

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

OCTOBER 2018

ISSUE 40

NORTHERN INSIGHT - YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

OCTOBER 2018

GAINFORD GROUP GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

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

issue 40

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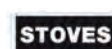
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## FOREWORD

Welcome to the October edition of Northern Insight.

With Autumn firmly upon us, we are delighted to bring you one of our strongest editions to date with something for all to enjoy.

Our cover stars are the Gainford Group who continue to go from strength to strength and now run 13 care homes, two nurseries and a plethora of bars, restaurants and hotels.

We also speak to Jeff Winn, founder of Winn Solicitors in an exclusive interview and look at a true North East success story.

Look out as ever for some terrific social coverage including the 9th Annual ABC Awards Dinner featuring our April cover star, Ammar Mirza.

We also visit the new Antler bar which is bringing a piece of Alpine life to the heart of Newcastle.

I hope you enjoy this latest slice of the Northern Insight journey.

Thank you for your continued support.  
Till next month.

*M-J Grahamslaw*  
Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher

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Barry Speker

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## NEWCASTLE AIRPORT SEEKS FEEDBACK ON ITS MASTERPLAN 2035



Newcastle International Airport recently launched its ambitious vision for the future with its Masterplan 2035, and is now seeking the views of passengers, businesses and stakeholders as the deadline for the submission of comments draws to an end this month.

The draft plan, which sets out the award-winning airport's goals for its centenary year, will enable the airport to continue to improve the region's global connectivity and deliver significant economic benefits to the North East.

Graeme Mason, Planning and Corporate Affairs Director, said: "The airport has grown from strength to strength in recent years and our Masterplan

2035 sets out a plan to ensure it continues to grow. We have seen high levels of engagement so far, with feedback being provided via public meetings, social media and our website."

Newcastle International Airport has benefited from more than £250 million in investment over the last 30 years. The Masterplan will ensure there is a framework in place to enable the airport to grow in the years to 2035.

Passenger numbers, which reached 5.4 million in 2017, are expected to continue growing with a high forecast growth scenario of up to 9.4 million passengers by 2035.

The Masterplan will enable the creation of more jobs and further reinforce the role of the airport in driving forward the regional economy. It is also hoped that future destinations can be served from the existing Newcastle International Airport runway.

Newcastle International Airport's Masterplan also sets out ways to ensure that growth is achieved in a way that minimises the impact on the environment. Supported by a full environmental appraisal, the plan includes a range of proposed measures to mitigate any environmental impacts, including in respect of noise, air quality, drainage, energy and biodiversity.

## NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEUR LAUNCHES BUSINESS TO HELP GRADUATES



Newcastle-based entrepreneur Sophie Milliken has launched an innovative new company to ensure that graduates have access to free information on how to land their own dream career.

As the Managing Director of multi-award winning Smart Resourcing Solutions Ltd (SRS), Sophie is now the proud owner of GetaGraduateJob.com.

The company is the expert for graduate assessment and employability. The team specialise in working with employers, students and universities on specialist solutions supporting graduate and apprenticeship recruitment.

To complement the early years careers activity SRS delivers, GetaGraduateJob has been launched, and the website has now also landed its first corporate sponsor with M&S.

The retailer was impressed with the new website jam packed with useful resources, tools and advice for graduate job hunters. The site also offers an online course with eight modules, which completed adds up to a Level 3 AQA Employability Skills accreditation.

Sophie said: "This is such an exciting time for me and the team. The website will truly make a huge difference to those job hunting in the lead up to or after graduation and we are delighted to have M&S on board as our first sponsor!"

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## JONATHAN EDWARDS CBE LEADS FIFTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

Olympic gold medallist Jonathan Edwards CBE has recently stepped up a gear to support Gateshead-based Team Cycles, by being a special guest at its 5th birthday celebrations and a participant in the Great North Bike Ride.

Jonathan took a Q&A session with guests at the packed birthday bash and was also part of a 15-strong Team Cycles squad which completed the Seahouses to Tynemouth 60 mile ride, firmly established as one of the region's top mass participation sporting events. The race is organised by the Chris Lucas Trust, which funds two medical researchers at the Institute of Cancer Research.



## TALENTED BOXER RISES AGAIN AFTER CONQUERING DEPRESSION

When Sam Best, previously undefeated light heavyweight boxer, lost his seventh professional fight at the end of 2017, he spiralled into a depression. Now, following months of soul-searching and mentoring, Sam hopes to set his native Newcastle alight with pride when he returns to the ring in the New Year.

Sam attributes his return to full health to the fact that he wasn't afraid to ask for help. With the support of his partner Emily and the rest of his family, Sam reached out for help to beat his depression.

Sam now has his sights firmly set on a return to professional boxing at the turn of 2019 with the help of his mentors and sponsorship from Martin Jordan Fitness Ltd.



## MERCIA LAUNCHES NEWCASTLE OFFICE AND EXPANDS ITS NORTH EAST TEAM

Mercia Fund Managers, which provides loans and equity investment for SMEs and technology firms, has opened its first office in Newcastle.

The launch of the new office in City Quadrant follows Mercia's appointment as fund manager for the £27 million North East Venture Fund, which will invest in SMEs across Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear.

Mercia is also expanding its team with the appointment of Jan Oosthuizen as Investment Manager. Jan has eight years' experience in accountancy and finance working in audit and advisory across the North, the UK and internationally.

Mercia's existing investments in the North East include Newcastle-based digital VR specialists Luminous Group and AI software sales company Refract.



## EMERGING ARTISTS TO BE SHOWCASED AT NEW GALLERY IN CORBRIDGE

The Duck House, one of the most treasured landmarks in Corbridge, is to be the base for an exciting art gallery and workshop, aimed at unearthing exciting young talent in the Tyne Valley and beyond.

Built in the 1800s and formerly Corbridge Town Hall, The Duck House Gallery will take first floor space within the existing European-style coffee bar and bistro run by local businessman Jack Lapping.

Jack said: "We are delighted to bring the gallery and workshops to the Duck House. The Tyne Valley has a very rich seam of highly talented young artists and we want to provide a top class outlet for them to showcase their work."

## PK MOTORS DRIVING AHEAD FOR SEPSIS

A local north east business has clubbed together to help raise over £6,000 for the Sepsis UK Trust.

Organising a charity golf day held at Northumberland's prestigious Matfen Hall golf course, the event was attended by local businesses and customers of PK Motors.

The fundraising was bolstered by a raffle, an auction and a personal Just Giving page. The money raised will go directly towards a £50,000 fundraising campaign, set up by Newcastle-based business Drummond Central in memory of their work colleague Jess McEnroe who sadly lost her life to Sepsis aged just 26 years old in 2017.



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The Gainford Group Management Team  
(l-r) Susan Khaliq (Founder Director), Yasser Khaliq (Marketing Director), Donna Ellis (Head Office Manager), Glenn Martin (Financial Director), Leanne Kell (Accounts Manager), Ken Thompson (Group Executive Chef), Mark Gubbins (Operations Director), Imran Khaliq (Group Director)



The Vermont Hotel



The County Hotel



The Sky Lounge



The NewBridge Hotel

# GAINFORD GROUP GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

The Gainford Group is a North East based company that has grown dramatically in recent years, expanding its core activity and entering new sectors.

Founded by Susan and Mohammed Khaliq 23 years ago, the Gainford Group opened its first care home and the progression of the company has been outstanding, with it now owning an extensive portfolio of residential and commercial property across the North East and further afield. Imran Khaliq joined his family business 10 years ago and has been behind much of its growth, with his focus being on strengthening the organisation's position in the hospitality and leisure sector.

Today the company currently own and operate 13 care homes consisting of 800 beds, 2 nurseries and an ever-growing plethora of bars, restaurants and hotels, employing over 2500 people across the group. New and exciting leisure acquisitions are in development and land is already banked to enable the opening of further sites.

The group ventured into the hospitality and leisure sector 6 years ago with its acquisition of the company's flagship hotel, The Vermont at Newcastle's Quayside. Since then the group has invested heavily in the area with the opening of Aveika, Livello and the Vermont ApartHotel.

Gainford is now one of the largest investors in the Quayside with a portfolio worth over £35m and plans to expand. A new Sky Lounge Bar is being developed, with incredible panoramic views of the city and the River Tyne. The opulent space is available for private hire and is licensed for civil ceremonies held 200ft above the heart of the city.

Imran Khaliq Director of Gainford Group commented: "The Quayside is an iconic area and we are proud that it has three

of our award winning venues at its heart. A lot has changed since our initial investment and there is still so much potential. Our aim alongside NE1 Ltd is to regenerate and restore interest into this unique area, being once the historical centrepiece of this great city."

Further acquisitions include The Great Victoria Hotel in Bradford, which was also saved from administration. The hotel combines old grandeur with contemporary elegance, offering luxury in the heart of the city. An extensive refurbishment has been carried out to create bedrooms, bars, restaurants and a wedding venue that stands out from the crowd.

In May 2017, The County Hotel opposite Newcastle Central Station was acquired. A £20m refurbishment immediately went underway introducing stylish rooms, new function rooms and a Manhattan style restaurant and late night bar, The Hudson. The historic hotel now offers Victorian grandeur and style in the heart of Newcastle. The investment created over 100 jobs, attracted new investors to the area and reinvigorated the gateway to the city.

In addition to this, the group is currently redeveloping The County Aparthotel, a renovation of the iconic landmark Grainger House. The 20 luxury serviced apartments in the heart of Grainger Town are due to open later this month.

Most excitingly, another purchase in March 2018 saw Gainford Group add the former Premier Inn site on New Bridge Street to their portfolio. The plans are to convert the hotel and surrounding areas to the most luxurious hotel in the city. The transformation will include a 200-bedroom hotel along with a number

of bars and restaurants, a spa and the largest conference facility in Newcastle, creating over 200 jobs.

The group has continued to expand with a strong strategic vision and a business ethos that mixes good old-fashioned values with cutting-edge business thinking. The brand has become synonymous with a passion for taking great care in all that it does with this excellence brought about by the team of experienced and dedicated people it employs and working with the best local suppliers.

Testament to the group's success are the awards being won. In the healthcare sector they are the only operator in the North East to be awarded 'Good' by the CQC at all of their homes. The Vermont hotel has been named as the city's best wedding venue by The North East Wedding Awards, whilst Japanese restaurant and late bar Aveika has just been applauded as the best restaurant in Newcastle in the National Restaurant Awards. Livello has also been recognised as the best late night venue in the LTA awards.

The group is enjoying being heralded as one of the most progressive companies in the region, but it also takes corporate social responsibility seriously too. The Gainford Group is proud to be supporting no less than 17 charities locally and nationally and has also signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

Northern Insight owner and editor, Mike Grahamslaw, said: "The Gainford Group is fast becoming a force to be reckoned with. Their acquisition trail is simply inspired and the care and attention they pay to renovations, creating jobs and improving the economy in Newcastle, is to be admired."



Andrew Silver with Alice Ackroyd

## ARE YOUR TEAM FIT FOR GROWTH?

What got you here, might not get you there!

The very DNA that drove you to start your business keeps you focussed on success. You may well have surrounded yourself with like-minded individuals who have been with you through thick and thin and mucked in to get the job done. Trust and friendship create a great partnership for growth, but are they enough to take your business to the next stage?

### YOUR EMERGING MANAGEMENT TEAM

As your business grows you will have delegated responsibility and accountability to an emerging team of managers. In turn your team will have stepped up to make decisions, reacted to customers needs, nurtured employees and created systems and process for their function. But are you setting them up for success?

The Chartered Institute for Personnel and Development (CIPD) found that in growing businesses managers are often appointed because they have been there the longest. Have you appointed on that basis? Did you consider if they had the required skills and knowledge to be effective?

### IS THERE A GAP?

Drive, passion and a shared vision for the business could soon wane if managers find they lack the skills and knowledge to perform. So, what can you do to help?

Start with the end in mind. What functional specialisms and skills do you need and where

are the gaps? Are they in marketing, business technology, operations or regulatory and are there any areas where you don't have coverage?

Consider the skills, knowledge, passion and potential of your team. This gap analysis gives you a springboard for discussion with individuals, and you can both devise a development plan to bridge the gaps.

What's it like to work in your company? Consider the climate you are creating and the culture you'd like to nurture.

Ken Blanchard said, 'The best minute I spend is the one I invest in people.'

### SO HOW CAN YOU SPEND THAT TIME WISELY?

They don't know what they don't know! Growing up with a business may mean some of your team have a restricted view of their function. You can help widen their perspective and open their eyes to 'best practice' in their field.

Is there a professional organisation you or they can join? Is there a specialist in another business willing to share their insights, or act as a mentor? Or is there simply a digital resource to develop knowledge. ACAS, for example, have a great range of free people management resources.

### FEEDBACK IS THE BREAKFAST OF CHAMPIONS

To quote Bill Gates 'We all need people who will give us feedback, that's how we improve'. Feedback

is a great way of helping people develop knowledge, confidence and ability.

Creating a culture where honest, open and respectful feedback is asked for, welcomed and even expected ensures great performance is recognised and poor performance is dealt with, enabling the individual to learn and move on.

Be careful of sugar coating feedback. Most people benefit from honest and constructive criticism and will respect you for taking the time to provide it.

### IS YOUR TEAM FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

What if you've done all you can, and the stretch is just too great for them in their current role? The friendship and commitment that has developed makes this a tough question, but a necessary one. It might be uncomfortable, but not facing the facts will create issues for the individual, the performance of the business and for your team.

### SET PEOPLE FREE!

Don't fall foul of being over protective, a respectful honest conversation where you genuinely and collaboratively focus on the best solution for the individual and the business may set them free. You could even find yourself supporting them in their quest for another role, in or out of your business.

Creating the right conditions for the growth and development of your team will increase their commitment and performance but making those tough people decisions early on will be key to your future success.

Alice Ackroyd is an associate 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](http://www.360growthpartners.co.uk) or e-mail [start@360growthpartners.co.uk](mailto:start@360growthpartners.co.uk)

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Photo credit: Richard Kenworthy

## SCALING NEW HEIGHTS IN THE NORTH

Back in the old days, if you wanted to create excitement and engagement around an Exhibition, you built it up – literally. Huge buildings were the order of the day – Crystal Palace was designed to crystallise interest in the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Eiffel Tower was raised to raise interest in The 1889 World's Fair and the Space Needle's foundation pouring helped generate concrete excitement for the same event in 1962.

**But when we were tasked with providing communications support to NewcastleGateshead Initiative's marketing and communications team for the biggest event in the England this year, we realised we needed to construct a PR plan that relied on more than construction and left a legacy stronger than bricks and mortar.**

Described as the number one place in the world to visit in 2018 by Rough Guides, NewcastleGateshead had something rather special in store for residents and visitors when it announced that it had won the bid for the Great Exhibition of the North – an action-packed 80-day programme of Northern culture, innovative technology, live performances and unforgettable experiences for the whole family to enjoy, with hubs and venues opening their doors to visitors wanting to discover the very best of Northern art, design and innovation.

The opening weekend was more breathtaking than any ceremonial bricklaying or ribbon cutting could hope to be. It was a spectacular event on NewcastleGateshead Quayside, with crowds treated to a performance by Maximo Park, playing some of their best-known tracks as they sailed up the River Tyne. There was also the first of over 1,000

displays of the Get North Water Sculpture, which was choreographed to three specially commissioned soundtracks, and renowned Lancashire-born poet Lemn Sissay gave a passionate performance of his Anthem of the North, before a swarm of illuminated drones took flight, and the evening was brought to a glittering end with a dramatic fireworks display.

By carefully building both relationships and excitement in the media, Karol helped to secure 442 pieces of coverage across print, broadcast and online with a 136 million combined press reach – the kind of press that costs over £3 million to buy - over the opening weekend alone.

