophobe but I'm comfortable surrounding myself with people who are far more digitally aware. That diversity is one of the strengths of Fusion's team.

Are you a risk taker by nature or more conservative?

In business I'm definitely risk averse, probably too much so. Prior to establishing Fusion five years ago this month, I'd always worked for big employers and never held any strong desire to run my own business. With the closure of its UK operations I was losing what I always describe as 'my last proper job' at Rio Tinto. I had opportunities to move abroad but chose instead to take

some time out, do some consultancy work for a little while and then look for a new proper job. Five years on, I'm very happy with how things have turned out but I'd never describe myself as entrepreneurial... I'm far too risk averse for that.

To what would you attribute your success?

I'm a little uncomfortable with the premise of the question because on a personal level I don't measure success in many of the usual ways. However I can't think of much that I do well that I wouldn't attribute to the people around me. That starts at home where I'm married to the smartest person I know and it extends to the brilliant teams at Fusion and the Chamber and to my wider network of friends and contacts. Chamber chief executive James Ramsbotham is fond of quoting the African proverb 'If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together.' I like that.

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

My aversion to risk. I'm not sure I'm actively managing it but through the passage of time I'm gaining confidence in what we're trying to do with Fusion and that's based on having made very many more good decisions than bad ones. I also swear too much and it's neither big nor clever. I'm afraid I'm not managing that at all.

How do you remain motivated?

I like to keep myself busy and involved. My Fusion and Chamber roles take care of that!

Would you prefer to be liked or respected?

Liked. I respect everyone I like but it's not necessarily the case the other way around.

I'll retire when...

I'm good and ready.





SUMMIT SUCCESS FOR ANNAPURNA ELDERS

John Dias, MD of Silver Bullet Marketing, reports on an expedition to Annapurna which raised almost £8,000 for Doddie Weir's Foundation.

The first two hours of the ascent to the Thorong La Pass were hard – it was 4.00am when we and other trekkers who had overnighted at Thorong Phedi at 4450m set off using headtorches and began the slow shuffle up to High Camp at 4850m. It was only 400m difference in height but you needed to concentrate to ensure you kept on the narrow path that zigzagged up the steep face - from there the track leveled out a bit into the snow fields and dawn revealed an almost alien landscape which dwarfed those who had made it this far.

Like most adventures, it had started in a pub...

Gordon Stanger-Leathes, (MD of Callerton Kitchens) and Eric Wilkins, (Director of the Great Run Company) had completed an epic Pyrenean trek whilst Eric had also been up Mt Kilimanjaro – both now wanted to do what many regard as the 'ultimate' trek, the Annapurna Circuit. The 140 miles takes travellers up the Manang Valley in North Nepal, over the Thorong La Pass at a lung-busting 5,416m height and down the Mustang Valley to Pokhara.

Gordon's daughter, Ali, a senior manager with World Challenge, through her contacts in Nepal was now able to make this happen and the team, of which I was fortunate enough to be a part, was invited last Summer. Andy Zair, Ali's boyfriend and an international rugby player for Hungary, would bring the average age down whilst Gordon, Eric,



**MY
NAME'S
DODDIE**
foundation

Jeremy Hargrove, Will Ruffman, Mel Horry and myself would return it back up to 65 or so – what could possibly go wrong?

Jeremy came up with the name of the Annapurna Elders, as it does what it says on the can as it were, and, as we were all fans of Doddie Weir and full of admiration for his fund-raising for Motor Neurone Disease, it seemed a natural fit for the trek to then try to support the charity. We set a high target at £5,000 but, due to the incredible generosity of people, we're at £7,422 at the time of writing and hoping to reach £8,000.00 – if you can donate, there's a Just Giving site to make it as easy as possible at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/annapurnaelders.

So what was it like? Incredible people in incredible landscapes. We were lucky with the weather and everyone made it over the Pass thanks to our great guides. We were lucky in having such a group that gelled so successfully in what were some fairly difficult circumstances. We were lucky in having the support of our families and colleagues that allowed us to take the time off work and we were lucky in having such generous supporters who have raised such a fantastic sum.

The highlight was the Pass – it's hard to explain how extraordinary this landscape is – and the icing on the cake was Andy asking Ali to marry him there.

Would I do it again – not a hope but if you ever get the chance, take it!

To support the "My Name's Doddie Foundation" and raise funds for research into the prevention of Motor Neurone Disease, please go to the Annapurna Elders' JustGiving page, www.justgiving.com/fundraising/annapurnaelders



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A NATURAL PROGRESSION

Increased demand for high quality photography and videography has led to the coming together of creative minds as one of the North East's fastest growing agencies expands.

The Bigger Picture Agency based in Newcastle's prestigious Biscuit Factory is spearheaded by Angela Carrington who has seen her business grow from sole trader status to a blossoming limited company employing five members of staff. Indeed, growth is projected to increase by a further 50 per cent by the end of 2019 based on current figures and the appointment of a new member of the team.

With the ever-increasing of popularity of social media and video, The Bigger Picture has developed its services into video production having worked with a number of key clients over the last two years. With successful video projects undertaken with Meldrum Construction, Virgin Money Foundation, high-end estate agents, a legal practice and many more in the pipeline, Angela has identified a natural



Angela Carrington, Jeanette Doherty, Liam Norman, Jason Thompson and Claire Gibson.

and complimentary progression for her business.

"The landscape of content marketing has changed over the past couple of years with video projected to form around 90 per cent of all web traffic by 2019. Simply adding a video to a marketing campaign can enhance click-through rates, conversion rates and hugely increase brand awareness. Viewers are

far more likely to remember a video they have watched than a blog post or other text based marketing piece," she said.

Feedback from her clients has been exceptional and the success of the ongoing projects and relationships have led to the appointment of Jason Thompson as 'Head of Video Production' on a retained basis.

"Jason was already working as an associate videographer with us and it seemed natural to bring his expertise in-house in a more formal way. He has an enviable track record as a Producer/Director of Photography and brings with him a wealth of experience and a passion for beautiful film-making," she said.



The Bigger Picture Agency is committed to providing affordable but visually engaging video work to their commercial clients and offer the same level of professionalism and creativity that their existing clients have come to expect from their stills work. Jason and Angela have over 40 years combined experience in visual practice and their coming-together represents a meeting of minds with a common appreciation of aesthetics along with cutting-edge technical know-how.

Jason said "We realised that not only did we work well together, but our combined skills and creative vision enabled us to create films that had a professional edge. They are engaging, personal, cinematic stories that feature clients in a positive, memorable way. There's no such thing as a typical project - everything we do is planned as an individual perfect fit for the client and their audience."

With Jason's extensive track record, Angela is looking forward to their creative mix of stills and video photography propelling the region's business

community onto a new, higher level of marketing excellence.

"I firmly believe that we can help companies in the region to deliver regular, quality video content to push out across their various channels for a fee that encourages a long-term approach to the use of film in their arsenal of marketing collateral. No longer will a general video overview of a company 'cut the mustard' for successful company promotion - viewers want more and they want it more often. Visual storytelling with a strong message, on a regular basis can raise a company from successful to exceptional in a matter of months." she said.

Jason added "Increasingly, the online space is being populated by more and more video content, and what will matter now is the quality, approach, professionalism and vision of your production crew."

The Bigger Picture's most recent commission is to produce three films for The Auckland Project, documenting the multi-million-pound restoration

of Auckland Castle. It's not the first heritage project that the agency has tackled as they documented the step by step progress of the old Co-operative Building in Newcastle as it was transformed into a new hotel.

The team are rolling out a series of packages whereby companies can benefit from quarterly or even monthly filming to give them fresh content year-round; all with an emphasis on quality - using specialist techniques and equipment that would be out of reach to an inexperienced film-maker.

Video has now become more accessible to all - just like photography did ten years ago. Angela however doesn't see this as a barrier or a threat - she regularly trains in-house marketers and helps them to develop the skills to create their own content.

"Where we can really add-value is by producing creative, engaging, memorable video content that elevates a brand or organisation. The emphasis is on quality - produced regularly to fit the demand of today's consumer".

Contact the Bigger Picture Agency at Studio 3, The Biscuit Factory, Stoddart Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE2 1AN

Email: info@thisisthebiggerpicture.co.uk Tel: 0191 711 9684 Mobile: 07903 269 619



LEGAL TECHNOLOGY EXPERT JOINS WARD HADAWAY

Ward Hadaway has announced that legal technology expert Jonathan Smith has joined the firm as Director of IT.

Jonathan has worked in the IT industry for more than 20 years and has spent his career advising on change development and technology implementations across the North. He has led firms through countless technology advancements, including successfully implementing practice management and digital dictation systems across the UK.

Over the next 12 months, Jonathan's projects will include Windows 10/Office 2016 desktop roll-out, improved mobility options and a number of projects to improve efficiency.

Jonathan said: "I am thrilled to join Ward Hadaway and look forward to promoting the firm's ongoing growth and success in the future."

Jonathan's appointment comes as Ward Hadaway reaccredits its CyberEssentials Plus certification. The firm remains one of just a handful of law firms across the UK to achieve this accreditation.



GATESHEAD FIRM SEES STRONG DEMAND FOR ONLINE SERVICES

A specialist Gateshead technology firm is planning further expansion after seeing continued demand for its advanced education quality assurance software.

Team Valley-based Mesma has achieved strong growth for its online technology and consultancy services, which help schools, colleges and training providers implement effective quality assurance systems aligned to external inspection and audit requirements.

Over the last 12 months, Mesma has seen a surge in demand for its subscription-based software and services, and now predicts revenues in excess of £300,000 in 2019.

The firm plans to expand the consultancy to bolster its existing team of specialists as part of plans to diversify in the face of a changing education landscape.

Director Louise Doyle said: "We have seen particular growth in our further and higher education client base this year. We can now see how we can build more modules into the software to support this drive for quality education and training."

GLOBAL EMPLOYEES RAISE FUNDS FOR LOCAL CHARITY

Electronics technology specialist Stadium Group has stepped up to the challenge as colleagues from around the world put their best foot forward to raise £8,000 for North East charity Saras Hope Foundation.

The company issued a global call to action, which saw 26 members of staff from its Hartlepool, Eastleigh, Norwich, Sweden and China sites take part in The Great North Run.

Saras Hope Foundation was launched in 2007,

inspired by the remarkable Sara Hoburn who died aged just 16 after a battle with a rare form of colon cancer. The charity aims to provide holiday breaks and special memories for people living with cancer and their family and friends.

Carol Bennett, Fundraising Manager at Saras Hope Foundation, said: "We sincerely thank all the family, friends and colleagues who sponsored the team so generously and, of course, the management at Stadium Group for its support."



DIGITAL BOOTCAMP PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE HONOURS



Eleven participants from the region's business community have recently received honours for successfully completing Generator's Digital Bootcamp. Team members from the likes of Cool Blue and Cobweb Design were recognised for their achievements.

Organised by Generator, one of the UK's leading business support agencies, the bootcamp was launched to curb the on-going digital skills shortage in the region and help new staff hit the ground running.

Emma Whitenstall, Generator's Head of Business Support, said: "We're extremely proud of our bootcamp graduates and Generator's on-going drive to provide some of the best creative and digital support opportunities the UK has to offer right now."

Digital Bootcamp is delivered by the best creative digital professionals in the region. Its aim is to establish industry-ready graduates and employees via hands-on workshops and events, taking place once a week over an eight-week period.

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BETTER, FASTER, HEALTHIER COMMUNICATIONS

Andy Hunter, Technical Director at IT managed IT solutions and services experts ITPS, explains how health and social care organisations will benefit from the new Health and Social Care Network

Every organisation relies on the collection, storage and sharing of data, and technology can help us to transform the way services are delivered. Nowhere more so than in the healthcare sector.

This year sees big new opportunities on the horizon for both NHS and commercial health and social care organisations, with the introduction of a new UK-wide communications network specifically for the sector.

The NHS is going through a period of massive change, with increasing operational stress and a raft of technological issues including compliance, data continuity and a reliance on ICT infrastructures approaching end of useful life.

The plan to replace N3, the virtual private network that connects around 1.3 million NHS staff, with the Health and Social Care Network (HSCN) is just one of the moves by the Department of Health and Social Care to improve services through more collaborative working, and underpin safe, flexible and efficient information sharing.

N3 was previously monopolised by the large carriers, particularly BT, however HSCN opens up the market to allow organisations the freedom to choose their own connectivity services partner.

The new network goes further than N3, which connected NHS Trusts, Clinical Commissioning Groups, hospitals and GP practices, by allowing commercial health and social care providers such as pharmacies, dentists, opticians and even care homes and social housing providers to access the network and share information.

HSCN is designed to underpin the digital



Andy Hunter

transformation of NHS services and is one of the biggest step changes in the delivery of health and social care services in decades.

We are delighted to be flying the flag for the region as the only North East based ICT experts to receive approval from NHS Digital. It puts us in a select group of major players and comes after months of effort going through the rigorous vetting process.