As well as attracting culture vultures and some of the UK's most brilliant talent to the 80-day programme of activity in NewcastleGateshead, Great Exhibition of the North social media and digital platforms had a reach of over 19.7 million. BBC editorial content alone was seen and heard by an audience of more than 15 million right across the UK and there were over 2,200 items of national, local and regional coverage across print, broadcast and online about Great Exhibition of the North in total.

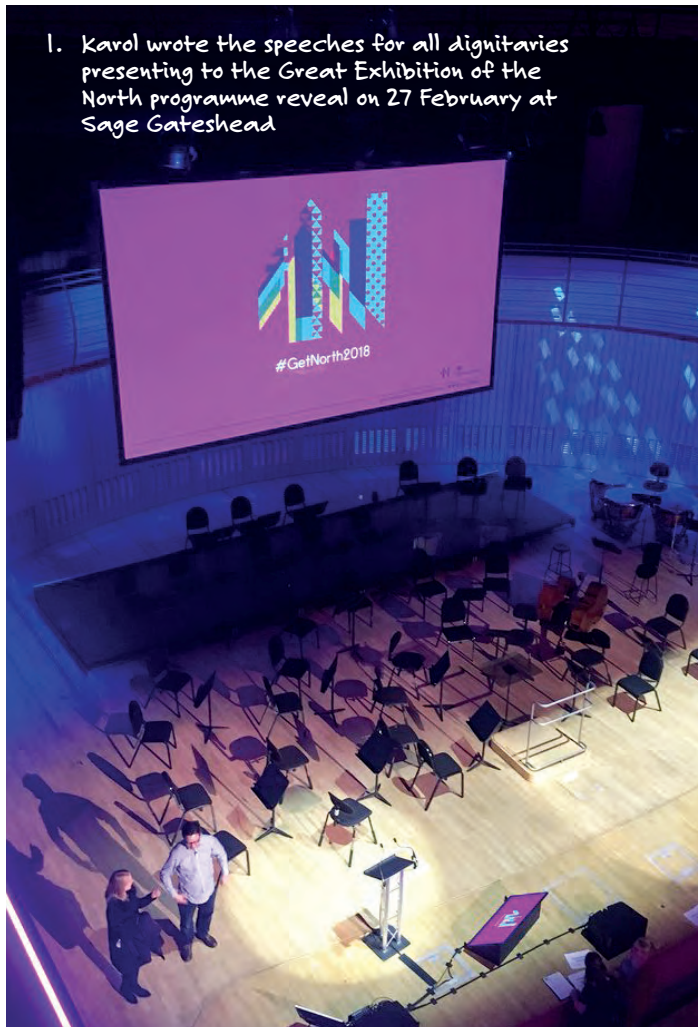
The solid foundations of the Exhibitions' expansive programme, combined with the build-up of coverage contributed to the fact that NewcastleGateshead welcomed more than four million visitors over the summer with surveys showing that 32% cited the Exhibition as the primary reason for their visit, and 75% engaging with the Exhibition's content whilst they were here. But it wasn't just tourists that flocked to the city; more than 10,000 contributors were involved, including artists, scientists and inventors, all producing content across 30 core venues and a further 83 locations in NewcastleGateshead.

Great Exhibition of the North's success was cemented by the huge number of towns and communities who truly got behind the event, as well as the team of more than 1,000 Get North volunteers. One of our key aims was to build a platform to exhibit exactly what makes the North of England great – not a platform of bricks and mortar, or concrete, but of conversation. We're proud to say that that's exactly what's been achieved here over the past 80 days.

To find out more about one of the North's leading PR Agencies visit [www.karolmarketing.com](http://www.karolmarketing.com)

## BUILDING A GREAT CAMPAIGN

1. Karol wrote the speeches for all dignitaries presenting to the Great Exhibition of the North programme reveal on 27 February at Sage Gateshead



2. Our video helped to launch the Great Exhibition of the North programme



3. We made the headlines locally...



4. ...and nationally



5. Camera crews could be spotted all over NewcastleGateshead



BBC editorial content alone was seen and heard by an audience of more than **15 million** right across the UK and there were over **2,200 items of national, local and regional coverage across print, broadcast and online** about Great Exhibition of the North in total



## LAYING FIRM NORTH EAST FOUNDATIONS THROUGH RUGBY

With both codes of rugby gaining an increased foothold in the North East through the rising fortunes of Newcastle Falcons in union and Newcastle Thunder in league, at the forefront of efforts to use that progress in the community is the Newcastle Rugby Foundation.

An umbrella entity that co-ordinates the community programme delivery of the Falcons Community Foundation and the Newcastle Thunder Community Project, the Foundation works across five pillars of activity to motivate, educate and inspire via the power of sport.

Employing ten full time members of staff, over 150,000 people have had contact with one of the Foundation's programmes over the past 12 years in Northumberland, Durham and Cumbria.

Working closely with their partners, the Foundation's programmes run in primary and secondary schools, rugby clubs and through projects held at Kingston Park Stadium.

Flagship education programmes include the First Class Supply Schools Connections programme, which allows affiliated schools to tailor their own delivery programme of up to 35 hours with Foundation coaches and HITZ, a national programme which uses rugby to tackle some of the greatest challenges facing young people today – unemployment, crime and disillusionment.

Developing the game of rugby at a grassroots level



is a club connections programme for both Falcons and Thunder, while match day festivals, coaching camps and a wide-ranging collection of CPD programmes further developing both players and coaches.

In addition to these efforts the Foundation also undertakes a number of programmes aimed at tackling health and social isolation via Tackling Health with Greggs and Move Like a Pro. Both deliver key healthy lifestyle messages and physical activity based around rugby, with Move Like a Pro also providing an opportunity for men aged 35+ to meet and bond with likeminded fellows.

Making use of the healthy relationships with Newcastle Falcons & Newcastle Thunder players from both clubs make over 500 appearances and donate over 1500 hours to community activity each season, enhancing the quality of the experience and impact of programmes for participants.

Newcastle Rugby Foundation was shortlisted in the Heart of the Community Award at the North East Business Awards and highly commended at the All Parliamentary Premiership Rugby Community Awards.

**The Foundation is funded through sponsorship, grants, fundraising events and donations. If you would like to get involved or find out more about Newcastle Rugby Foundation. Visit the Foundation webpage at [www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk](http://www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk)**

# Bobby's

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## ST JAMES' SQUARE HOST CHARITY EVENT

St James' Square Law Firm were delighted to host their first Charity Karting and Client Networking Event at Karting North East. The event brought together clients and staff for an action-packed afternoon of competitive racing whilst raising money for the firm's charity of the year, Macmillan Cancer Support.

The afternoon started with a welcome from Paul Monaghan, Managing Partner of St James' Square, followed by a few words from Macmillan volunteer, David. The racing then began with 28 teams battling it out for first place, with the St James' Square trophy awarded to the winners, Richard Aitken, AngloScottish and Matt Holbrook, Holbrix.



A man in a grey suit and blue striped tie is sitting on a train, looking down at his smartphone. The train is yellow and white. The background shows a blurred street scene with trees and buildings.

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## PAYROLL TEAM SHORTLISTED FOR 7 NATIONAL AWARDS

Armstrong Watson Accountants, Business and Financial Advisers are very proud to announce that their payroll team has been shortlisted six times in five different categories at the Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) Annual Excellence Awards and also confirmed as a finalist for the 'Technology Award' at the 'Rewards 2018' (the leading independent awards for Payroll, HR and Reward professionals).

The payroll 'Project of the Year' nomination was for the team's 'Bostik' initiative which involved streamlining and automating payroll to an online process, replacing physical payroll files with a cloud equivalent and creating a more secure and efficient service delivery.

## MAJOR FAMILY LAW RAISES RECORD AMOUNT FOR THE BRAIN TUMOUR CHARITY

Nearly 300 people adorned in Red T Shirts recently gathered at Kingston Park, home of the Newcastle Falcons, to play not rugby but rounders.

The evening, organised for the 4th year running by Joanne Major of Major Family Law, raised funds for the Brain Tumour Charity. The event involved 20 different teams from North East law firms, accountancy firms, local schools and other local businesses. The winning team this year was a team of Dads from Mowden Hall School with Major Family Law themselves the outright losers winning the Wooden Spoon!

The event itself raised just shy of £5,500 through a combination of team entry fees and a very well supported raffle drawn on the night, with generous prizes donated by local companies and restaurants.



## HAY & KILNER TRAINEES STEP UP TO SOLICITOR ROLES

North East law firm Hay & Kilner has rewarded four young lawyers' hard work and dedication by taking them on in solicitor roles at the end of their practice traineeships.

Jeremy Nash, Rebecca Weir, Tom Clarke and Sophie Allinson have all completed a training programme. This involved working alongside experienced practitioners in different departments within the Newcastle-headquartered firm to give them a sound general grounding in the law and identify any particular strengths and areas of interest.

Alongside this on-the-job learning, the quartet have also completed a Professional Skills Course at Northumbria University, which is a mandatory qualification run by the Solicitors Regulation Authority that must be successfully undertaken prior to individual practicing as a solicitor.

Rebecca has now joined Hay & Kilner's construction team, while Tom is working in its employment department. Meanwhile, Jeremy is based in family law division and Sophie in the criminal litigation team.

## NORTH EAST ACCOUNTANCY COMPANY GROWS

A North East accountancy firm has taken on its eighth apprentice in response to an upsurge in work following the launch of a new cloud accounting service and preparations for forthcoming HMRC changes.

UHY Torgersens has been working with Gateshead-based Access Training to recruit and train two new apprentices. This brings their total number of apprentices to eight, who are all progressing well on their journeys to becoming chartered accountants.

The trainees are working closely with partners Paul McMahon and Alison Henshaw to help prepare clients for major changes to legislation requiring VAT-registered businesses to report to HMRC under a new digital reporting system from April next year.

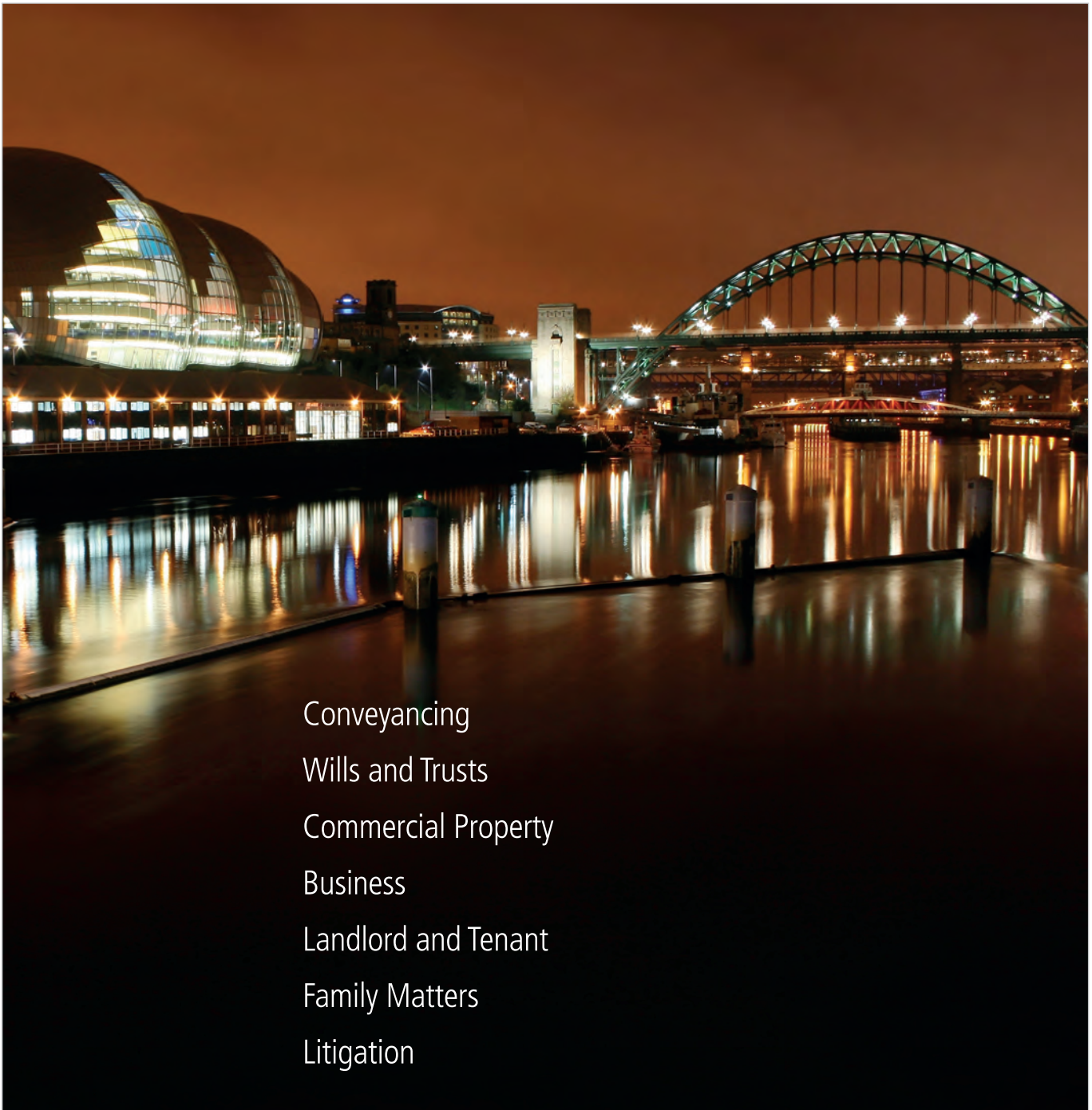
The firm, which has been in business for over 50 years, now has 35 employees and works with Access Training to recruit and train high-quality apprentices.



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Jeff Winn

## A NORTH EAST SUCCESS STORY

Winn Solicitors has built a reputation as a highly reputable company within the North East's personal injury field. The name 'Winns' is synonymous with quality of service, and as such the firm has grown into one of the largest companies in the industry.

Winn Solicitors was founded in 2002, following a crash in which Jeff Winn, Winns CEO, was the victim of a non-fault accident. The resulting fight for justice, and compensation from the at-fault party, opened Jeff's eyes to the shortcomings of the system at the time.

Poor communication from the insurance company, repairs made with non-manufacturer parts devaluing his car, a £500 excess charge, and rising premiums all served to convince Jeff that a system that better benefited the claimant was needed. That realisation was where Winn Solicitors began.

In 2002, Jeff split from the law firm in which he was a partner and established Winns with a small team of just eight people. The company has been growing ever since, and now employs almost 400 people in its Newcastle offices.

The last two years have presented a challenge for the company, as government regulations effectively halved fees to personal injury organisations. Despite that, Winns has worked hard to achieve an extra 50% of business, avoided any redundancies, and is even eyeing a 15% growth in the next year.

"Winns continues to be very busy, despite the headwinds that occurred due to government regulations which effectively took money out of the personal injury market," comments Jeff. "Thankfully we have bucked the trend, and have opened a raft of new accounts recently to cement our position in the field."

It is in fact fair to say that the company is thriving, with two recent account acquisitions adding around 11% to its annual turnover. With brokers and small insurance companies also continuing to utilise Winns' service to an increasing degree, the future of the business is looking bright on multiple fronts.

The relationship between Winns and its brokers is made stronger due to personal recommendations. Most of this business comes from brokers who are satisfied with the service, particularly after dealing with other companies who were unable to meet their obligations.

As well as legal representation, Winns also prides itself on offering a one-stop-shop solution during the claims process; providing hire cars and repairs, as well as referrals for medical treatment such as physiotherapy. These medical solutions in particular are set to form a substantial

part of the law firm's future, as it looks to grow and diversify further.

"One of the areas I'm particularly pleased about is our involvement in trying to address obesity issues through bariatric treatment," muses Jeff. "We're investing in new equipment and techniques which will help people to lose weight. A new personal trainer has been taken on, as well as a dietician. It isn't underway yet but I'm looking forward to launching that soon."