Alongside assessing our technical capabilities and track record in delivering complex ICT solutions, the audit paid particular attention to our own core infrastructure, which all potential Stage 2 suppliers must have in place in order to be considered.

We were able to demonstrate that our multi-million pound peer to peer, high speed communications infrastructure across the UK and our North East

data centre, and the wraparound services that support it, actually goes above and beyond NHS Digital's requirements.

We are pleased to see HSCN open up a competitive market for the supply of ICT services. It will enable health and social care organisations to more easily access better, faster and cheaper network telecommunications services. It will also reduce duplication and improve collaboration, enabling them to reuse and share existing network infrastructure and services.

Our ethos is to put clients in control and deliver better value for money, whatever the sector and the situation. The bottom line is that HSCN will have a positive impact on patient care, which will ultimately benefit all our lives.



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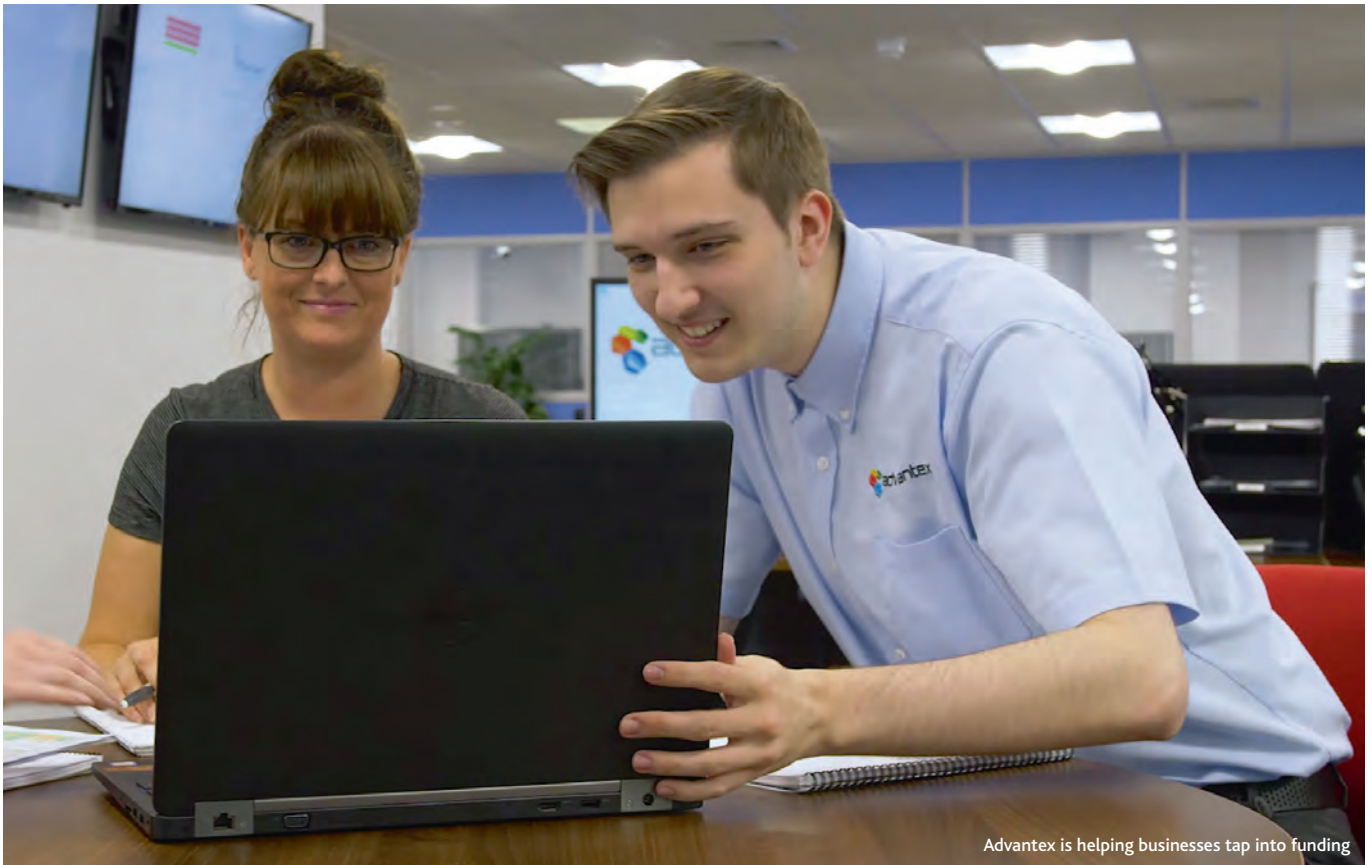


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Advantex is helping businesses tap into funding

TAKE IT FOR GRANTED

Steve O'Connell, managing director of Advantex, wants to see business benefit from new Government supported funding initiatives designed to power investment in local IT projects.

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) Gigabit Connection Broadband Voucher Scheme, an initiative designed to help companies secure access to superfast gigabit internet connectivity through £3,000 worth of funding, is being rolled out nationally and has arrived in North East England.

Meanwhile, the £4m Digital Drive Durham initiative, already up and running and part funded by the European Regional Development fund, offers grants of up to 40% towards digital technology or consultancy costs. Specifically, under a scheme designed to power growth and drive opportunity, SMEs can claim funding help towards the cost of installing new superfast broadband and equipment to improve business performance through the use of digital technology.

The three-year scheme will enable start-ups and smaller enterprises to access funding which can be invested in the important digital projects that are the crucial components for expansion and provide the building blocks for growth in the global market place.

Both initiatives come as a recent Tech Nation Report identified that the digital economy contributes in excess of £97bn a year to UK plc. More than 72% of venture capital and private

equity investment went to regional businesses in 2016, amounting to £9.2bn.

Steve O'Connell says: "Businesses can be recipients of these funding initiatives, which aim to boost performance and provide a head start to success through the latest workplace digital technologies.

"Advanced IT and telecoms equipment help to unlock new commercial opportunities and provide the business DNA that powers growth. These funding programmes open up whole new avenues of opportunity, and we look forward to companies getting in touch to explore how they can benefit."

For instance, those taking advantage of Digital Drive Durham can use the funding towards the cost of digital consultancy projects, new IT technology and the superfast broadband services that drive enterprise grade networks.

Steve O'Connell again: "Superfast broadband delivers increased capacity for businesses to send and receive data electronically. This allows larger files to be downloaded and uploaded faster, while emails are sent and received much quicker.

"It also significantly improves business performance, opening up access to new markets, improving customer relationships and delivering long term and measurable efficiency and cost savings. It can also provide a safe and reliable

platform to launch unique selling points, opening up a competitive lead over others in the market place. The list is almost endless."

Funding paves the way towards supporting the cost of experts from firms such as Advantex, who can provide the requisite advice on the right type of IT and telecoms systems to buy, or review your existing digital skill sets, with tips on how these can be improved.

There's no doubt that taking advantage of the advice and expertise on offer from specialist partners, can prove to be a worthwhile investment for those looking to navigate their way through the ever changing and challenging digital landscape, says Steve O'Connell.

"Secure, safe and cost effective internet-powered technologies lie at the heart of the advanced solutions we provide. These are designed to deliver secure and reliable services, which support employers and workforces based either in the office or working remotely from home or other offsite locations."

Advantex can draw on its experience of delivering similar schemes to help and support businesses wanting to apply for the Gigabit Connection Broadband Voucher Scheme and Digital Drive Durham funds.

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THE PRESSURES OF EXAM SEASON

Furrowed brows. Bitten nails. Fluttering tummies. Outbursts of frustration and anxiety. All these symptoms and more will be present in households with 16 and 18 year olds over the next few weeks as we move into public exam season. Not, I hasten to add, amongst those who are taking the exams, many of whom will be disconcertingly calm as the various tests loom, but amongst their increasing frazzled parents. Are they revising enough? Are they revising properly? Do they really need their phone to revise? Do they need a tutor? How can I help?

For many parents, watching their sons or daughters go through GCSE or A Level exams is a gruelling experience. Despite, or perhaps because of, the fact that mums and dads took exams when they were at school, the bewildering variety of advice, good and bad, available on the internet together with their child's apparently nonchalant approach to their work all mean that parents can feel powerless to help.

There's no doubt that there is a good deal of obfuscation about. Many commentaxtors, no doubt with the best of intentions, downplay the importance of revision and indeed public exams, arguing that the focus on grades is having an adverse effect on the mental health of young people. Others will point to educational technology as a panacea for the drudgery of revision; rather than pen and paper, laptops and mobile phones provide a quick and easy way to revise, magically transmitting the information from their screens into youngsters' heads smoothly and painlessly.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 386 4783, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk



This was highlighted recently when Barnaby Lenon, Chair of the Independent Schools Council and the ex-headmaster of Harrow, stated that "exam grades are made in the Easter holidays" and advised a solid seven hours of revision each day during that holiday period. The reaction was predictably uproarious. Mr Lenon was accused of being out of touch with youngsters today, talking to only a privileged elite, piling on pressure to fragile adolescents and so on. More sensible folk, usually teachers, pointed out that quality revision was not necessarily directly related to time spent revising; it was all too easy for children to spend time on inefficient or ineffective means of revising, when much more could be achieved in much less time by using better techniques.

My experience both as a student and as a teacher

tells me that, probably reassuringly, effective techniques for revision really haven't changed very much over the years. There really aren't any shortcuts to success, particularly at GCSE, which is an exam where hard work carries pupils a long way. My advice for revision is very simple. First, whilst it is possible to spend a lot of time in fruitless revision as some state, it is simply not the case that there are easy shortcuts to success. Revision requires time and pupils should be working two or three hours a day when they are at school and four to six when study leave begins. That sounds a lot, but with a properly constructed revision timetable, which importantly is adhered to, can allow that time to be spent without burnout or panic. Revision needs to be active, distilling notes and committing to memory, rather than just rereading the text book. Frequent self-testing is key to knowing where their weaknesses are as well as providing encouragement that progress is being made. Pupils should try to recreate the exam environment at home; sit at a desk, don't lie on the bed, no music, no TV and, most importantly, no mobile phone. Nothing is more distracting than checking every five minutes for a text or message. Online quizzing is fine, but be sceptical of any other reason for keeping the phone on. Revision is tough, time consuming and often tedious. But, nothing is better for the mental health of youngsters is the knowledge that they are going into a public exam fully prepared for the challenge.

If you are one of those parents this year, I wish you strength and fortitude!

CONCEPT STRENGTHENS SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

Award-winning creative and digital recruitment agency, Concept Personnel, has a new hand at the helm of its Newcastle Office.

Following its most successful year ever, Erin Kirtley has been promoted to Regional Manager, and will continue to drive the business forward in the North East and Scotland.

Erin, 28, from Ashington, has been a key part of Concept's team for the past three years, managing several key accounts.

After graduating from Northumbria University with a degree in Interactive Media Design her first job was in-house as a Graphic Designer and Digital Marketing Executive before being placed by Concept Personnel at Cargo Creative as an Account Manager.

"My role at Cargo was client facing which gave me the opportunity to manage a variety of projects and work alongside designers and developers" said Erin. "Having worked within the creative industry I am able to advise candidates based on my own experiences whilst understanding the technical aspects required for the jobs in which we recruit."

Firmly established as the leading digital and creative recruitment agency in the region, 2017 saw Concept celebrate its 15th anniversary and win a raft of new contracts with blue chip companies.

"Last year was an amazing year for the business," said Jo Carter, MD of Concept Personnel. "This year we are



looking to capitalise on that success by growing the business, opening our third office and making several new appointments.

"Erin has been a key part of this success, and her promotion is well deserved. It marks the start of a very exciting time for Concept."

Erin will head up the team in Newcastle, but will also manage the Scotland office which serves the thriving creative and digital industries in Glasgow and Edinburgh.

"I'm really looking forward to getting started in my new role," said Erin. "We have a fantastic team in

Newcastle who have all spent time working within creative, digital or marketing based roles. It is that extra bit of industry knowledge combined with our caring and personal approach to customer service that our clients really value.

"What sets Concept aside from other agencies is that we are not commission based or driven by sales targets. We are recruiters but from a different angle with different motives. It's all about relationships and much of our success is down to long standing customers from companies that love what we do and the way we work."

Contact Erin Kirtley on 0191 233 9560.

THE ART OF REVISION

By Mr. David Tickner, Headmaster at Newcastle School for Boys.



With the examination season upon us, it is worth remembering that there is more to pupils' success than simply their subject knowledge. Revision techniques also play a very important role in determining pupils' grades.

It can be easy for some pupils to fall into the trap of spending lots of time apparently revising but doing so ineffectively. In reading through or copying out course material, pupils may feel that they are spending a great deal of time of revising or that they are producing lots of revision material. In the short term, it may even assuage parents' insistence on signs of revision activity. But over time, we retain only a small proportion of the detail of what we might read or copy out.

Most of us don't want to spend any more time revising than we have to, so it is important to make time spent revising count.

Effective revision techniques ensure that key information has been understood, processed and can be recalled quickly and accurately at the time it is required in the examination. This is best done when pupils engage actively with revision content.

So, by all means re-read that important chapter but its key points need to be processed in note

or another visual form such as a diagram or a mind map. Alternatively, they could be captured in audio form as a sound file.

Mind maps can be particularly effective for capturing a subject or broad topic area. These can then be focussed on specifics and are useful in identifying key words, terms and concepts. The use of colour and other visuals, such as images, help the brain to remember and subsequently recall these details.

Revision needs to be targeted. It can be too easy for pupils to stay within their comfort zone and 'revise' the stuff they already know or enjoy. Pupils need to identify what they find challenging and what is important to their exam success and prioritise this.

Lifestyle factors also have an important part to play. Revision sessions should be 45 to 60 minutes with frequent breaks. During revision and exams, stress can be alleviated and productivity enhanced by getting sufficient sleep, exercising, eating healthily. There is also good evidence that staying hydrated improves brain function.

Finally, keep a healthy sense of perspective. Exams are important and can determine future study and career paths but they are not the be-all and end-all.

The School is currently taking applications for September 2018. To register your interest or for any queries, please contact 0191 255 9303 or admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk or for more information, please visit www.newcastleschool.co.uk.

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YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

KIERAN McLAUGHLIN

Headmaster, Durham School

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

I grew up in Liverpool, which is a city which mirrors many aspects of Newcastle: the warmth of the people, the acerbic sense of humour and the passion for football.

What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

I wouldn't class myself as a businessperson, though running a school does require certain business skills. I think it is a mixture of challenge and opportunity; there is no doubt that recent years have been tough for all manner of businesses but there is also a sense that the economy is diversifying and people are being even more entrepreneurial in their approaches.

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

The variety of scenery and environments in the area: world class cities in the form of Newcastle and of course Durham, together with stunning countryside and sandy beaches.

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

I tend to hold business meetings at school, which in itself is a beautiful site, but I do like the Kingslodge Inn as a local alternative.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

In Durham there are traditional favourites such as Cellar Door or the Ramside Hall Thai as well as newcomers like Hotel Indigo or Thai River. Further afield is Mannaza in Newcastle or the Lord Crewe in Blanchland.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

I tend to unwind by spending time with my family so, weather permitting, excursions to the Northumberland coast or to Weardale.

Are the people really friendlier?

They really are. I lived in London for over 10 years and all the cliches about not knowing neighbours or aggressiveness on the tube etc really are true. Its people are one of the North East's greatest assets.

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

The view from outside our School Chapel, across to the Cathedral and the wider city and county, is by far my favourite view.

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

From my personal point of view, I think the region is blessed with some excellent schools, state and independent, which really do offer the opportunity to make a difference to children's lives. The conditions are tougher in some ways than other parts of the country, but that makes it all the more rewarding.

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

I have lived and worked all over the country and I would only repeat my answers above. The combination of the people, environment and opportunity make the North East a uniquely satisfying place to work. I'm so delighted to have moved here.



NORTHUMBERLAND COLLEGE URGES NORTH EAST COMPANIES TO USE APPRENTICESHIP LEVY FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

North East companies with annual payroll costs in excess of £3m are being urged to use their apprenticeship levy funding sooner rather than later following a new report that states more than £1.28 billion is languishing in companies' service accounts nationally.

Northumberland College, which works closely with local organisations to deliver apprenticeship training across all industries, is asking North East companies who have contributed 0.5% of their annual wage bill to the levy to act now and use the funding available to take on new apprentices, or retrain existing staff, following data acquired by the Open University from the Education and Skills Funding Agency.

The report, named The Apprenticeship Levy: One Year On, highlights that only £108 million of levy funds have been used nationally meaning that the majority of North East companies have not yet withdrawn the cash they have paid in. If this continues at the same rate, it is predicted that organisations in England risk losing as much as £139 million a month from April 2019 as each company has only 24 months from the date of payment to access their levy fund.

In a document published back in August 2016, the Department for Education (DfE) had initially anticipated more than 19,000 companies, or 1.3% of all employers, would pay into the levy fund during 2017-18, generating approximately £2.7 billion. This meant that the average levy-paying employer would pay an average of £140,000 into their account.

Susan Goldstein, Director of Apprenticeship Academy at Northumberland College, commented, "Whilst the uptake nationally has been below the Government's initial expectations, the College is seeing a rising number of enquiries from organisations, not only in Northumberland but also further afield, looking at apprenticeships for



Susan Goldstein

recruitment and development purposes. Certain areas of the North East will have more levy-paying companies than others, however this report highlights the need for organisations, regardless of their location or sector, to look at the training funds available to them and use it to their benefit rather than letting it go to waste.

"Apprenticeships offer tremendous opportunities for employers to develop the knowledge and skills of their staff and attract energetic and motivated new employees. Our Business Training Solutions team is well placed to support such companies looking at the apprenticeship levy as a means of business growth or consolidation. We're here to help them develop programmes that best suit their requirements as well as fill any skills gaps that may exist and hopefully the statistics released by the Open University will make more employers sit up, get in touch and ultimately use the fund."

The College's Business Training Solutions team has become the first point of contact for many local companies looking to recruit via apprenticeships rather than more traditional, often costly and time consuming methods such as advertising or third party agencies. They have seen a rising number of clients using the levy fund for this purpose and this latest report could see more take up this option as an alternative recruitment solution.

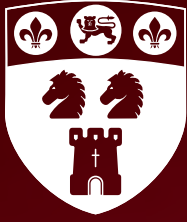
Susan added, "The levy fund provides a very cost-effective means of hiring and developing individuals to enhance business growth through apprenticeships and many now see it as an alternative, more efficient means of appointing staff. It has worked very well for our clients, whether it be to increase employee numbers or retrain existing personnel in new areas of the business and develop their skills set.

"There are many benefits to taking this approach, notably cost savings, and with our added support, the levy has given these employers a real return on investment whilst increasing efficiency and promoting growth. Employers who recruit and retain a 16-18 year old apprentice are also entitled to a £1,000 incentive payment, or for 19-24 year old apprentices, an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan. This is paid in two instalments by the training provider – £500 after a three month qualifying period and £500 after 12 months.

"The team here at Business Training Solutions has been able to enhance the skills and personal development of many young people in employment who now play an integral role in their respective companies."

Levy-paying organisations have two years to use their funding after which it will expire.

North East companies looking for more information or wishing to discuss apprenticeship opportunities should contact Northumberland College's Business Training Solutions on t: 01670 841268, e: training@northland.ac.uk or go to www.busessts.co.uk/apprenticeships.



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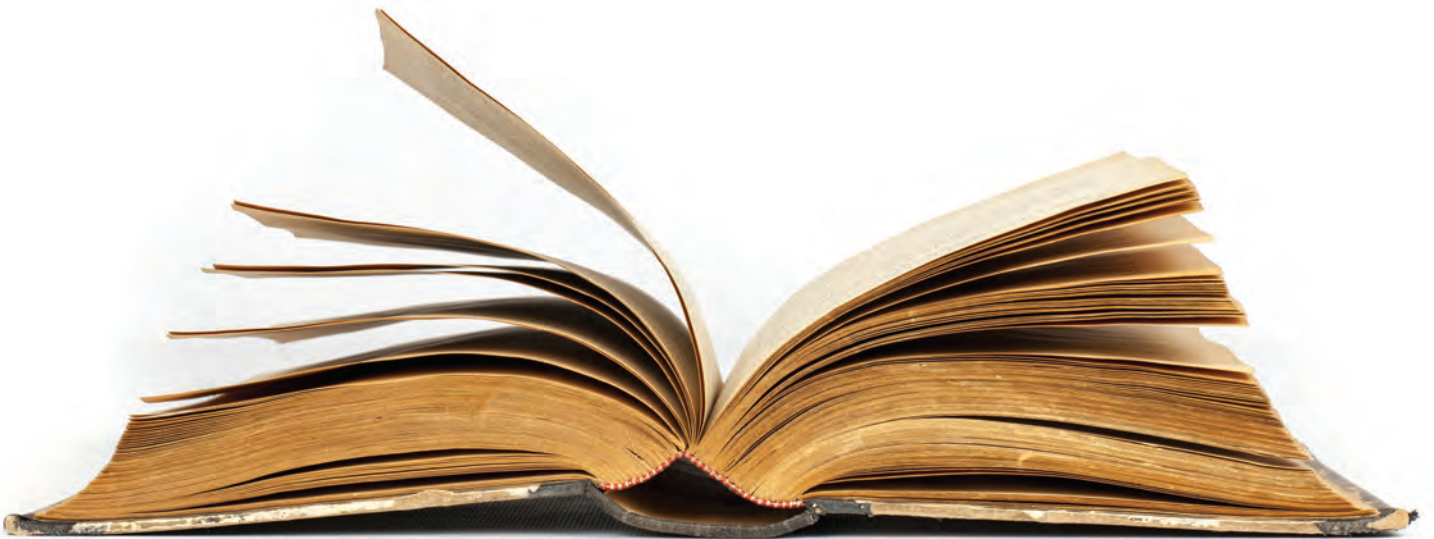
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WORLD'S BEST-SELLING SPORTS CAR CONTINUES TO STEAL THE SHOW AT JENNINGS MAZDA



James Chorlton, general sales manager at Jennings Mazda in Sunderland, with the limited edition MX-5 Z-Sport model.

Customers searching for a stylish, sexy and affordable two-seater sports car are spoilt for choice at Jennings Mazda dealerships - where the multi-award winning MX-5 is currently available in two variants.

The group's Stadium Way-based dealership in Sunderland and the Cargo Fleet Lane branch in Middlesbrough, are able to offer customers the option of a soft top, including a limited Z-Sport edition, in addition to a hardtop version.

James Chorlton, general sales manager at Jennings Mazda in Sunderland, said: "The globally acclaimed Mazda MX-5 sports car has always been a popular choice with customers, but now they have the added choice of a limited edition Z-Sport model, as well as a hardtop version.

"No matter which model customers choose, all versions of the super stylish MX-5 are great fun to drive and offer dynamic handling, as well as the full range of Mazda's SKYACTIV Technology and KODO – Soul of Motion design."

The limited edition Mazda MX-5 RF, comes with a unique Deep Cherry convertible roof, 17-inch Black

BBS alloy wheels and new Sand leather seat trim.

The retractable hardtop model delivers superior cabin comfort and refinement, while maintaining the original MX-5's characteristic agility, exhilaration, and superior handling.

James added: "The all-new MX-5 RF model allows customers to experience the car's thrilling handling and performance whatever the weather – overall it's a package for all seasons with sensible pricing and supreme driving enjoyment."

Featuring the award-winning SKYACTIV-G petrol engine, the all-new Mazda MX-5 RF can reach 62mph in just 7.4 seconds, and achieve a combined fuel consumption of up to 40.9mpg.

The limited edition MX-5 Z-Sport, which last appeared on the third generation MX-5 back in 2007, not only stands out from the crowd with

its striking design, but it also offers a combination of responsive, agile and fun driving dynamics with uncompromising fuel economy and safety performance.

The 2018 model has been given added sporty touches including, slip differential, Blistein dampers, and a strut brace to help it drive as good as it looks.

Other models on display and available to test drive at Jennings Mazda dealerships include, the Mazda2, Mazda3, and Mazda6, in addition to the SUV range consisting of the compact CX-3 and the mid-size CX-5.

Customers can also take advantage of a range of quality approved used cars, a Motability service, and a range of aftersales facilities including, service, MOT parts and accessories. The Middlesbrough dealership also operates an accident repair centre.

For more information about the range of products and services available at Jennings Mazda, contact Sunderland on 0191 562 3399, Middlesbrough on 01642 256655, or visit www.jenningsmotorgroup.co.uk



ZOOM-ZOOM

CHERRY ON TOP



THE LIMITED EDITION MAZDA MX-5 Z-SPORT

With only 300 available, the eye-catching Mazda MX-5 Z-Sport features a Deep Cherry Convertible Roof plus 17" Black BBS alloy wheels, making this a highly exclusive addition to the range.

Mazda Personal Contract Purchase Representative Example:

Mazda MX-5 2.0 Z-Sport 2dr		Optional Final Payment	£10,129.88
42 Monthly Payments of	£299	Total Amount Payable	£27,730.88
On The Road Price inc Metallic Paint	£25,610	Fixed Rate of Interest	2.00% p.a.
Mazda Deposit Contribution	£1,000	Duration of Agreement	43 months
Customer Deposit	£4,043	Annual Mileage	6,000
Amount of Credit	£20,567	Excess Mileage Charge per mile	14.9p
Interest Charges	£2,120.88	Representative APR*	3.9% APR

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OPEN HOURS: Mon-Fri 9am-7pm, Sat 9am-5pm, Sun 10.30am-4pm.