In preparation for this important new branch of the business, the company has begun talks with local NHS Trusts, as well as the private sector, in order to demonstrate its value. Once the new bariatric service has shown its worth, as it is sure to do, the hope is that a government contract won't be far behind.

It's likely Winn Solicitors will seek a stock market listing in due course, further enhancing the business' growth and allowing it to pick up even larger insurance contracts.

This is Jeff's vision for the future of Winns. Since that vision and experience has already taken the company from its humble beginnings to its well-respected present, future success seems guaranteed.



## REFERENCES - DO YOU KNOW THE RULES?

It is often standard practice, and sensible, for a prospective employer to request a reference from a job applicant's most recent or current employer.

A reference can provide valuable information on a prospective employee's suitability for the vacant role in terms of confirming the information already received as part of the recruitment process (such as dates of employment, roles previously performed and the reason for leaving) and providing additional details such as the former employer's views on the applicant's performance, honesty and any disciplinary issues. Referees might also comment on attendance, time keeping and any other matters they consider to be relevant.

But what are the risks of providing a reference (whether basic or detailed) or refusing to do so?

### DOES A REFERENCE HAVE TO BE GIVEN?

Generally speaking, a former or current employer is not under any obligation to provide an employee or former employee with a reference. There are exceptions to this – for instance if there is an express or implied contractual obligation to do so (which is unusual) or where the individual works in certain industries, such as those regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Therefore, a refusal to provide a reference is not unlawful in itself (unless the exceptions apply). However, where the employer's usual practice is to provide employees with references, but declines in relation to a particular individual, then that could give rise to a costly discrimination claim if the refusal to provide a reference is on the basis of a "protected characteristic" (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) and the refusal leads to the applicant not being offered the role or having a conditional offer withdrawn. The nine "protected characteristics" under the Equality Act 2010 are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Alternatively, if the applicant has previously brought a claim for discrimination or made an allegation of discrimination against the former employer, as a result of which it declines to provide a reference, the applicant will have a claim for victimisation.



### DUTIES OF CARE

Perhaps unsurprisingly, a referee owes a duty of care not only to the subject of the reference (i.e. the applicant) but also to the recipient.

This means that the reference must be true, accurate and fair. Crucially, it must also not be misleading (and that pertains to what is left out as well as that which is included). This can cause headaches for referees when the subject's record is less than exemplary or disciplinary proceedings have not been concluded.

Where a negligent reference is provided, both the subject and recipient of the reference could bring a claim for negligent misstatement against the referee. In limited circumstances, the subject might also have a defamation claim.

### CONSTRUCTIVE DISMISSAL

Where the applicant is still employed by the referee, there is also the possibility of a constructive dismissal claim arising out of a breach of the implied term of trust and confidence.

### WHAT TO DO?

It is worth employers giving some thought, in advance, as to how to handle references and to have a policy dealing with:

- Whether references will be provided;
- Which employees in the organisation can provide a reference;
- What format (oral, written, standard) should the reference take; and
- What can be included.

In addition, referees should ensure that any statements made are based on facts and that care is taken to ensure that any data protection issues arising from the reference request are handled correctly.

It is also best practice for the prospective employer to ensure that any offer of employment is conditional on satisfactory references being received and to make effective use of probationary periods once the employment starts.

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## GETTING TO KNOW... JOHN MORGAN



John Morgan

As partner of the commercial property department at Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP (GBLF), John Morgan is able to assist clients looking to acquire properties, while specialising for the past 12 years in acquisition, management and disposal for SIPP and SSAS schemes.

John, has also specialised in dealing with commercial properties held by insolvent companies and individuals, working with insolvency practitioners and LPA receivers in the North East and nationally.

#### WHAT IS YOUR JOB ROLE AT GBLF?

I am head of commercial property at GBLF. I work strategically with managing partner, Kathryn Taylor, and the team to support clients and businesses in the North East.

#### HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED AT GBLF?

I have worked at GBLF since March 2018.

#### WHAT WAS YOUR DREAM JOB WHEN YOU WERE AT PRIMARY SCHOOL?

I don't think I had one – it was a proud day when I was given my first racing bike, but I'm not built for speed. My sister, however, was adamant, for quite some time that she was going to be a crocodile

and a part-time sweet shop lady when she grew up.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN THE PROUDEST MOMENT OF YOUR CAREER SO FAR?

There have been many highs, but I took most satisfaction from completing a sale of the assets for a regional bakery chain which had entered into administration. The sale completed late at night, just before Christmas, saving the employees jobs.

#### WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO MOST AT THE END OF THE WORKING WEEK?

I help to lead a boys' brigade company in Gateshead which meets on Friday evenings. I enjoy the change of pace as I go into the weekend.

#### IF YOU COULD HAVE DINNER WITH ANYONE, DEAD OR ALIVE, WHO WOULD IT BE, AND WHY?

It would have to be Barack Obama – I'm fascinated by his life story, but I'd also like to hear what he thinks of his successor.

#### WHAT IS THE BEST BOOK YOU'VE READ?

I'm a science fiction and fantasy nerd, and an avid reader, so the answer to this question changes regularly. This week – A Song of Ice and Fire by George RR Martin (and no, I haven't watched the TV adaptation, and I'm not going to until the (long) awaited last book in the series is released).

#### IF YOU COULD HAVE ONE SUPERPOWER, WHAT WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Mind control – for child management, and not to further my career, of course.

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Sarah Crilly

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

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

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

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

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

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

A generic website certainly cannot tell you how

to share the marital assets, how to claim against a spouse's pension, how to maintain the family business, who should remain in the family home and, importantly, how to arrange the care of the children going forward.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dr. David Mansell

## PROUD TO BE SUPPORTING INNOVATION IN THE NORTH EAST

Dr. David Mansell, patent scientist at Murgitroyd, explains the importance of patent work to support the expansion of biotechnology firm, Iksuda Therapeutics.

Murgitroyd have been working with Iksuda Therapeutics (formerly Glythera), a biotech company developing next generation Antibody Drug Conjugates (ADCs), for about five years but David actually worked as a Senior Development Chemist for Iksuda before joining Murgitroyd – so he has a long history and understanding of the company.

This is helped greatly by his BSc (Hons) in Chemistry with Forensic Science and PhD in Synthetic Chemistry, which was put to good use while working on Iksuda's propriety technology portfolio. David comments: "Although, I'm currently working towards being a fully qualified patent attorney in the UK and Europe, my technical background is an asset that I rely upon on a daily basis. And, it's this experience and background that enables me to understand the needs of the companies I work with so that I can represent their interests in the best possible way."

Dr Jenny Thirlway, Senior Director at Iksuda Therapeutics Ltd describes one such case where David and the team's experience was helpful in dealing with a 'tricky' examiner in the US: "We worked closely with Murgitroyd during the prosecution of a US application and in this particular case the examiner consistently responded with what we felt were unreasonable

objections against granting the patent. The Murgitroyd team responded in a prompt and professional manner, disputing their arguments and suggesting that a statement from outside of the company should be sourced to support the application. The application subsequently proceeded to grant, providing us with patent protection in what is a crucial market for our technology."

Biotherapeutics are an integral part of modern medicine, particularly in the oncology space, due to their efficacious properties and ability to target specific molecules within the human body. This has led to a significant drive in the development and manufacture of new effective and safe biologics. Murgitroyd have driven forward successful patent applications for Iksuda's PermaLink® and PermaCarb® technologies.

The team at Murgitroyd works closely with Iksuda to identify any requirements for new or existing patent applications, sounding out next steps on projects and technologies and working on 'Freedom to Operate' searches.

Jenny comments: "Because Iksuda is focussed on developing highly active, yet safe ADCs for treatment of difficult to treat solid tumours, we are constantly innovating to improve the prospects of this important class of biotherapeutics. We

work closely with the subject matter experts at Murgitroyd, conveniently located here in Newcastle, to define our IP strategy from the conceptual stages through to grant, which has allowed us to not only expand our patent estate but to develop valuable drugs for patients living with cancer."

Iksuda is currently based in the Herschel Annex but will shortly be one of the first regional biotech companies to occupy the 'Helix Biosphere'. From there the company is looking to expand its drug portfolio, driving a growth in headcount and taking its ADCs through into clinical trials.

"Since working with Iksuda we've helped them grow a substantial patent portfolio. It's fantastic to be working with and enabling such innovative product development and I look forward to continuing this work and seeing the benefits that the application of this technology can achieve," concludes David.

Now in its 10th year, Murgitroyd's Newcastle team is based in the heart of the city and assists businesses and organisations of all types and sizes in getting the most from their intellectual property - they can advise on patent, trade mark, design and copyright issues and offer a free initial consultation.

More information can be found at [www.murgitroyd.com](http://www.murgitroyd.com) or you can request a meeting with one of Murgitroyd's patent and trade mark attorneys on +44 (0) 191 211 3550.



## BUT DO YOU REALLY HAVE A LEGITIMATE INTEREST?

Data protection expert Gillian Scribbins, of Muckle LLP, tackles a GDPR grey area for many businesses.

Too often in privacy notices and data protection policies we're coming up against 'we process your data on our legitimate interest' without any further explanation. Read on for some gentle pointers on how to avoid this subtle pitfall.

A fundamental element of GDPR, and as it happens the data protection laws we've had in place since 1998, is that personal data must be processed lawfully. At face value it seems simple enough, and is not always given much deeper consideration. But establishing whether your processing is lawful is a critical step to being GDPR compliant, and it is often a connection data controllers are struggling to make.

### SO HOW CAN PROCESSING BE LAWFUL?

Very simply, there are six reasons for processing data that are justified by law. These are the lawful, or legal, bases you should by now have seen repeated in every privacy policy worth its salt. To list them: performance of a contract; the data subject's consent; a legal obligation; the data subject's vital interests; a public task or the public interest; and, legitimate interests.

The ICO explains all of these six lawful bases in their guide to the GDPR, and mostly they're exactly what they say on the tin. Yet one continues, almost half a year on from the dreaded enforcement date, to cause a stumbling block. Legitimate interests.

Contrary to popular belief, it's not a catch all into which you can sweep all your data processing that doesn't quite fall under one of the other



Gillian Scribbins

bases. Stating there is a legitimate interest does not qualify as a legitimate interest. A legitimate interest might be commercial, charitable, it might be market research or social interest; it might be to promote or develop your business or your start up. Whatever it is, you need to have a genuine reason to be processing the data; you need to be able to explain what your interest is and why it's legitimate.

### DETERMINING LEGITIMATE INTEREST

This is the point we're finding organisations come to again and again, in particular those who have opted for legitimate interests as a way to avoid the daunting task of going out to data subjects for consent. Particularly we see this with marketing

campaigns; newsletters; existing customer databases; and the use of photographs on social media and other publically accessible platforms. In all these scenarios both consent and legitimate interests can work as your lawful basis; but if you don't really have a business necessity; your lawful basis should be consent.

Because once you've determined you have a legitimate interest – the fun has just begun. To truly have a legitimate interest, you need to have carried out what the ICO are referring to as a legitimate interest assessment. They say: "Documenting your assessment of legitimate interests is particularly important in helping you to demonstrate compliance under the accountability principle." So what does this involve? The assessment is a kind of risk assessment in which the data controller has to balance their aforementioned valid interest against the right to privacy, and the expectations of the data subject.

This needs to be a written and recorded document or rationale (for which there is no prescribed format); and it needs to conclude that the purpose for processing will not be unexpected to a data subject; will not infringe their privacy rights; and is the only way to achieve your purpose. If this isn't the conclusion of your balance test – you don't have a legitimate interest.

And this needs to be repeated for each individual data processing activity you're basing on your legitimate interests.

To learn more or for help with any data protection, GDPR compliance or any IT legal issues, email [data@muckle-llp.com](mailto:data@muckle-llp.com) or call 0191 211 7777.



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Barry Wood, Chartered Legal  
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## SEE YOU IN COURT

Court proceedings may not necessarily be the only, or best, option in trying to pursue a claim, resolve a dispute or settle a legal argument. There are alternatives.

Disputes can be costly, lengthy and stressful. No one wants them but sometimes they can be unavoidable. Things can quickly escalate if someone threatens court action.

Way too many years ago when I was training as a lawyer, court proceedings were the inevitable forum for pursuing a claim or to resolve a dispute. My working day was taken up with issuing court proceedings and attending court hearings for clients.

### TIMES HAVE CHANGED

Back in the day, civil court proceedings were slow and expensive, almost always involving lawyers. Now, access to court proceedings is available within minutes at the click of a mouse through the online court system. You can fill in claim forms and issue proceedings 24/7 from home without ever having to visit a lawyer's office or seek legal representation. However, this brave new world is full of pitfalls and dangers for parties embarking on the issue of court proceedings, in actions which have not been fully thought through or on which no legal advice has been sought. Proceedings become defended, counterclaims raised and costs orders and court sanctions imposed. Proceedings become protracted, expensive and evermore stressful and all started from the comfort of your own home.

Sometimes, court proceedings are not the correct forum for trying to resolve a dispute.

### THERE ARE ALTERNATIVES

- **1. Negotiation.** Communicate with the party you have a dispute with and see if you can resolve matters to your mutual satisfaction. A lot of disputes escalate because of a lack of communication or each party failing to understand the other party's stance. Sometimes communication between the parties themselves can resolve a dispute at a far earlier stage than if one party rushes off to issue court action.
- **2. Check the small print.** Are there contractual terms and conditions that apply between the parties? Do they contain an arbitration clause? Arbitration legislation provides a structure on which disputes can be referred to an independent Arbitrator without recourse to court proceedings.
- **3. Mediate.** Mediation/Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) can either be informal by way of a round table discussion between the parties and/or their lawyers or a more formal structured form of Mediation whereby an independent and objective Mediator is appointed between the disputing parties to explore with them a negotiated settlement.
- **4. Without Prejudice communications.** This is a legal expression which means 'off the court record' or 'without admission of

liability'. It enables parties to communicate openly and frankly without admission of liability to try and explore a resolution. They are however not magic words. Such communications must contain an offer or counter offer to try and settle a dispute or be part of such communications to be deemed 'Without Prejudice'. You cannot in normal correspondence simply add the words, 'Without Prejudice' for it to then be automatically covered by the protection of 'Without Prejudice' and the correspondence could as a result be disclosable at Court.

If parties reach settlement, then this can be legally binding upon both parties. It is important that any settlement agreed is set out in writing and signed by all parties to the dispute.

Sometimes, attempts at resolution fail and court proceedings may ultimately be the correct action to take to obtain a judicial determination.

But before you click that computer mouse and start legal action, think about things in a common sense and practical way as to how best the resolution can or may be achieved.

It is always worth considering, at an early stage, obtaining legal advice as to your options and alternatives available so you can make an informed decision.

For further information and advice please contact Barry Wood, Phillip Moir or Lisa Branker in the Richard Reed Dispute Resolution Team, Richard Reed Solicitors, 3-6 Frederick Street, Sunderland, SR1 1NA. T: 0191 5670465.

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Our Commercial Property team is headed by Partner Ryan Bannon. Leaving no stone unturned, it provides expert advice on every aspect of commercial property law including property finance, corporate funding, redevelopment, leases, buying and selling commercial real estate and managing investment portfolios.

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## POD PARTY CELEBRATES 10 YEARS

It was party time for expanding North East architectural firm Pod as it continues to mark its 10th anniversary year. The rapidly growing practice, which includes national housebuilders Bellway, Storey Homes as well as Northumberland Estates among its clients, was joined by more than 80 guests for drinks, food and memories at its Toffee Factory office in Newcastle.

The evening was a great success, with Pod owners Ruth and Craig Van Bedaf thanking everyone for their part in the Pod story, and unveiling a new look structure, with the appointment of new directors Jens Rahmann, Martin Clay and Adam Lee.





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# REGION'S MOST SUCCESSFUL BUSINESS PEOPLE NAMED AT NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEURIAL AWARDS



Around 400 people attended the hugely successful 2018 North East Entrepreneurial Awards at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead to celebrate the region's outstanding business success stories.