The official fuel consumption figures in mpg (l/100km) for the Mazda MX-5 Convertible range: Urban 30.4 (9.3) - 35.8 (7.9), Extra Urban 51.4 (5.5) - 57.6 (4.9), Combined 40.9 (6.9) - 47.1 (6.0). CO₂ emissions (g/km) 161 - 139.

The mpg figures quoted are sourced from official EU-regulated test results obtained through laboratory testing, are provided for comparability purposes and may not reflect your actual driving experience. Retail sales only, subject to availability for vehicles registered between 01.04.18 and 30.06.18 at participating dealers. T&C apply. ~3.9% APR Mazda Personal Contract Purchase available on all new Mazda models. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Part exchange the vehicle. (ii) Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to the condition or mileage of the vehicle. Finance subject to status, 18s or over. Guarantee may be required. Mazda Financial Services RH1 1SR. Model shown: Mazda MX-5 160ps Z-Sport OTR from £25,610. Model shown features free of charge metallic paint. OTR price includes VAT, number plates, delivery, 12 months' road fund licence, first registration fee, 3 year or 60,000 mile warranty and 3 years' European Roadside Assistance. *Test drives subject to applicant status and availability. Details correct at time of going to print. Not available in conjunction with any other offer unless specified.

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NEWCASTLE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL GIVES OUT ITS GONGS



International film makers, homegrown heroes and up-and-coming stars were recently honoured at the first Newcastle International Film Festival. The weekend saw the screening of more than 40 films and 140 shorts, as well as the holding of its own Victorem awards.

The festival included appearances from a number of stars, all flying the flag for independent movie making.

Directors Ken Loach and Abel Ferrera received Icon Awards, with Abel receiving an on-screen

congratulations message from actor Willem Dafoe.

Local Legends awards went to actors Denise Welch and Jill Halfpenny, as well as to director Neil Marshall and Grammy-award winner Geoff Wonfor.

Other winners on the night included Skim for England for Homegrown Talent, The Rider for Best Director and Richard Armitage for Best Actor.

The festival was the brainchild of North East businesswoman Jacqui Miller-Charlton MBE, who wants to showcase the region to filmmakers and

establish a viable film industry in the area.

Jacqui said: "The festival really put Newcastle on a national and international stage and the support and recognition it has received has been amazing. This is just the start of our journey to turn the North East into a true centre for independent film making based on our three principles of honesty, integrity and transparency. The festival has been supported from as far afield as Australia and India and we are now starting work almost immediately on year two."

PIXIE LOTT AND ASTON MERRYGOLD SET TO LAUNCH SUMMER OF OUTDOOR CONCERTS

Pop princess Pixie Lott will lead a host of stars heading to the North East this summer for the South Tyneside Festival Sunday Concert. She will be joined by former JLS singer Aston Merrygold on 8 July at Bents Park to launch the shows which will be held over four consecutive Sundays.

Admission to all four concerts will remain free of charge but fans can choose to upgrade to Priority Plus tickets. Priced at just £5 each, these will guarantee earlier access to the park to pick the best spot, along with access to a dedicated bar area and toilets.

Pixie Lott burst onto the scene in 2009 when her debut single Mama Do went straight to number one in the UK singles chart. Pixie

has also turned her hand to TV and acting, appearing in Inspector George Gently and Strictly Come Dancing.

She said: "I absolutely love performing at outdoor festival events like this and it's great to be returning to the North East. The audiences here are always incredible."

Aston Merrygold, one quarter of the successful British boyband JLS, has also appeared as a judge on UK talent show Got to Dance and released a string of solo singles and EPs.

He said: "I'm delighted to be part of the opening show at this year's Sunday Concert series. I've always enjoyed performing for North East audiences and I can't wait to head back there this summer."



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STAR AUTHORS SIGN UP FOR THE WRITE FESTIVAL

Some of the North East's best loved authors will take centre stage this month (12-25 May) at the region's biggest literary festival.

The WRITE festival, which launched last year at The Word, National Centre for the Written Word, South Shields, is now being extended from five days to a fortnight, and its jam-packed programme of workshops, events and activities for all ages has attracted some of the book world's brightest stars.

Among those heading to the festival is LJ Ross. Author of the bestselling DCI Ryan series of romantic suspense thrillers, she will give a talk

about her work and her journey as an author, as well as give readings from her books.

There will also be talks from writers Adam Bushnell, Jenn Ashworth and debut novelist Sarah Dunnekey, whilst South Shields author Tom Kelly will showcase some of the projects he has worked on during his time in residency at The Word.

Throughout the two-week festival, a series of workshops will also be held in collaboration with local publishers and authors for those keen to write and publish their own literary works.

RECORD OF THE MONTH - ARCTIC MONKEYS 'TRANQUILITY BASE HOTEL & CASINO'

"I just wanted to be one of The Strokes" croons Alex Turner at the opening of the Sheffield Quartet's sixth album of new material. Following up 2013's world-beating AM, *TBHC* nearly proved a solo effort for Turner, composed almost entirely on a Steinway grand piano gifted to him for his 30th birthday. Taking part of the name from the site of the 1969 moon landings, early reviews describe it as a cosmic pop concept album which embraces big American themes such as fame, politics and a perceived golden age.

Threads/characters from one song will crop up in another which provides it with an appealing sense of mystery.

Further adding to the mythos, the album features no lead singles and will be released in its entirety on May 11th. Arctic Monkeys are set to play two dates at Newcastle's MetroRadio Arena on 27th and 28th September. Beg, borrow or steal a ticket!



WHAT'S ON THIS MAY?

The Kite Runner

May 1 -5

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Brighton Rock

May 1 -5

Northern Stage T: (0191) 230 5151
www.northernstage.co.uk

Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds

May 3

MetroRadio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradioarena.co.uk

Michael McIntyre

May 4 -5

MetroRadio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradioarena.co.uk

Blossoms

May 8

O2 Academy Newcastle T: (0844) 477 2000
www.academymusicgroup.com

Sherlock Holmes: The Final Curtain

May 8 -12

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

Matilda: The Musical

May 8 - June 2

Sunderland Empire T: (0844) 871 3022
www.atgtickets.com

Rita Ora

May 13

O2 Academy Newcastle T: (0844) 477 2000
www.academymusicgroup.com

Evita

May 22-26

Newcastle Theatre Royal T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatreroyal.co.uk

The 39 Steps

May 22 - 26

The People's Theatre T: (0191) 265 5020
www.peopletheatre.co.uk

Bryan Adams

May 29

MetroRadio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.metroradioarena.co.uk

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May 30

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Bez And Rowetta from the Happy Mondays

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Chloe Chadwick & Band and Arya Sage

TICKETS £10 Adults, £5 Kids and Concessions

Available from: www.newcastlelegends.com

LEGENDS BRING IN SOME SUMMER LOVIN'

After-dinner events and music gigs have been the genetic make-up for Newcastle Legends for a number of years now and 2018 sees the company managing director, Steve Wraith, continue to set trends and bring a few firsts to the region.

Musically, with Big Country (October 13, support from The Good Souls) and From the Jam (November 17, support from The Wainstones) still to come later in the year, the early summer months of April through June, ahead of this summer's FIFA World Cup, will see several outings from Wraith and his supporting cast.

It all began on St Georges Day at the O2 Academy as a pair of iconic tribute bands Badness (playing the best of Madness) and the all-girl Sex Pissed Dolls, a tribute to the Sex Pistols both appeared.

April 23, otherwise known as St. George's Day, is a date on the calendar which Legends supremo, Steve Wraith, was looking to change, away from the much-hyped St. Patrick's.

The Irish day is seen as the more annual event of the two national holidays, with the March date hard celebrated across the United Kingdom, including here in the North East, with Emerald Green and plenty of Guinness-laden events being put on for punters' pleasure.

Last month though, when St George's Day came around, Steve broke with the norm and celebrated the feast of Saint George with a musical extravaganza at Newcastle's O2 Academy.

"The St. Patrick's Day celebrations are overshadowing that of St. George so I want to start championing events for our patron saint," said Steve.

"It's a national day that we should be proud of and not be chastised for any political overtures."

In order to celebrate St. George's this year Badness and the Sex Pissed Dolls were joined by a local up-and-coming band, The Good Souls, the Dolls having



a Geordie amidst their ranks, and The Good Souls, formed of South Tyneside steel.

With Badness bringing their unique tribute to those iconic rockers, Madness, to the table, the Dolls are their own brand of English sass, beginning as an all-girl tribute to the Sex Pistols. The Nancy Doll led five-piece have gone into their own brand and added their style to the mix.

Steve added of the musical talent on show: "We have

three really great acts performing in Badness, the Dolls, and The Good Souls.

"The event as a whole brought forth some great, British music and we can now hopefully celebrate St. George's Day as only we know how, having a good time with some good music."

Then there's the addition of something different to the Legend's schedule (lets pray for some grand summer weather) as, on the May Bank Holiday weekend, the annual Dunston Festival will see the welcome addition of 'Love Dunston Live' for the first time at the UTS Stadium.

A smaller version was trialed last summer and proved an instant success with the local council affording the go-ahead to run a larger version this time around so it's all systems go for May 12.

A myriad of acts are set to perform and there'll be a few surprises, and some local musicians so it's a case of watch this space.

Headlined by the iconic duo of Bez and Rowetta of Happy Mondays fame, they'll be joined by The Wainstones, Arya Sage, Molly Mackay, Chloe Chadwick & her band, and DJ Dean Walton.

It'll then be back to the city centre's O2 Academy in early June, immediately prior to the World Cup as we offer up an acoustic night with The Farm and special guests. Followed by, a week later, alongside Danny Mitchell, an evening with the legendary Toyah Wilcox, supported by the returning Stephanie Clift and Special Sorta Beat.

We hope you all enjoy a music-filled few months of summer lovin'!

TOLU SUPPORTS SUNSHINE FUND

Tolu A Akinyemi, successful author of *Dead Lions Don't Roar*, has chosen to support The Sunshine Fund by donating a percentage of proceeds from his new book to the charity.

Unravel Your Hidden Gems is Tolu's second book, and it is a collection of inspirational and motivational short essays from the heart of the acclaimed author.

It is a study on life, encouraging people to succeed at what they feel is important to their own happiness. Be it private life, business, religion, friendship, love, each part of life is discovered. It is particularly reflective of the lives of all the amazing people and families associated with The Sunshine Fund.

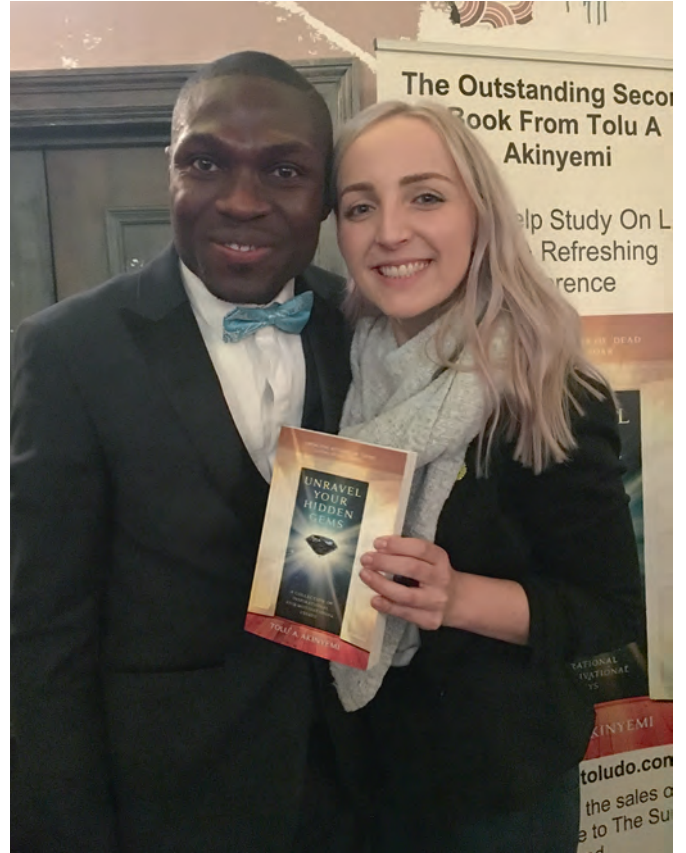
As well as making a donation, Tolu has also pledged time to work with the families, encouraging them to release their own creative side in a fundraising workshop.

He will also be supporting Amy Whyte of Gordon Brown Law, who is also a trustee of the charity, at events she is holding in the coming months, as part of her bid to raise funds by trekking through Kerala, India.

From his last book, Tolu successfully donated £1000 to Age UK Northumberland's friendship line campaign, and he is hopefully this venture will be even more successful. He said: "Family is all important to me and children need nurturing and supporting. The Sunshine Fund does an amazing job of that with their special families and little ones so I was keen to be involved. The theme of the book fits so well with their everyday struggles and how brave they are not to lose sight of what is important. Love, family and being yourself, realising your own abilities whatever they may be and enjoying life!"