Entrepreneur's Forum chairman James Robson MBE said: "This was a hugely successful celebration of people who have a passion, not only for business, but for the North East as well.

"We received extremely strong nominations in each of the categories which is very encouraging for the future of innovation and the creation of bold and successful businesses here in the North East.

"The awards were a showcase for their talent and accomplishments and provided an example to other entrepreneurs of what can be achieved. I hope their success stories will act as an encouragement to others."

## ENTREPRENEUR OF THE YEAR

Lianne Walker MBE, group managing director of Washington-based Walker Filtration, was named as Entrepreneur of the Year. Lianne took over the business, which designs and manufactures compressed air and filtration equipment, in 2005 and set about guiding it towards a more specialised and lucrative market.

The firm, founded eight years earlier by her father Brian in his garage, most recently recorded an annual turnover of £30m. Its success is based on a company ethos of combining technological know-how with problem solving and an ability to swiftly respond to ever-changing industry needs.

A takeover in March by Swedish firm Atlas Copco is expected to make Walker Filtration one of the world's largest manufacturers of filtration products - presenting a great opportunity to further strengthen

the position of manufacturing in the North East.

## MENTOR OF THE YEAR

Pamela Petty was named Mentor of the Year after founding her own entrepreneur mentoring business, Entreprenising, in June 2016.

Pamela has a strong track record in North East industry, having previously worked as managing director for Ebac, founded by her father John Elliott. During her tenure the company diversified from its traditional dehumidifier business to begin manufacturing freezers and washing machines.

She was described by those entrepreneurs who have benefited from her business mentoring as having a "passion for UK manufacturing" while she was further praised for being extremely knowledgeable and trustworthy.

## EMERGING TALENT

Jordan McCabe, founder of Aztec Diamond Equestrian, was presented with the Emerging Talent award after turning a childhood passion for horse riding and clothing design into a successful and highly profitable business.

Jordan, who was a keen showjumper, launched her own clothing range for equestrians in 2014 after realising there was a gap in the market for clothing which was fashionable, technical and affordable. Designed, manufactured and sold from her County Durham base, Aztec Diamond Equestrian has become so popular in the UK that Jordan is now looking to launch the range in the United States.

## SCALE-UP AWARD

Kevin Brown, managing director of Pacifica Group, won the Scale-Up Award. The support services firm provides extended warranties and after-sales support for domestic appliance repairs and in-house heating appliances.

Starting out with just four employees, Pacifica has grown to become one of the largest companies of its kind in the country, employing over 470 people and posting an increased turnover of £27.2m in 2017. Despite its phenomenal growth, the company is focused on increasing its market share and engaging more closely with manufacturers while offering customers exceptional standards of service.

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Sunderland entrepreneur Paul Callaghan CBE was presented with the Lifetime Achievement Award. The chairman and co-founder of global software and internet company, Leighton Group, was lauded for his vision and innovation in this fast-paced sector, as well as the huge commitment he has given throughout his career to championing and helping to drive the North East economy forward.

The five categories of the awards, held in partnership with the North East Growth Hub, were supported by Ward Hadaway, The Malhotra Group, NBS, IA Growth and Make It Sunderland. The North East Fund supported the networking and drinks reception. The evening was hosted by one of the world's leading explorers, Benedict Allen.

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



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

An Entrepreneur Interview with...

## ALEX INGHAM

MI Supplies

**TELL ME ABOUT YOUR BACKGROUND IN BUSINESS?**

I have worked in the workwear and industrial sector since leaving Darlington College, or rather after I was asked to leave without any qualifications.

I was 17-years-old and just walked into the first job I could get. However, the workwear sector has now been in my blood for 28 years and I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved.

Before setting up MI Supplies in 2005, I spent 15 years working for a family firm and two of the UK's largest companies so I gained a great deal of experience - from a small concern which values the smallest of orders to the more controlled and less flexible corporate environment.

**WHAT WAS THE INSPIRATION FOR YOUR BUSINESS?**

I was keen to live and die by my own decisions and was growing increasingly frustrated by the corporate way of doing things. Their focus was all about improving the bottom line rather than focusing on the customer and I really struggled with that.

I founded MI Supplies with a vision to ensure the customer is at the centre of everything we do. Fourteen years on, and we still strive each day to improve the customer experience.

During that first year, I underlined my will to succeed while delivering the highest standards by promising to issue a £100 cheque to clients if they weren't completely happy with our service. I'm pleased to say I never had to write one cheque.

**DESCRIBE WHAT MI SUPPLIES IS?**

We are an international workwear and clothing provider. We kit out people and staff from head to toe in safety clothing, workwear, footwear and corporate wear. We also offer logo and embroidery services together with a large range of industrial supplies, including respirators, latex gloves, torches and safety glasses.

We have exported to more than 50 countries and provide a very strong multi-channel offering - from our managed B2B service through to our website which attracts almost one million visitors a year.

**TELL ME HOW YOUR COMPANY HAS PROGRESSED?**

I began with the help of an early £10,000 inheritance from my father, which was spent in the first week. I managed to secure a small overdraft and this paid for stock, initial rent for a small business unit and a second-hand car which we used for deliveries.

During that first year I acted as managing director, sales representative, warehouse picker, packer and delivery driver.

After a few weeks I joined a local business network which provided valuable contacts but many of the clients were secured by the traditional method of visiting companies and knocking on doors.

MI Supplies has achieved growth every year since it was launched and now supplies 33,000 customers ranging from individuals to more than 250 businesses including such household names as Sainsbury's, Aldi, Mercedes Benz and Royal Mail.

In 2015, we moved to new premises on Teesside Industrial Estate, Thornaby, where we now employ 14 staff. A year later we invested £100,000 in upgrading our systems, web platform and IT.

At the end of our first year we recorded a turnover of £192,000 and since then have achieved often double digit growth, which has always remained steady and controlled.

MI Supplies has progressed from being a simple B2B offering of traditional rep/business account to providing a much more bespoke service. Last year we were the 11th fastest growing workwear company.

The business has changed dramatically in the past five years, with our main growth coming from e-commerce and by offering our services in countries outside the UK.

Eighteen months ago I joined the Entrepreneurs' Forum and I'm part of its eCommerce Cluster Group which has been really beneficial in terms of meeting other like-minded people and sharing ideas. I've also been part of its Scale-up Leader's Academy, which has given me great clarity on moving the business forward.

We are now approaching £3m turnover for 2018, which I don't think I could have imagined on the day we opened our doors for the very first time.

**WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT WITH MI SUPPLIES?**

I'm pleased to say I have many proud moments. Seeing the car park full of employee's cars bizarrely makes me feel really pleased as it reflects our level of progress. We are a great team, so to see a group of committed people all pushing in the right direction is fantastic.

Another great moment came in 2017 when MI Supplies won best Small Business in the North East Business Awards after three consecutive years of being shortlisted.

However, my proudest moment also came last year. It was a particularly difficult 12

months after my wife Clare was diagnosed with breast cancer which meant I was absent from the office for two months.

Happily she was later given the all-clear but in my absence the staff all pulled together and the business continued to run smoothly. It was very emotional for me.

**IS THERE A PARTICULAR MISTAKE YOU HAVE MADE IN BUSINESS AND HOW DID YOU LEARN FROM IT?**

Keeping staff too long when I know we're not the right fit for each other. It's not fair on the employees concerned, their fellow team members or the company. I try to be much more decisive these days. I only want employees who give nine or ten out of ten. Anything less isn't going to work for us.

**WHAT IS MI SUPPLIES USP?**

From an online perspective, I feel we offer the best website with the widest range of products and brands in the UK, with the best and most flexible returns policy.

From our traditional B2B routes, we are the only one within our industry that guarantees to fix pricing for long periods, regardless of currency issues or price rises.

We go back to our business and look to make the savings internally so rising costs aren't passed on to the customer. We have one client that has benefitted from 11 years of fixed or lowered prices which is absolutely unheard in our industry.

It is all down to our dedication in managing costs and negotiating well with suppliers. It has been a thorn in a few of our competitors, which is good to see.

**WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR BUSINESS?**

Quite simply it is the people. Our ethos centres on looking after our customers, suppliers and employees and developing and maintaining a high level of trust is vital in every area of the business.

**DO YOU LIVE BY A CERTAIN MOTTO?**

My motto is taken from James Dean: "Dream as if you live forever. Live as if you'll die today." My late mother-in-law gave me a card containing that quote when we opened. Since the day I opened the card that quote has stayed with me.

**WHAT ARE YOUR FUTURE PLANS?**

We have some big plans over the coming few years and have announced our Project 2020. This sets out our aims for us to develop a multi-lingual, multi-country site offering across Europe with £10m online sales.

It's a big, big goal but we are going for it!



## SUCCESSFUL FIRST YEAR OF TRADING SEES BUSINESS GROWTH SPECIALISTS EXPAND TEAM

Business growth specialists 360 Growth Partners has appointed five new associates following a successful first year of trading.

The Newcastle-based firm, whose clients include Saddle Skedaddle, Horizonworks and Newcastle Premier Health, has expanded its team to include sector specialists in HR, business technology, finance, leadership development and marketing.

Alice Ackroyd joins the company as Leadership Development & HR Associate, Emma Richards as HR Associate, Mark Jenkinson as Business Technology Associate and Sharon Coull as Finance Associate. Aisha Brannan-Grossett also joins the team as Marketing Associate.

360 Growth Partners works across a range of sectors including leisure, healthcare, engineering, education, marketing services and charitable organisations.



## MUCKLE LLP STRENGTHENS PRIVATE CLIENT TEAM WITH NEW APPOINTMENT

The North East's leading independent law firm for businesses Muckle LLP has strengthened its wills, trusts and estate planning service with a new appointment to its Private Client team.

Specialist Julie Garbutt has joined Muckle's Private Client team as senior associate, from where she will be advising some of the region's leading business owners, senior executives, professionals and other individuals on all aspects of private client services. This includes estate planning, wills, succession, inheritance tax, family trusts, powers of attorney and probate.

Julie has over 20 years' experience in this field of law, having previously worked at Sintons and Dickinson Dees. She is a member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners and is a Mencap recommended panel solicitor.

Julie said: "I am delighted to join the Muckle LLP Private Client team and I am very much looking forward to working with everyone."



## WESCOTT APPOINTS SALES & PROPOSALS MANAGER

Jarrow-based Wescott Industrial Services have appointed Lee Bullock as Sales and Proposals Manager.

Lee, who has returned to his native South Shields after an adventurous career overseas, brings 30 years' experience of the coatings industry to the position having moved from his previous position as Area Manager with Felling-based AkzoNobel.

Lee has worked in the coatings industry from an early age, joining South Shields-based Palmers Corrosion Control after serving his time as a plater in the local shipyards. After eight years, Lee left for work in the Far East but is now returning back to his routes.

Established in 2010, Wescott Industrial Services work primarily in the Offshore, Transport Infrastructure and Industrial Facilities sectors and enjoy an annual turnover of over £5m.



## COMMERCIAL SOLICITOR APPOINTMENT AT MINCOFFS

Newcastle Law Firm Mincoffs Solicitors has recently announced that Anna Allen has joined its Commercial team, after completing her training contract at the firm and successfully qualifying as a solicitor. Anna's appointment demonstrates Mincoffs' continuing commitment to growth with a recent influx of new staff and the team going from strength to strength.

Since joining in September 2016, Anna has become a valued member of the Commercial team. She will now work on a wide range of commercial contracts with particular focus on data protection and privacy law issues.

Prior to joining the firm, Anna graduated with an Upper Second Class Honours degree in Law from Nottingham Trent University. She has also held information governance roles in central government.

## CHARLES PENN JOINS PERSPECTIVE

Chartered Financial Planners Perspective have appointed Charles Penn as their Head of Marketing and Business Development.

Perspective, the new name for Rutherford Wilkinson, have been trusted advisors to countless individuals and businesses in the region for over three decades.

Charles was previously Head of Marketing at Sintons for 10 years, during which time the firm more than doubled in size and became regarded as one of the leading law firms in the North East.

During a 30 year career, Charles has also held senior marketing positions in the UK and abroad with Deloitte Management Consultants and Procter & Gamble.

Trevor Clark, Director of Perspective, said: "We're delighted to have Charles' vast experience in our team. His drive and knowledge of the North East is already proving valuable."



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## PERFORMANCE THROUGH PEOPLE

A recruitment business, like many other things in life, is a results game. Goals, objectives and metrics. Some internal, some external. Recruiters strive to achieve results daily, weekly, monthly and yearly.

It's no surprise then they talk a lot about "performance". How are we doing versus our objectives? Are we down? Up? Achieving? Not achieving? It's a constant battle.

It can also be consuming, exhausting and incredibly negative. If you're becoming preoccupied with what you have to achieve, it is very easy to lose sight of why you got into business in the first place.

"We try really hard not to lose sight of our vision. If you prescribe to the work of Simon Sinek, it's our why," says Andrew Mears, Director at Solutions Recruitment. "If we can keep being the partner of choice at the heart of what and how we do our business, we think we will continue to succeed".

Evidence would suggest their strategy is working. In recent years, the business has thrived; growing its headcount to more than 115 people and successfully establishing operational hubs across the UK and US, whilst also continuing to invest in its North East base.

By keeping their vision clear, the business has supported some of the best known brands in the North East region and globally, delivering appointments for clients in more than 20 countries.

"It's a collective effort," Andrew reflects. "We are a service business and our people are our USP, they are the ones who bring the vision to life every day. That's why when we think about performance, it's not just about capability, its behaviour too".

In explaining what he means, Andrew refers to the All Blacks rugby team and the book 'Legacy' written by James Kerr. In the book, Kerr refers to there being

better rugby players in New Zealand who will never pull on that All Blacks jersey, they just don't have the right behaviours.

He continues: "Our performance as a business has undoubtedly been driven by how we work - our values. The feedback we receive from customers consistently reflects their experience, how it was working with us, and what we are like as a partner. Of course, we get feedback on results, costs and so on, but we've seen the focus on those aspects evolve."

Purchasing decisions are influenced by emotion and not just price or other similar incentives. "Repeat business and customer loyalty are two different things," says Andrew. "We aspire to achieve the latter wherever we can, only then are we being a true partner."

Solutions Recruitment's vision is to be the recruitment partner of choice, based on their



Andrew Mears,  
Director at  
Solutions  
Recruitment

core values of knowledge, service, integrity and pride. With their people, they have put their vision and values at the heart of the business and are delivering the performance as a result.



Solutions Recruitment head  
office in Newcastle

If you're a potential client, candidate or recruitment professional who would like to find out more about Solutions Recruitment, call 0191 221 0402 or visit [www.solrecruit.co.uk](http://www.solrecruit.co.uk)

# HOW TO TAKE CHARGE OF YOUR CAREER



BMC's Senior Marketing Consultant, Will Smith

**BMC Recruitment Group's Senior Marketing Consultant, Will Smith, explains what marketers should be considering - before they leap into their next career move.**

**Career success within the marketing profession really depends on people understanding your impact.**

When I'm working with marketing candidates, the one thing I ask them about is the direct impact they have made – can they demonstrate a successful ROI from the marketing budget?

It's a competitive marketplace for any marketer, and to stand out you need to prove that you are driving the business forward – you may have raised brand profile and driven awareness for your employer, but has this translated into direct results from a sales perspective? Consider your worth and what you bring to the table.

The bottom line is that you need to ensure marketing is contributing to the company's

objectives. Marketers face continual business change, and need to respond to this by being proactive yet measured in their activity – ensuring every penny of the marketing budget is accounted for. Overall, it's how you adapt your focus and demonstrate a positive impact to the business that matters.

Marketing is an extremely important function of any business, from start-ups to global PLC's, widely regarded as an integral component supporting businesses to achieve their goals.

If you are in the process of re-evaluating your career, take a step back and think about where you want to be. What kind of marketing career do you want? Do you have your heart set on a particular sector? Do you see yourself as an in-house

marketing professional or a creative agency guru?

I'm regularly asked by my candidates about how they can successfully transfer between sectors – while there is no set answer, I tend to advise that the skills, knowledge and experience the candidate has gained can readily translate into different sectors – highlighting to employers, the value of the skills and knowledge the candidate offers rather than just sector-specific experience.

Whatever the direction you wish to take your career in, it is worthwhile researching career paths, get advice from your peers or a trusted recruiter.

In my view, the marketing professionals I have met who possess a clear vision and understand the steps to success – succeed!

**Looking to move into a new role within the marketing sector? Email: [will.smith@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com](mailto:will.smith@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com) or call 0191 432 6817 or 07984 637078.**

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Bryony Gibson

## VALUES-BASED RECRUITMENT

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, talks about the importance of matching company values and personal beliefs during the recruitment process.

Only 15% of adults in full-time employment claim to be engaged at work, according to Gallup's 'State of the Global Workplace' report.

The survey covers millions of people from more than 150 countries and implies that there is an incredible amount of wasted potential preventing companies from creating the high performing cultures they need to succeed.

Of course, corporate culture has always been important but, as today's workplace continues to change and evolve, it is becoming increasingly critical for businesses that are looking to make productivity gains.

A company's culture defines the environment in which employees work and the way they make decisions. It's the personality of a business and is made up of the most commonly shared values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours in a team.

Personal values are much harder to train than technical skills, and this is why many recruiters now give precedence to those who align with a company's vision and values, management style and team ethics; providing they have the aptitude to be successful.

It's also why many of the most successful companies in the world include values-based interviews as part of their recruitment process.

While the competency to do the job is clearly still important, being able to understand a person's motivation is the only way you can truly hope to ascertain whether or not they will fit well within a team and go on to thrive.

In order to use values-based techniques to find your next star employee, during the interview process it's vital that you provide an opportunity for candidates to showcase their character. If done well, this will help you to understand whether their priorities match your goals and what it is that drives their behaviour.

As a recruiter, your mission is to find the perfect person and in an interview the best candidates will be well prepared and ready to make a good impression. With their guard up, it's your job to get under their skin and find out what they're really like.

The key is to build a strong rapport from the start. If people trust you, they'll relax and that will make it easier for the conversation to flow in to topics they haven't previously rehearsed.

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

Try opening with a request for their personal and

professional goals; and how they see the role fitting in with these.

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

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

Of course these are just a few examples. You will need to develop a series of your own questions that match your company's 'non-negotiable' values, but whatever you end up with, don't forget that interviews are a chance to find out more for both parties.

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

And if you're preparing for a values-based interview, you should plan to be questioned about your personal beliefs. Make sure you do your research by, at the very least, reading the organisation's mission statement and reviewing the core values on their website and, when the questions start to probe deeper, be prepared to talk openly about your experiences and feelings. That way both parties should find what they are looking for.

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](mailto:bryony@bryonygibson.com) | (0191) 375 9983.



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The team in Kirima

## BENEFITING BUSINESS WHILE BENEFITING SOCIETY

How can businesses make sure that overseas CSR programmes really are benefiting everyone involved? A new strategic partnership between destination management company, Madventure International and Newcastle-based Gradvert has the answer.

In April 2018, a team of 16 staff from Siemens Corporate Finance Audit travelled to Kirima, Kenya, to build flushing toilets, sports and play equipment for the village's primary school. The programme provided leaders in the organisation with the opportunity to develop new skills, enhance relationships and benefit the business while also benefiting society.

The value to the local community were clear: by the end of the two weeks, the 420 pupils at St Paul's primary school had access to clean, safe sanitation and new sports facilities. But how can the impact on individual Siemens staff, teams, and the wider organisation be measured?

While Siemens' partnership with destination management company Madventure International, which organises annual overseas development programmes, has been in place for seven years, this was the first year that Madventure worked in partnership with Newcastle-based Gradvert to measure the impact of the trip.

Gradvert specialises in improving business performance by improving people, and has formed a strategic partnership with Madventure International to offer tailored CSR leadership, training and development programmes overseas.

Gradvert's diagnostic tool offered a 360° approach to measuring business impact, using a mixture of pre and post-trip interviews to record progress made towards Siemens' medium and long term goals. Qualitative and quantitative data demonstrated how Siemens team members worked towards personal and corporate objectives and how they will utilise the experience back in the workplace.

Michaela Reaney, Managing Director of Gradvert said: "Measuring the success of projects like this is key. By bringing together Madventure's expertise in planning overseas projects, and Gradvert's knowledge of developing people, we have created a model for CSR programmes which clearly demonstrates the impact on a business and its people."

The overall aim of the group was to contribute to the wellbeing of the community in Kirima while also building opportunities to improve teamwork, leadership and communication skills. For Siemens overall, a mixture of tangible and intangible benefits were measured, including the ability to attract future talent, boosts to employee morale, and staff members developing new capabilities.

The team set to work building foundations and

walls to create a new septic tank for the school and two more buildings were built to accommodate 12 toilets. All works were carried out manually: digging and removing earth with a human chain system; unloading truckloads of sand, stone and steel; mixing concrete; and transporting building materials around the site in order to complete the building work on time.

The team also went the extra mile, fundraising €15,000 to also create football, volleyball and netball pitches for the school. A welder (one of 43 local people employed during the project) built goals and nets and the new facilities were put to the test with a sports event with the volunteers and the pupils.

At the end of the two weeks the 360° diagnostic tool also pinpointed opportunities to further align future CSR programmes with the organisation's core values and extend the benefits of such programmes once employees are back in their roles.

"Too often we work with those we know," said one of the volunteers after the trip had been completed, "These past two weeks I've worked with new people. It was refreshing and inspiring."

Find out more at [www.gradvert.com](http://www.gradvert.com)



L-R: Christie Rawlings, Head of External Affairs of Heathrow Airport, David Coppock, North East Regional Director of the Department for International Trade, Samantha Davidson, Managing Director of Horizon Works, James Ramsbotham, Chief Executive of the North East England Chamber of Commerce, Phil Wilson, MP of Sedgefield.

## FUNDING AWARD OPENS A WORLD OF OPPORTUNITY FOR HORIZON WORKS

A North-East based B2B marketing agency has been awarded funding to support its exporting activities in North America after winning a grant from Heathrow's World of Opportunity SME Grants Programme.

Horizon Works is one of only 20 companies throughout the whole of the UK to have been awarded funding as part of Heathrow Airport's World of Opportunity programme.

In partnership with the Department for International Trade, the World of Opportunity programme aims to provide 20 SMEs across the UK with the financial boost needed to explore and develop export opportunities through trade missions, trade shows or market research. When departing from Heathrow, the SMEs will also be provided with a Plaza Premium lounge pass.

Established more than eight years ago, Horizon Works specialises in working with B2B organisations from innovation-led industries such as manufacturing, engineering, healthcare, life sciences and technology. It delivers and covers a multitude of services for its clients from marketing, strategy, and PR to digital and design and has a multi-disciplined team of writers, designers, digital experts, and public relations, communications and marketing specialists.

After a period of sustained growth and having recently rebranded, Horizon Works is now acting on its international growth ambitions as it continues to add to its ongoing client base. Horizon Works has been working with its first overseas client, Ohio-based AmeriWater - which provides premium water treatment equipment - for almost

a year, and the funding will allow the Newcastle-headquartered agency to further capitalise on this.

Ohio is a key manufacturing hub in the United States and is the home of a concentration of launchpad for its growth in North America. The grant will support Horizon Works in engaging with key industry networks based in Ohio such as America Makes, which aims to accelerate the adoption of additive manufacturing technologies in the US manufacturing sector and to increase domestic manufacturing competitiveness.

By becoming members of key networks such as this, Horizon Works will gain access to a diverse range of manufacturing businesses, based both in Ohio and surrounding States, and it will also allow the business to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the manufacturing market in North America.

Samantha Davidson, Managing Director of Horizon Works commented: "We are absolutely delighted to receive this funding and cannot thank Heathrow and the Department for International Trade enough. It is fantastic that they are helping UK businesses (particularly SMEs) to export and reach their full potential.

"This opportunity will benefit us massively by helping us to capitalise on our international growth, especially in light of us recently securing

our first overseas client and we are excited to see the opportunities that this will create for Horizon Works."

Emma Gilthorpe, Heathrow's Executive Expansion Director said: "We're thrilled to be working with the DIT for the second year to support these entrepreneurs as they look to expand their business abroad. Our airport plays a crucial role connecting British people, goods and services to the world, and now with the World of Opportunity programme we're able to help these businesses as they begin their exporting journeys."

David Coppock, Regional Director of the North East Department for International Trade commented: "I'm delighted to see Horizon Works win this national award and act as an exemplar for internationalising their business ... it is also great to see the drive and enthusiasm to work with partners such as DIT here and in market to increase their sales globally."

Horizon Works boasts a diverse set of clients which serve an international client base such as Murgitroyd, a global firm of European patent attorneys and trade mark attorneys, Parker Bioscience Filtration Division, a global leader in filtration solutions and Fera, which works across plant and bee health, crop protection, sustainable agriculture, food and feed quality, and chemical safety in the environment.

For further information please contact Horizon Works on 0345 075 5955, email [hello@horizonworks.co.uk](mailto:hello@horizonworks.co.uk) or visit [www.horizonworks.co.uk](http://www.horizonworks.co.uk)



## ELRO MODELS NOW AVAILABLE THROUGH PUMP SCRAPPAGE SCHEME

Billingham-based pump distributor and manufacturer Tomlinson Hall is now offering ELRO stationary and mobile peristaltic pumps through its innovative £99 for 99 scrappage scheme.

Launched at the start of 2018 to celebrate the company's 99th year in business, the scrappage scheme allows end users to replace older pumps with more energy efficient solutions and support the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) in the process.

Under Tomlinson Hall's £99 for 99 initiative, the firm is giving £99 to any company which replaces any old pump on their UK premises with a new ELRO pump, which will be supplied by Tomlinson Hall. The firm will safely dispose of the old pump and the scrap value of each pump replaced will be donated to the RNLI. The scheme will run until the end of the year.

Pump users can either take their scrap pumps to Tomlinson Hall's premises for disposal or Tomlinson Hall's specialist engineering team will deinstall the pumps on the customer's site.

The RNLI, which has lifeboat stations in Redcar and Hartlepool near to Tomlinson Hall's Teesside headquarters, will benefit from every pump scrapped as part of the scheme.

The ELRO range of pumps are designed and manufactured by CRANE, for which Tomlinson Hall is the sole UK distributor. A major presence in the positive displacement pump market, they are renowned for their ability to operate in demanding conditions and for handling challenging pumping operations.

Colin Simpson, Business Development Director of Tomlinson Hall, said: "By offering ELRO stationary and mobile peristaltic pumps through our £99 for 99 scrappage scheme, we can help even more businesses to replace older, potentially inefficient pumps with state-of-the-art pump technology, and make a positive impact on their running costs and carbon footprint."



## GRADUATES GAIN ON THE KOMATSU FAST TRACK

Ground-breaking graduates are moving through the ranks at Komatsu. Stuart Tomlinson, 27, and Maria Dimova, 28, both recently gained promotions to Senior Quality Engineer and Senior Production Engineer respectively, having progressed rapidly since being recruited fresh from university.

Stuart, who joined the firm directly from his Mechanical Engineering degree at Newcastle University, puts his rapid progress down to the variety of roles within the business. Meanwhile, Maria graduated from Durham University with a degree in Mechanical Engineering in 2012 and has been with Komatsu since 2014.

Komatsu's two-year graduate programme provides new starters with five-months' experience in the five main engineering departments: quality, planning, purchasing, design and production.

Tracey Bowman, Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs at Komatsu, said: "Stuart and Maria have worked incredibly hard since arriving at Komatsu. They have gained fantastic achievements that are a testimony to their drive and capability."



## INVESTMENT IN TALENT CONTINUES AS QUALITY MANAGER IS APPOINTED

Jarrow-based engineering specialist UTS Group has announced the appointment of Richard Atkins as quality manager.

Richard has vast experience, including having been project quality engineer at TechnipFMC Umbilicals Ltd. UTS, which was established in 2001 by Managing Director Shaun Sadler, has grown to over 200 staff and continues to expand. The firm also recently invested £750,000 in a 50,000 sq ft facility in Newport to meet increasing demand from its clients in the utility, industrial and commercial markets.

Shaun said: "We welcome Richard at an exciting time for the business. He is a fresh addition to the management team, bringing new ideas and enthusiasm to his area of responsibility. We have invested heavily in the business and my aim is to continue to build on the strong foundations that we have in place by bringing in experienced talent to complement our very loyal workforce."

The **B2B** Marketing Specialists

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**HORIZONWORKS**

## AKZONOBEL VOLUNTEERS HELP NORTH EAST TOURISTS TO WALK LIKE ROMANS



AkzoNobel volunteers on the Hadrian's Wall Trail Path in Northumberland National Park.

Both important to the region's economy, both colossal in size and both built to withstand the test of time, AkzoNobel's state-of-the-art paint factory in Ashington has more in common with Hadrian's Wall World Heritage Site than you might at first think.

As part of its innovative partnership with Northumberland National Park Authority, staff from AkzoNobel have been completing restoration work along the Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail to help improve access so more visitors can enjoy the region's historical treasure.

Groups of volunteers have been giving up their weekends and hours during the week to clear the Trail path and lift and re-lay a number of the flagstones so they are safer and easier for people to walk on. They have also got hands-on with some general landscaping and labour, building steps into the hillside so that it's safer for visitors to access some of the more rolling landscapes.

"This is the second big piece of project work that we have gotten involved with since we launched our partnership with Northumberland National Park," said Jeff Hope, head of manufacturing unit at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"Hadrian's Wall is an incredible piece of architecture and we are very fortunate to have it right here on our doorstep. The team at AkzoNobel is delighted to be able to help out in any way that we can with the conservation of this fantastic ancient monument.

"We were really keen to get stuck into a few more demanding projects", added Andy Darling, maintenance engineer at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"It was great to work alongside the Ranger team from the National Park and it makes me proud knowing that it was AkzoNobel that completed the work each time I'm out walking in the area."

Pre-dating AkzoNobel by some 2,000 years, Hadrian's Wall marks the northernmost perimeter of the Roman Empire. Stretching for 73 miles across Northern England and taking 14 years to complete, the Wall was granted UNESCO World Heritage status in 1987. The National Trail follows the line of the Wall across the landscape from Bowness-on-Solway on the West coast to Wallsend in the East.

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



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“

*...My team deserve to be recognised  
for their meticulous work...*

”



## LEAH BARRETT

Service Operations Director

Leah Barrett is the Service Operations Director at Northern Gas & Power Ltd. Leah brings a potent blend of entrepreneurial flair, business acumen and a dynamic approach to all elements of the NGP service department. With particular expertise in building leadership presence and a wealth of operational experience in the Energy Industry, she now delivers cutting edge compliance standards through coaching, training and strategic implementation across the business.

After joining Northern Gas & Power in 2016 as a Sales Team Manager, Leah has proven herself a driven and capable leader. Subsequent to developing a hugely successful team of energy experts at the NGP Head Office, she rose to the challenge set to her by the Managing Director to bring something more to the table. Two years later, Leah is now the Service Operations Director. The largest standalone team in the Northern Gas & Power network, which has recently been highly commended on a national platform at the Energy Efficiency Awards 2018 for Quality Management, Compliance & Training.

### **CONGRATULATIONS ON BEING RECOGNISED AT THE NATIONAL AWARDS. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ACHIEVE THIS?**

"Business energy is not as regulated as it should be and in a world where sometimes the "close" of a sale is more important than that of quality and compliance, I aimed to address systems and working practices to ensure NGP remained the first choice for corporate clients. My aim is to set the standard for other consultancies to aspire to across the industry."