This mind-altering life bible can be read as a whole or visited in snippets for day-to-day inspiration. Each verse examines and highlights challenges in life and how to succeed in enjoying life with grace.

A self-help paperback with a refreshing difference, the book is a totality of life's journey reminding us we are here on a temporary basis and that it is our duty to not hide in obscurity but to *Unravel Your Hidden Gems* before it is too late! Pure Inspiration!



www.tolutoludo.com

 A nighttime photograph of the Gateshead Millennium Bridge in Newcastle, illuminated with blue and green lights. The bridge's arch is reflected in the water of the River Tyne. In the background, the city lights and the Sage Gateshead building are visible.

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View of Sant'Angelo, Ischia



IDYLIC ISCHIA... AN ITALIAN JEWEL

Italy has over 350 sea-islands amidst its warm Mediterranean waters. Glitzy Capri, seductive Sicily and the beautiful beaches of Sardinia often bask in the limelight, with tourists flocking to their shores, but lesser known Ischia has recently been grabbing people's attention.

Rising out of the Gulf of Naples, this laid-back island is full of charming fishing villages, Roman history, tree-clad hillsides, chestnut forests and, being a volcanic outcrop from Mount Vesuvius, an abundance of mineral-rich hot springs to soak in. The beaches are also a lot better than most along this rugged coastal area of Italy, and many of the island's spa resorts have direct beach access.

You may recognise some of the quaint towns and coastal scenery from the silver screen – Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton's romance first blossomed on the island whilst on location there filming 'Cleopatra' and Jude Law, Gwyneth Paltrow and Matt Damon sipped Campari and soda in Ischia Porto, whilst filming scenes for The Talented Mr. Ripley.

Visiting one of the public thermal gardens is a must and Negombo Thermal Gardens at San Montano Bay in Lacco Ameno is one of the best. You can pay for a day pass and enjoy the extensive gardens and thermal pools, as well as a sea-water pool which overlooks the San Montano beach. Many of the public thermal pools don't allow children under 16yrs, so bear this in mind if you're travelling with a young family.

Ischia Porto



Our hotel recommendation: The nearby exclusive Garden Villas Resort offers easy access to the Negombo Thermal Gardens. It is set amidst its own beautiful gardens and also offers thermal spa treatments and yoga activities for the full island spa experience.

Castello Aragonese, the Medieval castle perched on a volcanic, rocky inlet close to the atmospheric old town of Ischia Porto, is the most impressive historical monument on the island. The original fortress dates from 474 BC but most of the existing castle was built in the 14th Century and the elegant Ponte Aragonese connects it to the mainland. A lift or a gentle stroll along a series of paths will take you up to the Castello through the lush gardens and a myriad of historic buildings dating from the 11th to 18th Century. It's well worth a day trip. Stop off for a bit of Italian boutique shopping, cocktails and dinner in one of the many cafes and bars in the pretty old port on your way home.

Our hotel recommendation: Grand Hotel Excelsior is a majestic 19th Century villa located near to Ischia Porto with stunning views out over the Gulf of Naples and a lovely private beach which is completely secluded.

Grand Hotel Excelsior



Mules no longer hoist suitcases up the steep hills of the exquisitely picturesque white-washed fishing town of Sant' Angelo but it still retains much of its old-world charm. Easily reached by bus, taxi or car, traffic is stopped outside the town in a dedicated parking area, leaving you to meander through its cobbled lanes by foot. Fisherman's houses now snuggle up alongside chic boutiques, gelaterias and ceramic shops and if you head to the fashionable Piazzetta Ottorino Troia, near the harbour, you can enjoy some of the best seafood on the island.

Our hotel recommendation: Hotel Miramare is a rustic little property with a traditional feel in keeping with the town. Rooms are all different in design and every-one is sea facing. You feel like you're floating on water when you step out onto your balcony.

With twice-weekly short flights from Newcastle to Naples and a 40-minute hydrofoil ride, Ischia is easy to reach and can be combined with a stay at another resort along the Amalfi coast for a longer 10 or 14-night twin-centre holiday. Whether you come for the spas, the scenery or just the sunshine, it's a delightful destination if you fancy a slice of La Dolce Vita this summer.

Ischia Porto



Travel Bureau's Joanne Kinnaid travelled to Ischia last year with Classic Collection Holidays. To find out more about Ischia and get Joanne's personal recommendations call 0191 285 9321, email joanne@travelb.co.uk or visit www.travelb.co.uk for more holiday inspiration.



Argonese Castle, Ischia

HOTEL INDIGO DURHAM - OPEN FOR BUSINESS

By Michael Grahamslaw



Durham's newest luxury hotel, Hotel Indigo, recently opened for business bringing a shiny new leisure, accommodation and business facility to the heart of the cathedral city.

The 4-star hotel, which is within easy walking distance of all major attractions, is situated on the site of the grade II listed Old Shire Hall, a magnificent red brick building which – dating back to 1896 – is a shining example of late Victorian architecture.

In a £15 million labour of love, the building has been comprehensively renovated to include 83 guest rooms yet sympathetically so which means it retains all of its Victorian charm. For a large scale hotel, it has all the style and feel of a boutique property whilst notable period features include brass etchings, stained glass windows and a simply sensational marbled staircase.

Also on site is the Tinderbox Coffee Shop – an already popular meeting place serving barista-brewed coffees and artisan sandwiches, the Rotunda Cocktail Bar with its impressive domed ceiling and of course, the sleek, celebrity-endorsed Marco Pierre White Steakhouse which is set to bring a semblance of “affordable glamour” to the city’s dining scene.

Meanwhile – for those who must – business facilities include SuperFast Wifi (which I can personally vouch for), state-of-the-art audio/visual equipment and a large meeting & events suite.

Checking in with Mrs G, our expectations were clearly high and these were matched following a very warm welcome and a helping hand with our luggage.

Hotel Indigo Durham stems from a stable with impeccable credentials and one thing which always stands out is their attention to detail. Our bedroom provided little nods to the areas rich history and heritage with book-lined shelves and clan crests adorning the walls.

Many rooms have stunning views out over the neighbourhood and cathedral and we spent the afternoon just relaxing and taking in our sumptuous surroundings over a glass of fizz before heading down for dinner.

Following their unfortunate demise in the 1970s, steakhouses have seen a revival of late and Hotel Indigo evidently have their fingers on the nation’s culinary pulse by including such a prestigious one in-house.

The sexy, celebrity Marco Pierre White Steakhouse aims to bring Marco’s magic touch to Durham with its signature steaks, English favourites and timeless French classics – not to mention an extensive wine selection. Oh yesssss!

Formerly a grand, circular debating chamber, the dining area has character in abundance. We got talking to a couple on a neighbouring table who both agreed that this place is perfect for networking or unwinding with friends and family.

In true 70s style (minus the flares), we kicked off with the classic prawn cocktail featuring jumbo prawns and a gloopy marie rose sauce and the tartare of fresh salmon with melba toast.

For mains, we had Sirloin steak (when in steak heaven) with pommes frites and a classic peppercorn and brandy sauce. As a true steak aficionado, this was a truly superb cut which went lovely with some supplementary bangle-sized onion rings.

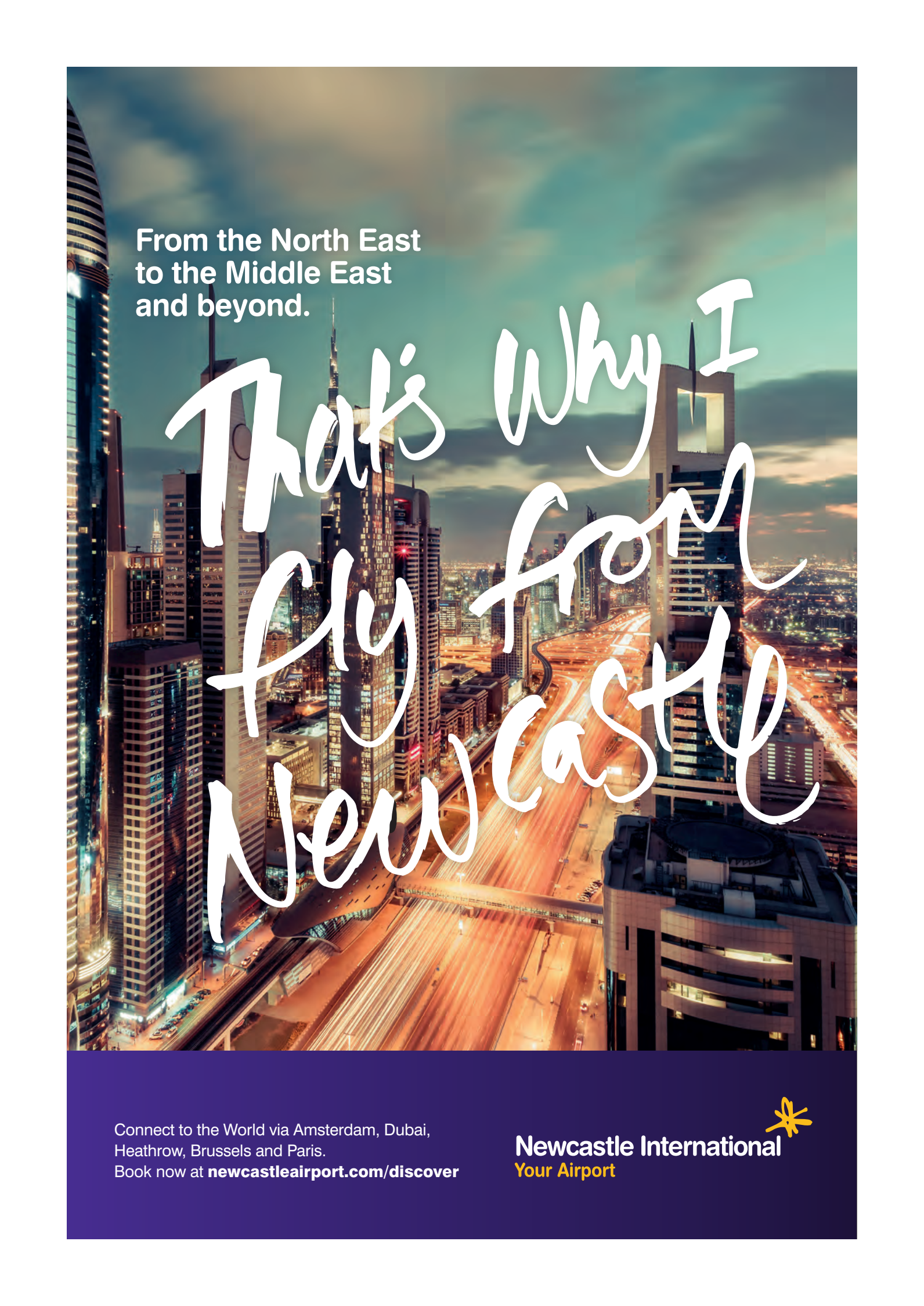
Naturally, all of this was washed down with an excellent bottle of Malbec, cherry-picked from their incredible wine list by Food & Beverage manager, George Liddle – an old friend and hospitality king.

This had been a great meal and whilst replete, we felt duty bound to look at the dessert menu anyway. Unfortunately, our favourite puddings sticky toffee puddings and New York baked cheesecake did their best to derail all of our Summer diet plans. Never mind eh?

The following morning I undid (some of) the damage with a quick blast in the hotel’s fitness suite whilst Lisa stole the chance of some extra zeds. Reconvening over a cooked breakfast, we reflected on a memorable overnight stay and both agreed on what a great addition this hotel is to the region.

Hotel Indigo Durham effortlessly straddles both the business and leisure markets with the brand’s trademark style and panache. With a demand for more luxury accommodation in Durham, this hotel is sure to fit the bill with its prime location, sumptuous bedrooms and polished food & drink offering. If you’re looking for a change of scene this Summer, this venue is well worth checking out!

For more information on the hotel, check out their website www.ihg.com/hotelindigo/hotels/gb/en/durham



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MILLINER'S NEW REBRAND KNOCKS COMPETITION INTO A COCKED HAT

Margaret Woodliff Wright, a well-known hat designer from rural Northumberland, is making spectacular headway in the millinery world. Not only did Margaret find one of her hats in the top three in a recent prestigious competition, she's also taken the bold step of rebranding her entire company.

The Northumberland Milliner, as Margaret's business is now known, features a collection of stunning headpieces and accessories inspired by the landscape and beauty of her home county.

Margaret explained: "I'm hugely influenced by what I experience in daily life. I'm constantly developing new techniques and styles and absorbing influences from everything around me. It was on a recent master class in France that I made the decision to rebrand my business as The Northumberland Milliner. I'm immensely proud of my home county, especially our unique black and white Northumberland tartan."

LUMLEY CASTLE OFFERS A ROYAL WELCOME



On 19 May, HRH Prince Harry will tie the knot with US actress Meghan Markle. In honour of the occasion, Lumley Castle, Chester-le-Street, is giving visitors the chance to enjoy a Royal Retreat in its most opulent room.