"We, as a business have meticulously broken down

the journey of an agreed energy contract and have identified and resolved potential issues along the way; we have identified how things can be done more efficiently and securely, to ensure the best possible standards for our customers and suppliers. After many impact assessments and reassessing processes, I have designed a robust compliance process and have developed an incredible team. My team deserve to be recognised for their meticulous work, all of whom completely understand the absolute importance of the work they do on a daily basis."

### **WHAT IS BEHIND YOUR RAPID SUCCESS AT NORTHERN GAS & POWER?**

"I would say, drive, determination and integrity are the three main contributing factors to my professional approach to success. Within this industry, the only constant is change and my ability to recognise change, adapt and implement processes to protect customers from adverse change has allowed me to grow rapidly within a very innovative and forward thinking company. I thrive on being challenged to deliver a quality service in an ever changing market. Challenging my team to problem solve is important to me, to find more efficient and effective solutions.

'Work smarter' is a philosophy instilled by the Managing Director across the business, along with pushing the boundaries of our comfort zone, to continuously push for personal development and improvement. I embrace this philosophy and promote it across my department.

I'd like to thank NGP for providing me the working environment and support to develop the most efficient, effective and quality focussed service department in the industry."

# TYNESIDE CAFÉ IS ENTREPRENEUR'S RECIPE FOR BUSINESS SUCCESS



Aidan at work in the kitchen

Northern Insight charts the journey of a talented restaurateur from Gateshead College student to successful business owner...

When Aidan Jackson embarked on a professional cookery course at Gateshead College in 2012, little did he know it would be the springboard to a thriving business venture. Six years on, the talented entrepreneur from Washington is heading up Aidan's Kitchen, a quirky café serving quality, locally sourced food and beverages.

It's been a steep learning curve for the 22-year-old but he's looking to the future with confidence.

He said: "There's a gap in the market for this type of café in Sandyford. I wanted to create a relaxed environment so that customers feel as though they're dining in their own living room. I'm already thinking of ways to expand the business, perhaps by extending our opening hours and introducing a supper club if there's sufficient demand for it. Eventually I want to open a second outlet somewhere in the North East."

Aidan's interest in food was ignited during his childhood, when he enjoyed making cakes for visitors at his local church fayre. After finishing his GCSEs he completed professional cookery and patisserie courses at Gateshead College, where he learned how to make complex pastry products

and prepare and cook other tasty dishes. He also acquired a sound knowledge of food service, food hygiene and workplace health and safety. Another member of Aidan's team, kitchen assistant Lee Swainston, also completed the professional cookery and patisserie courses at Gateshead College, which has provided dozens of fledgling entrepreneurs with a route to business success.

After leaving college in 2014, Aidan worked in several local eateries including an Italian restaurant and Jesmond-based ARLO bistro and café, where he honed his culinary talents under the wing of renowned head chef Brian James. This experience, along with the skills and knowledge acquired at college, gave him the confidence to go solo and launch his own venture.

Set in a relaxed environment with a contemporary twist, the Sandyford-based café sells tastebud-tempting treats ranging from a traditional full English breakfast to harissa spiced tomato and pepper stew, smashed avocado with red chillies, and grilled chorizo and halloumi flatbread. For those with a sweet tooth, there's also a wide selection of cakes, scones and other tasty desserts on offer.

Aidan is quick to highlight his education as a key catalyst for getting his venture off the ground.

"The Gateshead College courses gave me the skills and confidence I needed to work in the industry," he said. "The tutors really helped and encouraged me to pursue my ambitions, which I'm now doing. Lee has also completed the same courses at the college, so I knew he'd have the right skills and enthusiasm when I recruited him."

Chris Toon, deputy principal at Gateshead College, said: "Aidan is a shining example of what can be achieved through talent, hard work and a good education. Our curriculum is designed to cater for the needs of industry and our courses equip our students with the real-world skills to make a positive difference in the business arena."

"It's vital to keep pushing the message that technical education is just as important as academic qualifications. In Aidan's case, the vocational skills he acquired at our college have helped him to fulfil his dreams. I'm sure his business will be a roaring success; everyone at Gateshead College is very proud of him."

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



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## HERE'S TO THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Five years goes by in the blink of an eye but what can be achieved in this time can be of historic significance and can last for generations.

Planning for the next five years has been the focus of NE1's efforts for the past few months, running in tandem with the practical delivery of our existing plans, programmes and events during what has been an extremely busy summer for NE1 in Newcastle. Our BID renewal proposals for another five-year term were published at the beginning of September with copies of the plan landing on the desks of our 1,400 business members at the start of the month.

Our business plan outlines our vision for Newcastle and the opportunities that lie ahead for the city and wider North East, seeking business buy-in for another NE1 term. Over the last few months we have made over 30,000 direct contacts with our business members and we are confident that our voters feel the same way as we do and are as excited about the future as we are.

We know that Newcastle is on the cusp of something very special and it's an exciting time for businesses and for the people of the city, but we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. Support from the city's business community is essential to provide us with a strong mandate to push forward and deliver our ambitious plans. The key message from businesses during our extensive consultations has been to keep being ambitious and to strive for quality in all that we do – this approach and the hopes expressed by businesses for the future have helped shape our business proposals and plans. We believe our plan will deliver this and are urging businesses to vote 'yes' so together we can maintain the gains of the past and secure £10 million investment for Newcastle's future.

We are proud of what we've achieved over the last ten years at NE1 Ltd and are confident that our members feel the same way. Without NE1, there would be no Alive after Five and the early evening economy that has generated an estimated £839 million for the city with 13.7 million extra visitors. Similarly, it would be questionable whether other major capital investment initiatives like the Newcastle Central Station Gateway project, NE1 Newcastle City Marina and the Bigg Market regeneration project would ever have got off the ground without NE1 championing the cause.

At times like these it would be helpful to have Jacob Marley and his three Ghosts from Dickens' 'A Christmas Carol'. With their insight we could present

a picture of Newcastle's past, present and future with and without NE1 Ltd and the Business Improvement District Company. Without our focus on creating the best possible environment for the city's businesses to thrive and providing the backdrop for economic growth and prosperity in Newcastle and the wider city, Newcastle would be an entirely different city with a different set of challenges to face.

A look into the future without NE1 would also see a city failing to build on the gains of the last ten years and losing the momentum that has been building, risking the city's commercial future.

With a 'yes' vote comes a vision, a confidence and a plan to build on our past successes focusing on key themes for the future. Investing in the Quayside is a major goal, and we plan to transform the iconic riverside into a world-class destination developing a waterfront and a brand to rival the likes of Melbourne and Copenhagen. Ambitious plans to position Newcastle as a leading digital city is another key target, with a strategy to work with businesses and other key partners to deliver faster internet connection speeds and better, free WiFi for visitors as well as lobbying for increased investment and support for the Smart Cities Agenda.

Playing to our city strengths and delivering further investment in Newcastle's retail core would be another major cornerstone of NE1's next generation focus. Creating a retail destination of national and international significance with better pedestrian links and a higher density of independent retail and leisure businesses are our target. We had a glimpse of what could be achieved with our summer trials of family friendly parklets on Northumberland Street and Blackett Street and with a ringing endorsement for businesses and a yes vote, this would form the routemap for the city's future.

Getting the basics right is another key strand of our plans for the future, ensuring Newcastle is

cleaner, greener and safer. We will deliver this by incorporating greening and sustainability into the fabric of the city and into all physical projects to create a better trading environment for NE1 businesses, their employees, residents, tourists and other city visitors.

Major events and animating the city have always been a priority for NE1 and we would continue this into a new term. Identifying and attracting major events to the city such as the Rugby Football League's Magic Weekend and concerts at St James' Park will continue to be a crucial part of NE1's role in supporting its business members.

Continuing to invest in NE1's established annual events programme including Newcastle Restaurant Week, Newcastle Motor Show, Screen on the Green and Quayside Seaside as well as looking to transform Newcastle's Christmas experience would form the mainstay of NE1's highly successful events programme into the future. And, championing the city and raising its profile at a regional, national and an international level would be NE1's lifelong goal.

We are unabashed in our efforts to encourage and persuade the city's business community to keep the faith and vote for us for another five-year term. We will be shouting it from the rooftops over the next couple of months and will encourage our supporters to do the same. In our first ballot in 2008 we had a 58% turnout with 67% in favour, in our second ballot in 2013 we had a 68% turnout and 78% in favour – this year, we hope for a similar or improved result.

With voting now underway we are excited about the city's future and hope NE1 has a role to play in helping shape and decide what that future looks like. Assuming we succeed in the renewal vote, Newcastle will have the NE1 BID through until 2024. Over that period I'm confident our delivery will continue to be transformational for the city.





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★ ★  
ABC 9TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS DINNER ★ TIME TO SHINE  
★ ★

## REGION'S RICH DIVERSITY CELEBRATED AT AWARDS



Ammar Mirza CBE

The diverse and inclusive contribution of the North-East's Asian community to the region's economic and business success was recently celebrated at a glittering and colourful awards ceremony.

The 9th Asian Business Connexions (ABC) Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony (in association with Gainford Group) took place at The County Hotel in Newcastle with headline speaker, Nusrat Ghani MP, the Under-Secretary of State at the Department of Transport addressing the sold-out event.

The event was organised by ABC, a Not for Profit Social Enterprise which next year will celebrate a decade of connecting, supporting and promoting the Asian and wider community throughout the North-East. The awards event featured success stories from all across the region focussing on diversity and inclusion with an emphasis on the growing role and contribution of Asian females in business.

Host for the evening, Ammar Mirza CBE, serial entrepreneur and founder of the event's charity recipients, the PIE Project (Primary Inspiration through Enterprise) said: "This has been a wonderful celebration that clearly shows the rich diversity and talent that we have in our region. I am particularly proud of the fact that we have featured so many successful Asian females which clearly demonstrates how we embrace and cherish equality. From business, to arts and culture and through to the public and professional sectors

our female finalists have certainly done the whole community proud through their ambitions and aspirational attitude.

"Our headline speaker, Nusrat Ghani MP is a great role model to us all. A Muslim female Minister of Pakistani descent, she has demonstrated that regardless of your background, our country provides everyone the opportunity to thrive through hard work and determination."

Other highlights of the celebratory evening included a speech by Mr S.M Chakraborty from the Indian High Commission whose work with ABC to encourage bi-lateral trade links with India has already started to make a significant impact within the region.

Mandeep Kaur (Sikh Chaplain for the Armed Forces) and Major Naveed Muhammad MBE explained how the Armed Forces are now an inclusive and forward-thinking organisation that recognises the importance of diversity in an ever-changing world. Closer to home, the Federation of Asian Business (FAB) made up of North East, North West and Yorkshire Asian Business Associations highlighted their ongoing work representing the whole of the Northern Powerhouse.

A lifetime achievement award sponsored by The

Gainsford Group was presented to Shahda Khan MBE, Strategic Cohesion & Migration Manager at Middlesbrough Council for her work which has benefited the community particularly within the fields of diversity, inclusion and equality.

Summing up a very successful awards celebration Mr Mirza said: "The role of ABC is to connect and support all Asian businesses and others wanting to engage with them, locally, nationally and internationally. Our awards have highlighted the significant contributions which we as the Asian community continue to make. We don't do this in isolation however but through integration, understanding and a true partnership working. This is shown once again by the tremendous support we've received from our partners and stakeholders' who have come together to help us celebrate this success."

Keynote speaker, Nusrat Ghani MP was delighted to support the North East and Asian Business Connexions by attending the celebration event.

"Newcastle was buzzing at the Asian Business Connexions awards for Asian trailblazers in the North-East. Thank you for allowing me to give the keynote speech at your celebrations," she said, "I was very impressed by what I discovered on the night."

[www.abconnexions.org](http://www.abconnexions.org)

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## ABC AWARDS

The winners of awards on the night representing a wide range of businesses and organisations from the Tyne to the Tees were:

### **Independent Award Sponsored by Brewin Dolphin**

Sabrina Din- Teacher,  
Time Day Care Nurseries – Middlesbrough and  
Stockton

### **Arts & Culture Award Sponsored by Newcastle College**

Tahmina Begum – Tahmina Arts

### **Public Sector Awards Sponsored by Unison**

Lt Col Ben Banerjee Deputy Commander South  
& Asma Shafi – Deputy Principal Prior Pursglove  
College Guisborough

### **Professional Awards Sponsored by Northumberland County Council**

Prof Sugata Mitra Newcastle University

### **Business Awards Sponsored by Northumbria University Business School**

Behroz Beni Managing Director Prima Cheese

### **Lifetime Achievement Award Sponsored by Gainford Group**

Shahda Khan Middlesbrough



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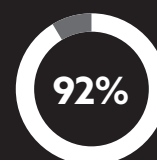
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## GETTING WOMEN ON BOARD

Successful North East business woman Linda Hitman, CEO of Exclusive Business is backing the gender equality issue.

Anyone who has attended business meetings over the past decade or so will have noticed that there has been a steady increase in the number of women who are now representing companies, local authorities, charities etc.

However, it is still widely accepted that the number of women present on the boards of these organisations is still stubbornly low. The vast majority of board meetings continue to feature a high percentage of men.

In a bid to address this problem, Linda Hitman of Exclusive Business has organised a conference...the Boardroom Diversity Conversation...to investigate the issue of how get to more women into senior roles, enabling them to then step up to board level. Linda, a well-known figure on the North East business scene said..."I believe it is important to get men and women into an environment where experiences can be shared, questions asked and allow a discussion on how to start to address the imbalance."

It is too easy to suggest that women are being overlooked on purpose. There are other reasons and, crucially, there are solutions. Delegates will also hear how diversity is beneficial for any company.

The objective behind the Boardroom Diversity Conversation is to explore those reasons and solutions. There will be guidance from guest speakers who have been involved in research or have experience in appointing women. Delegates will also hear from women who've achieved senior boardroom positions within companies and organisations. You will hear of their experiences along the way.

The event, staged at Ramside Hall Hotel on the outskirts of Durham on November 7th gets underway with a welcome from Dr. Joanna Berry of Durham University Business School. There will be a discussion between panel members who include Katie Marshall (Head of Corporate and Legal and Company Secretary at Virgin Money); Kerrin Wilson (Assistant Chief Constable of Lincolnshire Police); Gary Lumby (MD of Focus on Success); Andy Armitage (Regional Director at Lloyds TSB), and Herb Kim (Board Director of Tech City).

The panel members have been instrumental in their sector at championing boardroom diversity. They will each speak for 15 minutes after which there will be ample time for questions from the floor.

"Women have been absent from (or worse, invisible

in) too many boardrooms for far too long," said Dr. Joanna Berry. "While there is an increasing awareness of their absence and the potential benefits of their presence, there is still too much cynicism about this issue and too many tokenistic appointments being made. Women have a very definite place in the boardroom and a huge beneficial impact on both culture and the bottom line of a company."

In other words, appointing women to be board members should not be done merely to tick the numbers box; the appointment of any director, female or male, needs to be done for the benefit of the company or organisation, and as Gary Lumby from Focus on Success comments, having a mix of skills and experience is invariably a recipe for success.

"There is clear evidence from the experiences of businesses overseas in places such as Norway but also here in the UK, that boards with a diverse mix of specialisms and backgrounds enable a business to make better decisions. In my experience.....all businesses would benefit from an external viewpoint no matter what the background or gender of that

person so long as it was a position gained on merit." Katie Marshall from Virgin Money says that diversity is a major aim across her company.

"We have made gender balance a strategic priority because we believe a gender balanced workforce at all levels will undoubtedly improve culture, outcomes, profitability and productivity. To achieve this, leaders need to take responsibility and lead from the front."

The Boardroom Diversity Conversation is an opportunity for businesses seeking to generate greater diversity to gain an insight into how to achieve this and introduce best practice. It is also for those seeking to make the move to a senior role or into a boardroom position who need support, advice and guidance to help them take this next step in their career.



To book tickets which cost £25 go to [www.eventbrite.co.uk](http://www.eventbrite.co.uk) and type Boardroom Diversity into the events box.