The castle's King James Suite is named after James I of England, who visited the castle as a guest of Lord Lumley in 1603. Along with a private sitting room and superb views over the castle's ancient parkland, the suite features a 20ft, Queen Anne, four poster bed.

Dinner in the hotel's renowned Black Knight restaurant is included, along with a full English breakfast the following morning and a late check out time of 12 noon. Guests will also find red roses and a bottle of prosecco in the suite on arrival.

Sales manager Lauren Colledge said: "The King James Suite has the wow factor and whenever we show people around the castle that's the room they remember. It's impossible to stay here and not feel like you're in the middle of a fairytale, so what better way to celebrate a royal wedding?"

During the week of the wedding, the Royal Retreat package will cost £329 per night from Monday to Thursday and £399 per night from Friday to Sunday.

BOUTIQUE HOTEL APPOINTS CORPORATE AMBASSADOR



Boutique hotel Jesmond Dene House has recently appointed Barbara Gubbins as corporate ambassador. Barbara has developed strong networks with North East businesses through her fundraising activities and marketing career and the hotel group are looking to use her expertise to help build and expand their corporate client base.

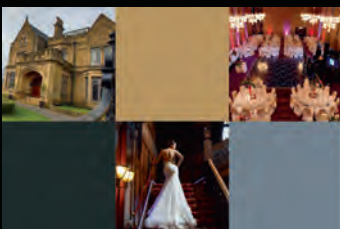
A refurbishment programme and the creation of a new outdoor area for events is currently in progress at Jesmond Dene House. Barbara's appointment will help share this news to the business community.

Barbara recently stepped down as Chief Executive of County Durham

Community Foundation and has since set herself up as an independent adviser to support business development in companies. Having developed a strong network of corporate relationships over her career, Barbara understands that they are the key to success.

Barbara has also recently trained as a Celebrant, so she will perform weddings, vow renewals and naming ceremonies at the hotel.

Peter Candler, Owner of Jesmond Dene House, said: "I've known Barbara for a number of years now and we have always worked well together. Her addition will ensure our customers have the best experience when they come to Jesmond Dene House."



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MEET THE GM...

PAUL MANDEIR

Holiday Inn Washington

Did you always envision a career in the hotel industry?

As my parents were from a hospitality background it is no surprise that I would follow in their footsteps. Although as a child I wanted to be either a policeman or a barrister. However I have and do enjoy the hospitality Industry.

Tell us about your career path so far?

I attended Henley Catering college and after graduating I worked for mainly private hotels as a trainee manager at establishments such as Garden House Cambridge, the Imperial Hotel in Hythe followed by Britannia Hotels and the Adelphi hotel, Liverpool.

I then moved onto to become General Manager with Queens Moat House at the George Washington Hotel. After a long period managing the hotel I moved onto managing Redworth Hall and then Derwent Manor. After a brief time with Cedar Court Hotel Bradford I am now settled working for Kew Green Hotels at the Holiday Inn Washington.

What is the most rewarding aspect of your job?

The most rewarding part is training my team members giving them all the knowledge I have gathered throughout my career. I love coaching them to help them progress and set off in their own careers throughout the hospitality industry.

What is the most difficult aspect?

Wearing so many hats! And by that I mean you need to be so many things for different people. For example I need to be a leader, be inspiring, and be a manager as well as looking at health and safety, guest relations, HR and managing a successful business. It is all of these 'hats' that keep the job different every day! – It's a really exciting role.



How has the industry evolved in the past 10 years and what changes do you envisage going forward?

The industry has changed greatly throughout my career and especially in the last 10 years. Management styles have changed and I have had to learn how to adapt and change the ways in which I work. Technology has progressed and keeps progressing. In the future everything will be online such as check in and check out!

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

Fake it until you make it! Keep your head held up high and you will in turn be rewarded. Hard work certainly does pay off.

What are you currently working on?

I have been spending a lot of time on FUSE a management porthole through IHG to help share best practices in the hotel industry across the globe. I have managed to gain the status of 'hotel super user' as worldwide I am in the top 10!

I have led the team in numerous charity events

help raise money for Greenfingers who Kew Green Hotels currently support. I am delighted to say that Holiday Inn Washington raised a phenomenal amount of £10,030.00 in 2017!

Food and Beverage is a great focus of mine and what we can do to keep our restaurant and menus fresh, new and ahead of the trends all the time.

Who are your heroes and mentors?

My Personal hero/mentor would be Roland Matthews a Senior Lecturer at Henley College where I studied. He really inspired to love and become passionate about hospitality.

Ken Hom has to be my ultimate food hero producing amazing clean, fresh food without any fuss!

Describe yourself in 3 words

Mentor, Leader, Commercial.

How do you like to unwind?

Relaxing for me would have to be either a round of golf or a lovely large glass of wine. As well as dining in restaurants and hotels enjoying being the guest in the industry.

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INDULGING AT INDIGO

By Holly Grahamslaw

Tired and stressed by all my university work, I decided it was time to take a much-needed revision break with my friend Harriet, and there was no better way to relax than afternoon tea at Hotel Indigo Newcastle.

Set in the heart of the city, and just two minutes away from Newcastle Central Station, the hotel is situated in an easily-accessible location and is perfect for those who fancy a perusal in the city's shops or bars before or after their visit.

Upon arrival, we were welcomed by the friendly staff who took our coats and asked for our dining preference, either in the sleek Marco Pierre White Steakhouse Bar & Grill, or in the relaxing Grainger lounge. Opting for the latter, we were swiftly ushered to our comfortable table and were instantly impressed by the lounge's atmosphere. With unique splashes of colour and geometric prints, the place really did promote elegance and sophistication. We were also thrilled by the hotel's distinctive Cocktail Bar, which is ideal for those who fancy indulging in some of the hotel's delightful cocktails or aperitifs alongside their afternoon tea.

Served daily from 12 til 5, the hotel offers an original take on the traditional afternoon tea. At only £17.95 a head, we thought we would push the boat out with a glass of prosecco for a mere £6.75 supplement. Why not make the most out of the revision break? We were then provided with an array of delightful teas and coffees, which were sourced from the renowned, local brand Ringtons. It was shaping up

to be an extremely pleasurable afternoon to say the least.

Not long into our catch-up, we were presented with our food. A selection of finger-cut sandwiches, various kinds of scone and an abundance of cakes and sweet treats formed the line-up.

Opting down the savoury route first, we sampled the tasty sandwiches that were on offer. Whilst the daily cake selection can be subject to experimentation, the hotel prides itself in serving traditional sandwiches which will appeal to all general folk. With Harriet's palate being of the simpler variety, she quickly tucked into honey roast ham on soft white bread, whilst I devoured both tuna and egg mayonnaise on a malty wholemeal loaf. Our savoury experience was topped off with a warm, homemade sausage roll, which was a lovely addition to the classic sandwiches.

Excited to try something sweeter, we then dived into the scones. Presented with a fresh plain and fruit scone each, there was much choice to sample. After coating them in delicious mixed berry jam and heavenly Chantilly cream, our tastebuds were soon tingling. It was safe to say that the summer diet was definitely off the cards!

Despite feeling stuffed, we were sure to make room for the delectable cake selection. Being a die-hard

chocolate enthusiast, I immediately opted for the chocolate dessert. A generous layer of chocolate ganache slavered on top a digestive cheesecake base, the rich and tasty treat did not disappoint. As a fan of the more fruity delicacies, Harriet sampled the mouth-watering raspberry mousse which was served delicately in shot glass form. A spongy almond cake slice completed the diverse offering.

Whilst we managed to polish the selection off, the hotel will gladly box up any unfinished goods for the less greedy customers to enjoy later. This was just one of the many examples of the splendid hospitality at Hotel Indigo, which was of course complemented by the impeccable service which we encountered all afternoon. With a Gluten-Free menu and staff which will accommodate for various dietary requirements, the hotel really goes above and beyond for its customers.

Now feeling fit to burst, the kind waiters offered us a refill on our tea and coffee whilst we concluded our catch-up. We then left Hotel Indigo after an incredibly pleasant afternoon, having enjoyed a satisfying release from the revision. Whether you're in need of a girls catch-up like us, or fancy treating a loved-one, afternoon tea at Hotel Indigo really does provide the perfect opportunity for all to enjoy.

Hotel Indigo Newcastle can be found at 2-8 Fenkle Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5XU. For more information visit their website www.hinnewcastle.co.uk or call 0191 300 9222.

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main **bob's dad's secret chicken curry**

ingredients :

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2 mild green chillies
3 medium chicken breasts
tin chopped tomatoes
2 large potatoes
tub natural yogurt
coriander stalks
vegetable oil
fresh ginger
salt
haldi
chilli powder
garam masala
dry fenugreek
tomato puree

cooking method :

warm 2 table spoons of oil
once hot add chopped onions
keep stirring until onions become translucent
add finely green chillies, finely chopped ginger and salt
add a tea spoon of haldi, keep stirring
add half a tea spoon of chilli powder and garam masala
once all spices have been stirred add chopped tomatoes
add diced potatoes, once 50% cooked add diced chicken
add some crushed dry fenugreek
once chicken is cooked add a table spoon of tomato puree
add half of yoghurt
garnish with some fresh chopped coriander and ginger

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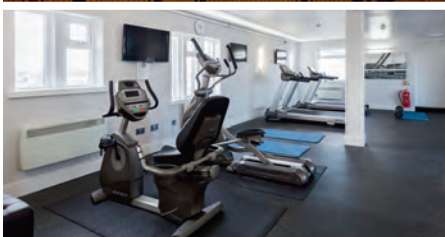


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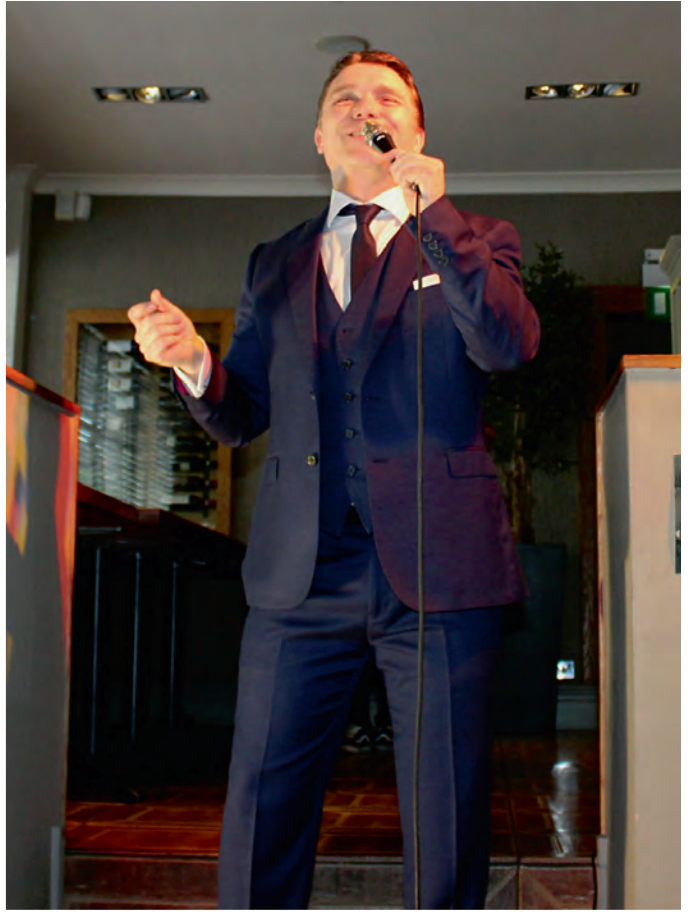


50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

It's been 50 years since Luigi Bernardelli opened the first of his Venezia hair salons in Newcastle. To celebrate, a reunion was thrown at Sabatini, on Newcastle's Quayside.



VENEZIA
ITALIAN HAIR SALON
EST 1968
REUNION



IN CONVERSATION WITH...

RICHARD COLMAN ORD

Director, Colmans Seafood Temple

Did you always envision a career in the leisure industry?

I don't think I had any other route to choose, fifth generation of a family business established in South Shields since 1905! I have always had a passion for food and drink for as long as I can remember, especially with all my family being in the industry as well, it becomes a way of life, not just a career.

Tell us about the Colmans Seafood Temple journey so far?

My father had thought about it for a long time when eventually he put pen to paper and started to put the plan into action. Then a few years later once things had progressed we eventually got the go ahead and started the building process. This was very exciting seeing the site being built brick by brick. Now we have been open almost a year, and what a year it has been. We were recently recognized in the top ten fish and chip restaurants which was a fantastic achievement for less than nine months of being open, all of which has been made possible by our fantastic team and customers!

What are you currently working on?

As you may know, at Colmans we hold sustainability very close to our hearts, therefore at the minute we are further looking into a more sustainable future for our region and industry. One way in which we have started implementing this is by cutting out the amount of plastic we use throughout our restaurants. We have also recently started a partnership with the lobster hatchery in Amble in which a donation from every lobster we sell is given back to the hatchery to help release a young lobster back into the wild!