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**Booking now for Monday 29th October**

**Speaker - Stefan Lepkowski, Karol Marketing Group**

**Venue -** Jesmond Dene House, Newcastle upon Tyne

**Date -** Monday 29th October, 12 noon

**Price -** £50pp to include a two-course lunch and coffee

**With over 30 years' experience in business, Karol Marketing founder & Managing Director, Stefan Lepkowski, will give a frank talk on business, his successes and failures and a roller coaster ride of a personal journey.**

Entitled, "Look what I lost - A story of foolishness and fortune" his story tells the tale of losing his family fortune in Poland, to a chance meeting with the founder of Berghaus on a mountainside in Corsica.

He will tell the inspirational story that has shaped him to be the successful business leader and entrepreneur he is now. Be prepared for an honest and emotional re-telling.



**Booking now for Monday 5th November**

**Speaker - Matt Scott, Navada Studios**

**Venue -** Jesmond Dene House, Newcastle upon Tyne

**Date -** Monday 5th November, 12 noon

**Price -** £50pp to include a two-course lunch and coffee

**Navada Studios have just created 50 new Digital Media channels across every vertical to build a global audience of 100's of millions of people.**

They are working on delivering major projects in Hollywood including immersive projects.

Matt is a passionate speaker, a highly creative talent and sought after globally for his ability to convey a story, however challenging the subject matter. Matt is lined up to deliver two keynote presentations, at Sigma the largest gaming event in the world later in November. Be prepared for an honest, emotional and engaging presentation.

Limited places available - contact Linda Hitman to reserve your space, [Linda@exclusivebusiness.net](mailto:Linda@exclusivebusiness.net)

**Diary Dates:** Monday 26th November, Jon Chadwick – Durham Distillery – Jesmond Dene House

Monday 3rd December, Tony Robinson OBE – Enterprise Rockers – Wynyard Hall

Monday 28th January, Sir Peter Vardy DL – The Vardy Foundation – Jesmond Dene House

Monday 7th January, Alistair Waite – Altec Engineering – Wynyard Hall

[www.exclusivebusiness.net](http://www.exclusivebusiness.net)



[www.northern-insight.co.uk](http://www.northern-insight.co.uk)

INSPIRING CONVERSATION OVER A FINE LUNCH



## EXCLUSIVE LUNCH CLUB

There was a great turn out for the September, Exclusive Business, Northern Insight lunch club held at Jesmond Dene House. Guest speaker, Ammar Mirza delivered a powerful presentation and inspired the room. Next event Monday 29th October



# EXCLUSIVE

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## BOARDROOM DIVERSITY CONVERSATION

### JOIN OUR PANEL OF EXPERTS



**Andy Armitage**

Brand Distribution Director TSB E & W North



**Herb Kim:**

Found of the Thinking Digital Conference



**Kerrin Wilson:**

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**Gary Lumby**

Managing Director of Focus on Success Ltd,  
Non Exec Director for several SME's



**Katie Marshall**

Head of Corporate (Legal) and Company  
Secretary Virgin Money



**Joanna Berry**

Associate Professor Entrepreneurship,  
Durham University

As a cohesive group, MEN and WOMEN can address the balance in the boardroom, we encourage ALL those who would like to make a difference to attend our event and join the conversation, be a part of the North East agenda to be LEADERS in CHANGING MINDSETS!

Our panel of experts will answer your question's, reserve your place now! and add your support to this important initiative.

**Wednesday, November 7th, Ramside Hall, Durham DH1 1TD**

9.30am Registration/networking coffee and breakfast pastries

10.00am Introduction & Speaker Panel

11.30am Coffee

11.45am Question & Answer Session

12.30pm - 13.00pm Networking

**Price £25.00 inclusive VAT ...Tickets available via Eventbrite or visit [www.exclusivebusiness.net](http://www.exclusivebusiness.net)**

For more details visit: [www.exclusivebusiness.net](http://www.exclusivebusiness.net) or to book a place - email [Linda@exclusivebusiness.net](mailto:Linda@exclusivebusiness.net)

# 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...

## RYAN FOSTER

Founder and creative director of RFD, e-commerce design experts specialising in the Shopify Plus platform, which powers some of the world's fastest growing leisure and lifestyle brands.

### DID YOU ALWAYS ENVISAGE A CAREER IN THE INDUSTRY?

The internet was in its infancy, so jobs like mine didn't exist when I started work. My first job was installing touch screens in museums and galleries, and as the internet started to take off I could see the opportunities. I'd like to say I've always had a masterplan but the reality is my career evolved alongside technological advances, combined with a dash of luck and being in the right place at the right time.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE ASPECT OF THE JOB?

Because technology makes it possible to work seamlessly from anywhere, our clients are based all over the world, and so are our staff. I'm lucky to be able to live in the North East yet work with international brands. I love being able to walk into the offices of a client in Hong Kong, the US or Germany and it's just business as usual for everyone. We really are 'team everywhere'.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR CAREER DEFINING MOMENT?

Working with US West Coast start-ups taught me all about scaling, and how to achieve phenomenal growth. That prompted me to start my own business and gave me the confidence to set up a niche UK agency that was a real strategic partner rather than simply a design agency.

### HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

By the calibre of clients we attract, and their success. We have just launched a new ecommerce website for Victoria Beckham's fashion brand, and we helped active wear brand Gymshark's turnover go from £12m to £41m in 12 months, propelling them into the Sunday Times Fast Track 100 at the number one spot. That's such a testament to the RFD team and its ability to help clients attract and retain customers, improve business processes and solve problems.

### WHAT HAVE BEEN THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN THE INDUSTRY SINCE YOU STARTED?

Mobile is now a core element of our daily lives. Technology has democratised business, anyone can start up a business from their bedroom and compete with the big boys, with no need for costly bespoke ecommerce platforms. Niche brands can use technology to create exclusive releases and new collections, and run pop up promotions quickly and easily. The downside is that because the barrier to entry is so low, businesses need to work

with partners who have the knowledge and skills to help them get the fundamentals right to achieve real growth.

### HOW HAS YOUR SKILLSET DEVELOPED ACCORDINGLY?

I've gone from being a designer and coder to someone who manages a team and runs an international business. It's been quite a learning curve. One of the biggest skills I've learned is how to expand conversations and dig deeper into a business to help solve its problems. For instance as well as discussing what the sales targets are for next quarter or next year, we also talk about how to expand the percentage of repeat customers, or how to reduce returns and make the process smoother by rationalising the product information management system.

### ARE YOU A RISK TAKER BY NATURE OR MORE CONSERVATIVE?

I'm not reckless but I'll take a managed risk. The same week I resigned from my job to start my own agency, my partner Louise announced she was pregnant with our first child. Five children and a successful business later, it's paid off, thankfully. You have to be able to spot opportunities and go for them, keep pushing on.

### TO WHAT WOULD YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR SUCCESS?

It might sound cheesy, but Louise is my mainstay. She takes care of everything else so I can run the business. She's my enabler and I'm very grateful for her. We've been together since we were 19 and married for 21 years.

### WHAT'S YOUR BIGGEST WEAKNESS AND HOW HAVE YOU MANAGED THIS?

I find it difficult to switch off from work. I use time management apps, and I'm proactive about planning time off. We try to get away every month for at least a couple of days. It would be really easy to just let my entire life be about work.

### HOW DO YOU REMAIN MOTIVATED?

Doing a great job for our clients is my prime motivator. Being able to help a business turning over £10m into one hitting £100m is such a buzz. I'm also currently managing to put two of my five children through university, only three to go now.

### I'LL RETIRE WHEN.....

See my previous answer!



# ALL MY EMPLOYEES ARE LEAVING! HOW TO SPOT IT AND STOP IT



Jayne Hart

A survey by the North East England Chamber of Commerce found that 45 per cent of firms had faced skills or labour shortages over the last 12 months.

Of these, most sought to address the shortages by increasing investment in recruitment (39 per cent), training (32 per cent) and pay and benefits (24 per cent).

With a skills shortage presenting such a risk to North East employers, more than ever our attention should be drawn to employee retention.

Your employees are jumping ship and you're questioning everything from pay brackets to office décor. From skills shortages, huge handovers and impact on delivery. To recruiting and training new staff. Not to mention the whip round for leaving gifts and emotional goodbyes. It can be a costly occurrence and a draining for all involved.

So, what can employers do to spot the signs and prevent a potential wave of leavers?

Jayne Hart MCIPD, Director of The HR Dept Newcastle, offers up some practical steps you can take to improve employee retention in your business.

## REVISIT RECRUITMENT

Do you have enough steps in your recruitment process to ensure that you are attracting the right people to your roles? From accurately naming job roles to making sure you are matching skill sets and values with specifications, strong recruitment can play a big part in employee retention.

## Invest in 1-2-1 time

Having regular employee reviews is standard practice. If your employee reviews are currently a formal annual affair, you may want to consider introducing some less formal 121s through the year.

Explore how are they handling their current responsibilities? Are they working well in their team? Could training be beneficial? Discussing these issues should give you some indication to their current happiness at work and their intentions to progress within the business.

## MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES

Seek to receive feedback on the way things are going within your workforce. Have an open mind when collecting this feedback and see it as a useful tool to boost overall productivity and morale.

If comments are generally positive, great! But try not to get complacent and maybe consider a fun team-building activity to keep spirits high. If comments are negative, you may need to address some core operations. Listening to your employees will help to build trust, but acting on feedback shows a genuine commitment to your team.

## MIX IT UP

Whilst co-workers being great friends can be good for business at times, it can also be risky if one

becomes unhappy at work. Not only can morale be affected, but alliances can be made. And when friends leave, others might follow. Aside from finding out why employee A is unhappy, it could also be a good idea to mix up dynamics at work.

## FEEDBACK BEFORE FAREWELL

If your employee does ultimately decide to move on, it would be a good idea to schedule an exit interview. This offers the perfect opportunity to find out why your employee has decided to leave.

## CREATE A CONTINGENCY PLAN

Assume that everyone could leave at some point. By having a contingency plan in place for your workforce, you can feel more prepared in the event of people leaving. Is there room to reshuffle tasks for an interim period whilst you're hiring? Are you training your staff so that they can potentially step up and graduate to a new role should one become available?

Whilst recognising that continued, longer term regional intervention and strategy is required to address a skills and labour shortage, incorporating the above simple steps into an overall "People Strategy" for your own business should go some way to ensure that once you have attracted the right skills within your business you keep them. The HR Dept Newcastle can provide support to develop the right strategy for your business.

## TDR TRAINING GET TOP MARKS

Congratulations are in order for Newcastle based apprenticeship firm, TDR Training, who have achieved an impressive 98 percent conversion rate on their recent Apprenticeship Access Programme.

The company offers apprenticeships in a range of fields including engineering, science, business administration and customer service, bringing an alternative career route to the arguably, saturated degree.

The Apprentice Access Programme has been a roaring success for TDR Training, enabling their candidates to gain hands on experience in the engineering field, opening them up to higher level qualifications. The selected candidates work towards an EAL Level 2 Diploma in advanced manufacturing engineering, before progressing onto a higher-level engineering qualification or into an apprenticeship programme with an employer.

With 28 eager candidates enrolled, all of which achieved the qualification, 26 have progressed successfully in to engineering apprenticeship vacancies.

Following the achievement of their qualification, successful graduates will go on to careers in manufacturing engineering, engineering maintenance and installation, fabrication and welding, materials and processing as well as engineering technical support.



If you know anyone who's struggling to decide on their future career path, head to [www.TDRTraining.co.uk](http://www.TDRTraining.co.uk) to check out the latest vacancies.

## Providing local HR and employment law advice



- Employer's advice line
- Contracts of employment
- Handbooks
- Disciplinary and grievance
- Dismissals
- Performance management
- Absence management
- Redundancy
- TUPE projects
- Training
- Payroll
- Recruitment advice/support
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Contact Jayne Hart

Call **0191 594 7789**

Visit **[www.hrdept.co.uk](http://www.hrdept.co.uk)**

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Paul Lott

## WHAT IS A SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT?

Settlement Agreements can be used in many circumstances when an employment relationship comes to an end, but what exactly does it mean for employers and employees?

Here Hadrian HR's Paul Lott explores what a Settlement Agreement, previously known as a Compromise Agreement until 29 July 2013, is and its importance.

A Settlement Agreement is a legally binding contract made between an employer and employee, either towards the end or just after the employment relationship has terminated. It sets out the terms between the parties, and once signed, prohibits the employee from bringing legal action against the employer in respect of their employment or termination. It is commonly in exchange for a termination payment and other benefits which are also set out in the agreement.

Some circumstances where a Settlement Agreement may be used, whether or not there is a prior dispute, could include:

- Redundancy
- Performance management at work
- Long-term sickness
- Clash of personalities
- Transfer of a business
- As a means of settling a grievance

Each Settlement Agreement varies, but typically, some clauses deal with:

- The potential claims to be settled by the Settlement Agreement
- The payments that will be received and the relevant tax issues

- Confidentiality/non-derogatory comments
- Agreed reference

The main benefit of entering into a Settlement Agreement is to provide certainty between parties and encourage a clean, amicable, break. Settlement Agreements regularly make provision for the employer to pay more than the statutory minimum entitlement to the employee. However, it is beneficial for the employer to pay more as the Settlement Agreement gives the certainty of knowing there will be no dispute or claim afterwards.

If the employee doesn't sign the agreement, they preserve their full rights to claim against their employer. Notably, with the outcome of many Employment Tribunal claims being uncertain and potentially costly. Therefore, a Settlement Agreement route facilitates a straightforward resolution of the ending of the employment relationship.

### PROTECTED CONVERSATIONS

Pre-Termination Negotiations - otherwise known as a 'protected conversations' - came into force at the same time as Settlement Agreements. They allow employers to have open discussions with employees about terminating their contracts, and anything said during the discussions is 'protected' and cannot be used by either party against the other in an Employment Tribunal claim.

There are exceptions, and a conversation is not necessarily protected in discrimination cases, whistleblowing or other automatically unfair dismissal claims. Meanwhile, the negotiations no longer have to remain off-the-record if either party misbehaves during the process, in which case what is said during the 'protected' conversation could come out into the open during a subsequent Employment Tribunal hearing.

### LEGAL ADVICE

A Settlement Agreement will only become binding once the employee has received independent legal advice on its terms and the effects from an appropriate legal advisor, typically by a qualified solicitor, who has attached a certificate confirming the advice that has been given. It is customary for the employer to pay for this information, or at least make a significant contribution.

Once a Settlement Agreement is signed by all parties, including the legal advisor, it is as if an Employment Tribunal has made an order at a full hearing, and no further action can be taken.

Hadrian HR is an employment advisory team with specialist knowledge in both employment law and human resource management. Its team of specialists are on hand to provide advice on creating an equal environment for employees, with consultancy advice ranging from one off contracts to a full audit of current policies and provision of customised contracts and handbooks.

# BUILDING A SYSTEM TO ENCOURAGE LEARNING AT WORK

Last night I gave the keynote address at my old school's Speech Day...

Apart from being an immensely humbling experience, being back on the platform, this time handing out awards and certificates rather than receiving my (then) very thin envelope of academic achievements, I used the opportunity to remind the graduating class of the importance of maintaining their thirst for knowledge and growth, long after they leave school.

*...Because your appetite for learning and personal growth directly correlates to your level of success.*

I happen to be an example of one of those students that did not take the academic route through life. Instead learning on the job or grabbing every work-based training programme that was ever offered and I've personally invested tens of thousands of pounds into my own development over my thirty year career, travelling around the globe to attend courses and to listen to world-class speakers.

This same week I also had the opportunity to introduce my friend Pete Wilkinson, the CEO of Reclaro, a SAAS start-up, which I have an investment in, to Nelson Da Silva the Chief Revenue Officer of Receipt Bank, a fintech business that has an impressive record of growth from start-up in 2010 into today's multi-million global tech firm, now employing over three hundred staff.