What have been the highlights of your first year in business?

I have two stand out moments that have stuck with me since opening, the first was working with



our local school and inviting the children down to plant a time capsule at the front of the building, it was a great feeling to get the kids involved and seeing the excitement on their faces. The second was the first day of opening, we had an extremely busy day and at the end everyone stayed back, sat in the restaurant and enjoyed a g&t. It was as if everything beforehand led up to that point, a great sense of achievement!

What is your most popular dish?

We are famous for our fish and chips so they are our biggest seller! However our seafood curry has also become a very popular dish, with people travelling from far and wide just to sample it! We often travel as a family to the Far East and got the inspiration for the curry from Penang, Malaysia. The authenticity of eating off a banana leaf made the experience even better, which is something we wanted to bring back home!

Tell us about your team?

We have been very fortunate to have such a great group of people join us at the Temple! Front of house you have Kyle and Victoria, our restaurant managers who look after the day to day running

of the restaurant and bar. Downstairs in the kitchen you have Kerry and Jon, who bring a vast wealth of experience and knowledge to our kitchen to train and help our younger kitchen members. I also have the pleasure of working with my mother Frances, and brother Dominic whilst my father prefers a more peaceful life at Ocean Road!

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

'Invest in people'. I was told this at a young age, and it never really made sense until I took a more active role in the business. It's not always about paying money for a course for staff but also investing your own time. If you are in a position to help others, in any way whether it being developing their skills or making them feel part of a team, then not only do you feel a great sense of achievement but the impact it has on the other person can be far greater!

How do you like to unwind?

I love my music, so picking up my guitar, opening a nice bottle of red wine and jamming away into the night is always a nice escape. A holiday with my girlfriend now and then is always nice too!

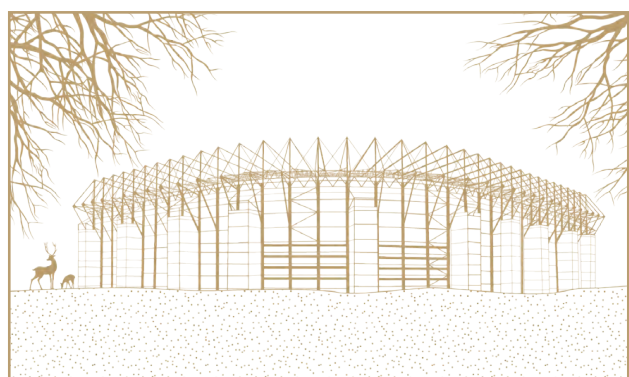
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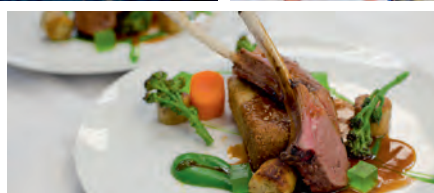


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TALENTED CHEFS FROM ROCKLIFFE HALL AND JESMOND DENE HOUSE WIN THE GREAT NORTH MENU COMPETITION



Winning starter
Caramelised Red Onion and Yellison Goats Cheese Tart.



Winning main course
Roast Lamb, Lamb Shoulder Croquette,
Rosemary Gnocchi and Broccoli Puree.



Winning dessert
Rhubarb, Apricot and White Chocolate Pave.

Two talented chefs from hotels in Newcastle and County Durham have battled against some of the finest rising stars in the North East to be crowned the winners of the Great North Menu Challenge 2018.

Louise Harbottle from Rockcliffe Hall in Darlington, County Durham, wowed the judges to win the main course category with her Roast Lamb, Lamb Shoulder Croquette, Rosemary Gnocchi and Broccoli Puree.

Manuel Prado, representing Jesmond Dene House in Newcastle, won both the starter and dessert categories. The young Venezuelan, who only started cooking professionally two years ago, impressed the judges with his Caramelised Red Onion and Yellison Goats Cheese Tart starter and a Rhubarb, Apricot and White Chocolate Pave pudding.

The annual competition is organised by the North East Hotels Association (NEHA), the membership body which represents hoteliers across the region. It is run in partnership with Newcastle College and sponsored by North East specialist catering equipment supplier, Crosbys.

Louise and Manuel competed against 11 finalists from hotels across the region to win the 2018 Great North Menu Challenge, taking part in an intense cook-off at Newcastle College's Chef's Academy.

Their individual dishes were judged by industry experts including former North East Chef of the Year David Kennedy, Ben Crosby, director of Crosbys and Phil Pringle, lecturer and course leader in food and hospitality at Newcastle College.

Lead judge, David Kennedy said: "It's great to see a new generation of chefs in action. I was impressed with the standard of the entries and the level of professionalism and creativity on display.

"The competition challenged all the finalists to demonstrate skill and execution with their dishes which can be testing in an unfamiliar environment. It's also been good to see how they operate under pressure and their approach to designing dishes which both look and taste good. Manuel and Louise met the brief and are worthy winners, the standard of cooking was excellent."

The winning dishes will be prepared for hundreds of high-profile guests and industry leaders at the North East Hotels Association Excellence Awards evening at the Newcastle Marriott Hotel Gosforth Park on 10 May.

Describing her win, Louise Harbottle, who has worked at Rockcliffe Hall for 8 years, said: "I spent just over a week designing the dish and I'm absolutely thrilled it went according to plan. It will be an honour to have my entry showcased at the Excellence Awards next month. Taking part in the challenge was nerve wracking at times but it was also a great learning experience."

Starter and dessert winner Manuel Prado said: "Two years ago I gave up a career in engineering to follow my passion for food and hospitality. I've never entered a catering competition before and I was up against some really talented chefs, so to have the judges select two of my dishes has been a dream come true!"

Each of the 13 chefs taking part in the competition were presented with a professional chef's knife from Crosbys for reaching the final.

The Great North Menu Challenge was first

launched in 2012 to run in partnership with the North East Hotels Association Excellence Awards. The prestigious competition celebrates the cooking skills of chefs working in the kitchens of the region's best-known hotels.

Adam Green, General Manager at the Hotel du Vin in Newcastle, is the NEHA coordinator for the Great North Menu Challenge, he said: "The aim of the competition is to showcase the emerging talent we have in hotel kitchens across the region. We want to encourage their development and celebrate their progress.

"It was an exciting and tough contest this year, the dishes were of a very high calibre and the judges had a good degree of deliberation before selecting the winners. I'd like to congratulate everyone involved, especially our winners and finalists, who represent some of the best chef talent in the North East today."

The North East Hotels Association was first established in 1992 to represent and promote the region's hotel and hospitality industry around the UK. It is now believed to be the biggest of its kind in England, representing 50 of the region's best-known hotels including internationally and nationally recognised chains and leading independent hotels.

The Association launched the Excellence Awards in 2010 to recognise and celebrate the brightest and best hospitality service providers in the North East of England. The awards are now an annual highlight for hotels across the region, attracting over 400 industry professionals and guests.

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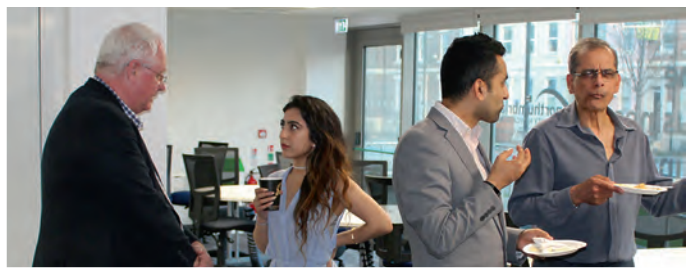
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**ABCURRY CLUB -
PRIMARY TO PROSPERITY**

Asian Business Connexions hosted their sell-out ABCurry Club at Northumbria University Business Clinic in association with the SME Centre of Excellence. The theme for evening was Primary to Prosperity and guest speakers included Michael Gramhamslaw, Tahmina Begum, Jacqui Miller-Charlton, Lt Col Andy Black and Ammar Mirza CBE, all of whom shared insights, inspiring attendees and demonstrating what a wonderful place the North East is when everyone collaborates and celebrates.

Visit www.abconnexions.org for future events.



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RDA
Restaurant Design Associates



RDA HELP TO CREATE UNIQUE COFFEE SHOP INSIDE SOMERSET HOUSE

RDA was recently appointed by Levy UK to bring a second store to life for Hej Coffee in the heart of London's art and cultural hub, Somerset House.

RDA's team of design experts worked with Levy UK, a leading sports and hospitality caterer who have partnered with Hej Coffee at this site, to create a new coffee shop within the stunning surroundings of Somerset House, which overlooks the River Thames.

Established in the heart of Bermondsey, Hej Coffee has become something of a coffee phenomenon throughout London. As well as its thriving Bermondsey café, it now provides a workplace coffee service. Bringing its neighbourhood coffee shop vibe into the work environment, Hej supplies everything for a Barista style coffee at work to over

30 sites in blue chip companies throughout London and the South East.

Our team had to be sympathetic to the buildings listed status and chose colours such as dusty grey and duck egg from the Victorian colour palette. This was complemented with Hej's strong brand identity of Tiffany Teal and bold black logo as well as "coffee quote" signage on the walls. The new counters were given a sleek and contemporary finish with statement tiles to the front and drop in counter top chillers to allow for deli style displays of tasty treats and drinks.

And of course, the iconic Moose Head Erik for which Hej has become so well-known, takes pride of place within the new store, whilst is colleague Lars will watch over the Bermondsey store.

Mathew Keech, CCO Hej Coffee said: **"From our initial meeting with Levy UK and RDA we were filled with confidence and felt that they really wanted to understand us and how we saw our brand. The end result speaks for itself, a sense of grandeur without losing the neighbourhood coffee shop feeling we value so much, we couldn't be happier."**

To find out how RDA can help you with your next catering project call 0844 873 4993 or visit www.rdalimited.co.uk

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

with Dave Coulson, Chef Patron, Peace and Loaf Jesmond.



RAW STEAK & MUSHROOM PIE

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS

- 400g fresh hand diced sirloin mince
- 50g pickled beech mushroom
- 2 egg yolks
- 1 diced shallot marinated in beer and mustard
- 1 sheet bric pastry
- Fresh herbs for garnish, Salt, Extra virgin olive oil

METHOD

- Roll pastry and cut to desired size or shape, glaze with olive oil and bake for 8 minutes at 180 degrees centigrade.
- Mix the mince with mushrooms, shallots, olive oil and salt.
- Boil the eggs and take out yolk when cooled. Crumble the yolk into the mince, shallots, olive oil and salt.
- Serve in a small pie dish and place cooked pastry on top.
- Garnish and serve with wild watercress salad.



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THINKING ABOUT STRAIGHTENING YOUR TEETH? READ THIS FIRST

By Dr Guy Deeming

In my practice as a Specialist Orthodontist I am used to seeing lots of children and adults of all ages choose orthodontics as an option to improve the appearance of their teeth and smile, as well as correct their bite.

One thing has come to dominate over recent years, and that is the huge number of apparently magical and speedy brace treatments promoting their benefits direct to patients. The upshot of this is that patients are often confused or even misled about what may be the best treatment for their needs.

A key part of what we do at Queensway is to debunk some of the myths about tooth straightening and help patients make the best choices to suit their needs and expectations.

Myth: Orthodontic treatment means wearing metal braces

Metal braces remain a popular option for many patients. A popular alternative is a tooth coloured or ceramic fixed appliance which, while not invisible, is very discreet and a more understated option for patients who don't want to shout about their treatment. For virtually invisible treatment more and more teenagers and adults are choosing Invisalign removable aligners. Invisalign is now an incredibly important part of my practice as it allows more patients to access the benefits of having their teeth straightened who were put off by the appearance of traditional braces. At Queensway we have treated over 500 patients with Invisalign and love seeing the results that can be achieved and how easily it fits into people's lifestyles. It's also worth mentioning that more teenagers than ever are choosing Invisalign – for the same sorts of reasons as the adults, but also because they perhaps play a lot of sport or wind instruments.

Myth: Orthodontic treatment is for kids

I treat patients of all ages, young and old (currently, my oldest patient is 77). Age is certainly not a barrier when it comes to achieving a healthy, confident smile, and while some people want and need comprehensive treatment, quite commonly treatment will be focussed on one or two key concerns and can be simple and surprisingly fast. We look after lots of brides and bridegrooms and will always try to make the Big Day deadline!

Myth: Everyone who straightens teeth is an orthodontist

While some general dentists offer treatment to straighten teeth and are very good at it, a Specialist Orthodontist has completed (at least) five additional years of study and training in how teeth move, before



they can register as a Specialist. If you are in doubt you can have a look at the credentials of who is doing your treatment on the General Dental Council website or via the British Orthodontic Society.

Myth: Orthodontic treatment is expensive

Treatment from a Specialist Orthodontist means access to the skills, expertise and efficiencies of someone entirely focussed on straightening teeth and trained accordingly. While treatment is certainly an investment, if well looked after and the retainers are worn the results can last a lifetime (unlike some of the more invasive alternatives such as veneers). In addition, most practices (including Queensway) offer some sort of payment plan. We find a lot of our patients choose a flexible interest-free option to pay over 12 to 18 months.

Myth: Orthodontic treatment is purely cosmetic

Although we always plan for a great looking smile there are many other benefits to treatment including a better bite and teeth that may be easier to clean, look after or for a dentist to repair. Orthodontics is normally a once in a lifetime treatment and it is worth considering the additional value over and above just straight front teeth before making a final choice.

Myth. All orthodontists do is take those horrible moulds

This used to be the case but no more! At Queensway we have two of the latest iTero intra-oral scanners which means there is no gunge and no impressions – easy! Plus we can now take advantage of the latest software planning and treatment simulation software to help you visualise your treatment before you have anything done. Visit our Facebook page or

website to see videos of the scanner in action.

Orthodontic treatment is a great option for lots of adults (and children), but think carefully about your options and choose an orthodontist who can provide the best treatment options for you, achieving the confident straight smile you are looking for.

Dr Guy Deeming BDS Hons, MFDS, MSc, MOrth is a Specialist Orthodontist and partner at Queensway Orthodontics, working in Billingham and Jesmond. He is a Clinical Speaker for Invisalign, involved with teaching and training other orthodontists and has treated over 500 cases. In addition he is the Director of Clinical Practice on the board of the British Orthodontic Society, a founder member of the UK Invisible Orthodontic Network and previously an Honorary Clinical Lecturer and visiting practitioner at Newcastle Dental Hospital.

Dr Guy Deeming – has recently become an Invisalign Diamond Provider, 1 of only 10 in the UK!

This accreditation is to recognise that Guy has completed more than 150 cases in the last year using Invisalign, demonstrating his wealth of experience with the virtual invisible aligner system. He has seen and treated over 500 Invisalign patients at our practices in Billingham and Jesmond, from those with very mild to extremely complex cases. His experience and commitment to the clear braces means he knows how to get the very most out of the system to deliver the best possible results.

To celebrate we are giving away a Philips Sonicare rose gold DiamondClean electric toothbrush plus an air-polish for a clean, white, super sparkly smile – a prize worth £395! For your chance of winning, add Queenswayjesmond on Instagram and share your best smiley selfie with us. Tag @Queenswayjesmond and use the hashtag #Mydiamondsmile

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A young male golfer is captured in the middle of a golf swing on a green field. He is wearing a white Nike baseball cap, a blue long-sleeved shirt, light grey trousers with a white belt, and black and orange Nike sneakers. He is holding a golf club with a silver head. The background is a blurred green landscape.

“

“...the ultimate dream would be to play in my favourite tournament, the Ryder Cup.”

”

HENRY HAS SUCCESS DOWN TO A TEE

If you look at the background of many of the world's leading golfers such as Tiger Woods, Rory McIlroy, Jordan Spieth, Dustin Johnson, Justin Rose etc, you will spot a familiar trend.

They all started playing golf at a very early age. They were members of golf-crazy families and quickly moved through the ranks onto the national stage. Many won Junior events and by the time they were approaching the age of 16, they were playing off scratch.

And the rest, as they say, is history.

Of course, you need dedication, skill, patience, and the will to practice, practice...and...practice.

That final list can certainly apply to one of the UK's most promising young golfers; he's Henry Joynson who plays at the Close House course on the outskirts of Newcastle.

When it comes to other requirements such as winning local junior competitions and graduating to bigger, national events, Henry also ticks the boxes.

Last year, Close House Golf Course hosted the British Masters. Two events took place before the Masters got underway. There was the Junior British Masters and, the following day, the Pro-Am which, incidentally, raised just under half a million pounds for the Graham Wylie Foundation charity.

Henry won the Junior Masters which meant he qualified to play in the

Pro-Am with leading golfers and personalities from the sporting and entertainment world.

Henry's team won the Pro-Am as well. Not a bad couple of days.

Following Henry's foursome along the course was a team led by Rory McIlroy. As Henry waited on the 18th after completing his round, Rory wandered over to have a chat with Henry who'd plainly caught his eye.

"That's one of the highlights of my golfing career so far," said Henry. "I was really proud to have won the British Junior Masters, but to then have a chat with my hero, Rory McIlroy, made it a couple of days I'll never forget. Rory even gave me the ball he'd been using."

Henry is a young golfer in a hurry. Although he represents Close House, his coach Ross Leeds is based near Edinburgh at Archerfield Links. Thankfully, technology plays a big part in Henry's work with Ross. Henry wears a special GPS device which sends Ross information about how Henry is playing.

However, there's no doubting that playing regularly at Close House is a massive benefit to Henry. The support given by Close House owner Graham

Wylie to young up and coming golfers, allows Henry to develop his game at one of the UK's leading courses. It's also a challenging course.

Henry has a busy schedule. As well as attending Newcastle School for Boys, 13yr old Henry is gearing-up for a busy season. Along with representing Close House Junior Team he'll be taking part in many Junior Open tournaments across the region and Scotland.

And of course, he'll be aiming to retain his British Junior Masters title at the end of October.

Bearing in mind that Henry is still growing and maturing, he's already shown that he's an incredibly gifted golfer. He can drive a ball 275 yards. His handicap is anticipated to be very low single figures by the end of the year.

And what of the future?

"I'm aiming to go to the USA on a golf scholarship," added Henry, "and then it's a case of keeping my head down and working hard. I'd love to be a professional golfer and the ultimate dream would be to play in my favourite tournament, the Ryder Cup."

We certainly wouldn't bet against it happening because Henry Joynson is a Rising Star.





INSPIRING CONFIDENCE AND TRANSFORMING LIVES

Northern Insight are delighted to welcome award-winning Personal Trainer, campaigner and motivational speaker, David Fairlamb, as our new Health & Fitness correspondent.

David has been at the vanguard of the North East fitness scene for two decades and will now impart his knowledge to readers every month with workout ideas, diet tips and lifestyle changes.

Throughout his career, David has been transforming lives by helping clients achieve their fitness goals and is particularly committed to trimming the regions waistline with his mix of exercise and sugar clean healthy eating.

David originally honed his skills on an athletic scholarship in Long Beach California, training clients first in LA before qualifying in the UK and returning home to his native North East. From initially training one client once per week, David Fairlamb Fitness has quickly grown to nine fully-qualified personal trainers and three private gyms at his state-of-the-art base in North Shields.

In addition to personal training, they offer award-winning "Fit Factor" group sessions as well as physiotherapy, psychology, yoga and life coaching.

David has been pioneering in group exercise sessions and was the original trainer to trial "Beach

Bootcamps" on Tynemouth Longsands which now run five times per week, including a hugely popular Saturday morning slot which continues to be a start-of-the-weekend staple for many.

Always looking for innovative new training methods, David recently opened a self-contained, floodlit Outdoor gym which is the first of its kind in the country. Formerly a disused compound at Queen Alexandra College, the site has been comprehensively transformed. The gym offers an obstacle-course type session with a strong emphasis on functional fitness. Eagle-eyed readers will have spotted our own Michael and Jack Grahamslaw take on the challenge in our March edition and they can personally vouch for its effectiveness!

With a strong presence in local media, David is an active campaigner on healthy eating and has been particularly outspoken on the dangers of eating sugar and its links to the nationwide obesity crisis. Known, somewhat ominously as "the white death man", David preaches a sugar clean diet and provides guidance with his "Sugar Clean Lean" cookery classes.

In 2011, David endeavoured to help the North East on a wider scale when it was named the 2nd most obese place in Europe. He launched the Great North Fitness Revolution at St James Park by running a bootcamp in front of 52,000 people. As a result, the North East would pledge their goal online and try to make changes. David wanted to prove small daily changes over time can be life changing. The campaign was meant to last six months but was so successful it lasted five years leading to recognition in the House of Commons from Andrew Lansley, Health Secretary at the time.

Another of David's major achievements was coaching/mentoring local lad Mark Allison in his "Run Geordie Run" fundraising challenges across America and Australia, raising thousands of pounds for charity in the process.

But – all of this considered – what motivates David? Well, it's the desire to inspire confidence and transform lives that drives him to carry the business forward. Moving into the Summer, there's never been a better time to make some lifestyle changes and readers can look forward to David's first column next month.

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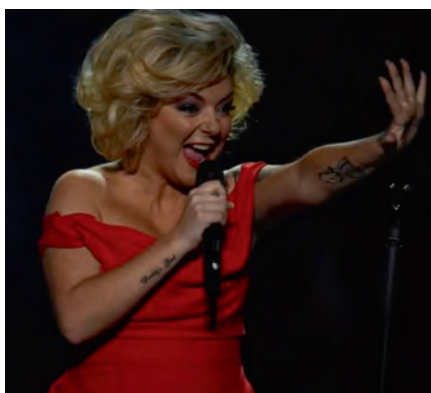


COMMENT WITH... Barry Speker

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“
Everyone should be encouraged to get off the sofa and enjoy the full film experience.
”



In Britain alone, Facebook has nearly 40million users (2.2 billion world-wide). It is used mostly to keep in contact with family and 'friends' and indulge in what I call 'narcissistic self-aggrandisement'. In general it is thought to do good not harm, other than encouraging too many people to spend excessive time exchanging drivel and bad photos.

The realisation that the social media giant enables vast quantities of personal data to be accessed, sold, misused for profit seems to have come as a surprise. The inadequate control of racist and offensive material was one thing (plagiarism, copyright theft, facilitating hate, violence, self-harm, stalking, paedophilia, terrorism) but interference with free and fair elections is quite another.

Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, now a \$484billion technology and publishing company, faced questioning before two congressional committees in Washington and seemed better prepared than his aged interrogators.

Senator Orrin Hatch (84) asked Zuckerberg how, if its products are free, does Facebook make any money. Zuck smirked and replied "Senator, we sell ads". Indeed \$40billion last year for selling digital advertising space.

As to Cambridge Analytica and dubious material, Mark did say sorry and, robotic or not, showed he cares. He says that FB will do better. FB's shares recovered and Zuck remains one of the world's richest people with a fortune of \$66billion.

He has declined to attend before our parliament's Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee. Perhaps he is worried about incisive interrogation by the likes of Diane Abbott.

Helen Mirren laments that the likes of Netflix and Sky Movies are endangering the film industry and of course her film Director husband. Too many people are spurning the superior experience of seeing film in the focussed atmosphere of a Dolby sound assisted cinema. Everyone should be encouraged to get off the sofa and enjoy the full film experience.

I tend to agree that seeing a film on your home flat screen, however ridiculously oversized, can not match a night at the cinema. This assumes you avoid the distraction of other people's mobiles, the disturbance of the sound of crunching buckets of popcorn and the smell of hotdogs and burgers.

I resisted my aversion to the idea of live productions being streamed to cinemas and went

to see the Royal Ballet's presentation of three new ballets to mark the 100th anniversary of Leonard Bernstein's birth. It was an amazing experience and almost identical to being at the Royal Ballet in Covent Garden but with extra interviews before and after the ballets and during the two intervals.

This event was streamed to over 200 British cinemas and live to 22 other countries. It's attraction to some is clearly limited. At Vue Gateshead Screen One, only 15 other patrons! At least it meant very few mobiles and little popcorn and nachos noise.

For a real live experience we saw Sheridan Smith at the Sage, the opening concert of a nine venue tour, her first ever as a singer and entertainer. Best known from being in Gavin and Stacey, her performance in the West End as Fanny Bryce in *Funny Girl* and her acclaimed portrayal of Cilla Black, Sheridan's tour is a sell out.

Slightly embarrassed at being on stage without a script, she received a fantastic response from an enthusiastic audience. Songs included hits from Cilla, *Funny Girl*, *La La Land* and *Dreamgirls* accompanied by a terrific band and backing group.

Perhaps it was the lack of confidence at having to ad-lib her repartee which produced the constant stream of blue invective. Yet this seemed to be eventually accepted by even the most shocked in the audience.

The newly developed national tradition of posting bunches of flowers as a tribute or memorial became more established since the seas of flowers laid outside Kensington Palace and Buckingham Palace. The practice is followed at scenes of fatal road accidents or places where publicised deaths have occurred.

The blooms put up on a fence near the scene of the fatal burglary in Hither Green, south-east London, should have produced a more sensible response from the police. The flowers were hung by friends and relatives of Henry Vincent, a serial thief and conman, who was fatally stabbed in a scuffle with Richard Osborn-Brooks, the elderly householder whose home he was burgling.

When neighbours took the flowers down the Police allowed them to be restored, trying to appease mourners and protesters. Apparently some were travellers who 'know their rights'. Political correctness gone mad? It seems the Osborn-Brooks and some neighbours have been advised that they should move house! Victims of crime really should be the priority.





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