It was fascinating listening to Nelson recount the early days when they were only a team of eight, he was the entire sales department, on the phone doing demos and signing up their first customers, to now running the entire sales operation globally.

He shared how he began to build out the sales team, initially employing two graduates as his first employees for the sales department. "I find it much easier to mould them into how I need them to be. People with experience tend to want to do things their way," he recounted. He explained that when recruiting he looks for three key characteristics;

- Curiosity
- Intelligence
- Coachability

...not just how coachable they are personally, but how well they can also coach others.



Nicola Cook. CEO of Company Shortcuts.

Listening to Nelson, this is not surprising, as finding high quality ready-made skilled talent for a sales team is one of the greatest challenges for a growth business. We are only now beginning to see the introduction of sales focused courses within mainstream education, but with such little literature and academic research into what makes a successful sales person, academia is still catching up. Leaving businesses with two choices;

1. Hire ready-made and trained talent
2. Hire raw talent and train them

If you are serious about the long-term growth and the scale of your business then I'm with Nelson and fundamentally believe that you should be prepared to invest in developing your own sales methodology. One that is documented as your own Sales Bible (your company's playbook) and be prepared to grow and develop your own talent as you grow.

Businesses that attempt to shortcut this vital step, instead attempting to hire in a ready-formed sales function always fall flat on their backs, and look back in six months and wonder how they ended up with a maverick team of individuals all running around like headless chickens.

Here's three things you can do to help your own

team maintain a thirst of knowledge;

- Begin building your library of templates now – your own company's playbook. Begin with how YOU do sales personally. Document every email, every script, every presentation, every part of the process.
- Invest in skills-based training in the areas your team need to improve. Look for credible but successful trainers with a solid track record with strong teaching methods.
- Link 'mastery' and 'coachability' in their role to their remuneration packages. Assuming you have a competency framework for their roles (and if you don't, there's a good place to start,) grade the levels and at each review date, discuss how they have shown not only how they have mastered this area of knowledge themselves, but can demonstrate how they have used it in their role AND coached others and supported the team as a whole.

Most importantly build a culture where self-growth and investment in one's own education is celebrated and rewarded and you will reduce the risk of hiring on impressive CVs only to have people fail, once they have to deliver on what's actually required.

To watch a video on how to improve the sales productivity in your business follow this link; [www.companyshortcuts.com](http://www.companyshortcuts.com)



(L-R) Glen Colledge &amp; Mark Stuart Bell

## NORTH EAST ORGANISATION CREATES ONE-OF-A-KIND TECHNOLOGY FOR RUNNERS

Entrepreneur Craig Downs has combined product design, artificial intelligence (AI), smartphone technology and big data analysis to create an innovative running product.

Shoes2Run – based at The Hub in Washington, has developed a wearable product called mymo which uses AI to match a person's gait to the latest running shoes on the market.

Born out of his passion for running, he sought support from the BIC to help create a special sock that he believes could become a global success.

Craig said: "The BIC's Innovation Programme gave me invaluable support with funding and access to innovative expertise.

"I worked with their Innovation Adviser, Gillian Middleton, who put me in touch with various organisations so I could access their networks and gain further business knowledge."



(L-R) Beverley Brown &amp; Tracey Lilburn

## REDUNDANCY RESULTS IN 'BEAUTIFUL' BUSINESS VENTURE

A beauty salon in South Tyneside has been taken over by experienced beauty therapists.

With over 60 years of combined experience in the beauty sector, Beverley Brown and Tracey Lilburn have launched Cleadon Beauty after being made redundant.

The duo have retained all staff in the salon which was previously known as Relax and Glow whilst under different ownership.

They launched Cleadon Beauty with support from the BIC and its start-up programme.

"Having our own business means we can now protect our own futures and not have to worry about being made redundant.

"As well as having the experience and passion we have – as well as having so many friends and connections in the industry – we're very confident of succeeding."

## DOUBLE CELEBRATION FOR ACCLAIMED VIDEO PRODUCTION FIRM



Craig Downs, MD of Shoes2Run

A video production company is celebrating an expansion and new contract wins.

Second Draft – which received widespread acclaim for producing the official film for Sunderland's 2021 City of Culture bid – has moved into office space at the BIC.

The business has also won contracts with Invest North East England and the North East Local Enterprise

Partnership. And the expansion and contract wins are both hugely significant for Second Draft according to the firm's co-founders Mark Stuart Bell and Glen Colledge.

Mark said: "The move to the BIC presents us with new opportunities to collaborate due to the variety of businesses it has on-site".

## ABFAD HAS EUROPE LINED UP AFTER RECEIVING MAJOR ACCREDITATION



(L-R) Alan Fada &amp; Chris Haritou

Abfad Limited has achieved a world renowned European certification for their product.

Abfad's product Fuelvac®, a solvent-free, double-skin liner with a class one vacuum leak detection monitoring system which alerts clients to a breach either in the double-skin liner or external tank.

The firm have been striving to receive the accreditation from TUV Nord, a German test organisation that validates the safety of products and services.

Director Chris Haritou said: "To get these certificates is a vindication of our determination to develop a lining system that is one of the most environmentally friendly in the world and will provide 24/7 monitored protection against corrosion and pollution – a major problem in the industry."



My Property Box team including MD, Ben Quintrell (far right)

## INNOVATIVE LETTING AGENCY EXPANDS

An innovative North East letting agency has achieved further growth recruiting new staff and moving into additional office space.

My Property Box based at Darlington's Business Central, has secured more space in the business centre to accommodate new members of staff and to help facilitate future growth plans.

Since their inception, the firm have embraced digital marketing and technology by implementing an online

portal for landlords.

And it's with this way of marketing that the firm have achieved their success to date, leading to another significant expansion.

Managing Director Ben Quintrell said: "we were the first letting agency to launch in Darlington that wasn't on the high street; the industry has gone online and we're benefitting from being in the perfect environment."

## Start me Up



Callum Thompson

## BUSINESS ENERGY CLAIMS

*Prior to starting his own business, Callum Thompson had over eight years industry experience which gave him the confidence to tackle the lack of transparency by brokers in the non-domestic energy market.*

We caught up with Callum to find out more about starting up his own business.

### WHAT DOES YOUR BUSINESS DO?

Business Energy Claims (BEC) is made up of a team of energy industry and legal experts helping businesses to recover hidden commissions and losses from the mis-selling of energy contracts.

The commercial energy market in the UK is complex, with over 3,000 brokers selling energy solutions to businesses. Within that market we have discovered a significant number of examples of hidden charges and different forms of mis-selling.

We have partnered with a panel of law firms to identify mis-selling by energy brokers and help clients to seek repayment of the commissions and profits earned by the energy companies.

### WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO START YOUR OWN BUSINESS?

Prior to starting BEC, I worked in the energy industry for several years and I felt compelled to tackle what I believe is a huge issue facing

UK businesses. The non-domestic energy market is unregulated and as such the broker market is facing criticism for not being fair or transparent in its dealings, resulting in some brokers making significant financial gain at the expense of UK businesses.

The scale of this issue is immense and is a far bigger problem than people realise. In fact, Business Energy Claims' research suggests that this could be a multi billion pound problem across the UK.

Currently, BEC is the only organisation which is truly taking control of the mis-selling taking place within the energy industry, which further demonstrates the issue at hand and lack of controls that exist.

### TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

I am responsible for running BEC and ensuring that we effectively evolve the utilities sector to become more transparent and ethical. This includes meeting with clients, our partners and our panel of law firms to progress the cases we have for our clients.

### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENT SO FAR?

Being able to raise awareness of this growing issue both regionally and nationally has opened up opportunities such as being featured in The Sunday Times, which is great promotion for us in terms of reaching UK wide businesses. We are also working with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other key regulatory bodies, so it's great that we can bring this issue to a national decision making level.

### IN THE FUTURE, WHERE DO YOU SEE YOUR BUSINESS?

In the future we see Business Energy Claims as being the driving force and go-to firm in helping businesses across the UK recover monies for mis-sold business energy contracts.

### IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO YOUR YOUNGER SELF, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Don't get too downbeat about adversity and disappointment. Things going against you, or not as well as you would hope, are prerequisites for greatness. Dealing with them with bravery and courage will help you to strive in the future.

To find out more about Business Energy Claims or to see if your business has a commercial energy claim, please visit [www.businessenergyclaims.co.uk](http://www.businessenergyclaims.co.uk) or call 0800 689 4259.

## PROBLEM SOLVING, SAS-STYLE



When it comes to corporate team building, at Lumley Castle Hotel it's a case of Who Dares Wins, as Emma Walker discovered.

Special forces are most definitely at work at one of the North East's best loved castles – as businesses learn how to solve problems SAS-style.

Lumley Castle Hotel, at Chester-le-Street, County Durham – has unveiled four new team building packages aimed at corporate clients.

And one of the most popular is a Special Forces-inspired series of challenges designed to teach participants how to give – and act on – clear instruction, against the clock and with limited resources.

In the first task, teams must decipher a series of clues to work out which spy has planted a bomb while, in the second, a team leader instructs blindfolded team members to erect a tent.

The third task in the half-day package relies on delegates working together to cross an imaginary river using only limited equipment.

Other motivational team building packages include CSI, which relies on detective work to crack puzzles and solve clues; Desert Island, which features



outward-bound style teamwork and Pen the Problems, in which teams of 'sheep' are blindfolded and herded into place with only the barking of their 'sheepdog' leader to direct them.

Each package can either be a stand-alone event or incorporated into a wider conference or event programme at the Castle, which also has 11 conference rooms, some dating back to the 14th century.

"Businesses are increasingly looking for ways in which to motivate and bring their work teams together," said sales manager Lauren Colledge, "and these packages are a fun and very effective way of doing just that."

"Our business clients also tell us that because the Castle is straight out of a storybook and completely different from their work environments, it inspires their delegates to think differently and really unleashes their imaginations and creativity."

"It is also a spectacular place to relax and unwind at the end of a busy day."

Overlooking Durham County Cricket ground, off the A1, Lumley Castle can cater for everything from small scale meetings and product launches, to seminars, AGMs and dinner dances.

In addition, the hotel, which has ample free parking and a helipad, can provide a secretarial service and arrange a variety of entertainment, such as Elizabethan banquets and murder mystery dinners.

**For information about the wide variety of corporate packages, activities and facilities on offer at Lumley Castle call 0191 389 1111 or visit [www.lumleycastle.com](http://www.lumleycastle.com)**

# THE VALUE OF CREATIVITY



Rosi Lister, Chief Executive at IVE

IVE is a social enterprise that is working to ensure a more creative future for the UK through training, education, advocacy and support.

We passionately believe that creativity, and the application of it to produce innovations and solve problems, is crucial to the economic prosperity of this country. In fact, we believe it has never been more important to promote the value of creativity: jobs requiring human creativity are becoming more prevalent given automation is making many jobs obsolete.

Every business can benefit from creative leaders who are able to approach problems in a new way, anticipate future issues, innovate new products and approaches and encourage their teams to be creative too.

Having a creative workforce is also crucial, one that is able to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances, bring new ideas to the table and solve the problems of tomorrow that we can't anticipate today.

In addition to this, ensuring people have the opportunity to be creative has been proven to help with mental health, reduce stress, improve social skills (and other "soft" skills) and generally improve a person's quality of life. The business case for this is clear, happy employees are more productive employees.

## **BUT, HOW CAN YOU ENCOURAGE CREATIVITY IN THE WORKPLACE?**

Since 1997, IVE has been at the cutting edge of

creative learning policy and practice. We know from evidence and experience that creativity is a transferable skill that anybody can learn and develop. Creativity is not a gift you either do or don't have, but something that can be learned and practiced.

All of our work revolves around ways to develop creativity as a skill, produce structures and processes to encourage creativity and find methods to be more creative in daily life.

We work with businesses in every industry to deliver services that improve their creativity, innovation and problem solving capacity.

At IVE our services include:

- Training aimed at encouraging creative thinking and behaviours in both managers and their teams.
- Training to address unconscious bias and promote diversity and inclusion.
- Facilitating meetings aimed at problem solving and ideation.
- Business/management consultancy - applying our processes for generating unconventional and fresh ideas to problem solve and developing strategy.

## **SUPPORTING CREATIVITY IN THE NEXT GENERATION**

As a charity, all the profits from our services are used to fund projects aimed at helping young people, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, to develop their creativity, employability and work skills. We also support talented young people on personal development programmes which can provide routes into creative careers.

We also work with schools to provide training and continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers, not in how they can be more creative, but in how they can structure their teaching to allow pupils the opportunity to be more creative, resilient and imaginative.

Through every strand we advocate for the importance of creativity. Working with our partners to amplify our voice, we petition local and national government to change the way creativity is viewed in education.

As a charity, we also welcome the direct support of anybody to achieve our charitable goals in the forms of donations or gifts in kind.

**If you are interested in employing IVE to increase productivity and creativity in your business, contact on 0113 322 3050, email [hello@weareive.org](mailto:hello@weareive.org) or visit [www.weareive.org/consultancy-training/](http://www.weareive.org/consultancy-training/)**



## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO FACT

FACT is celebrating its 10th birthday in 2018, having been set up by a North East mother who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005.

She found that she was looked after very well by local medical teams and services, but, once outside the hospital environment, was surprised to find that there was no practical or emotional support for her, or her family or friends.

Following her long and difficult battle and having been successfully treated for cancer, she was inspired to set up FACT (Fighting All Cancers Together) to provide the support services that weren't there for her or her family so that everyone affected by cancer, could find the help they need easily, in one place, in good time, when they need it and free of charge. FACT's help is easily accessible to anyone affected by cancer without the need for referral.

10 years ago, FACT started out in a spare bedroom with nothing and has now moved into bigger accommodation twice as the demand for its services is so great. It has grown into an established North East regional charity, now operating from a dedicated cancer support centre in Swalwell, and exists to:

- provide support and guidance for cancer sufferers and their friends, family and carers.
- create a platform for the exchange of experiences, views and information
- provide facilities to improve service users' life conditions

Very early on, when FACT couldn't find what people were looking for it started to fill the gaps itself – either as a one off for an individual, or by developing a programme of readily accessible support.

From a standing start 10 years ago, FACT now offers a wide suite of activities, counselling and therapies which are all available free, without referral, to anyone affected by cancer. The list is demand led and depends on the needs of the current service users.

FACT also offers advice, support and guidance about day to day practical issues people need to deal with, sometimes because of, and sometimes despite, cancer. These include finances; employment; child care; talking to children, family

and friends about cancer; exercise, nutrition; affordable travel insurance; etc. FACT is aware that a diagnosis of cancer affects not only the patient, but also family members, friends and colleagues which is why its support is available to all who need them. Support can be offered either on a one to one basis or as a group or family unit.

At FACT, everyone understands that having cancer doesn't mean you are just a set of symptoms to be treated. Everyone who gets cancer is different. As they are all individuals, the care and support they need to live with a cancer diagnosis, particularly after treatment has finished, will also be different. In the last 10 years FACT has learned a lot about the complicated, individual needs of those affected by cancer and the difference it means to people to be offered support outside of a clinical setting.

FACT doesn't focus on what is the matter with the patient, but more importantly, what matters to the patient. Beneficiaries have told us that prior to FACT's existence it wasn't uncommon for them to be signposted to 6 or 7 different providers in different locations and still not have their needs addressed.

FACT has made the cancer journey easier for thousands of people in the north east and supported them through good times and bad, life and death and bereavement and loss. It organises kindness kits for those who need support and has an annual Christmas hamper appeal for families financially affected by the diagnosis of cancer, as financial hardship often goes hand in hand with a cancer diagnosis.

Because of the demand for FACT's services, it's begun to hold regular open drop in sessions, and services by appointment, across other areas of the north east including Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Durham and Sunderland.

In 10 years, FACT has gone from pipe dream to reality and its baby steps have turned into giant strides to support anyone affected by cancer - it really is unique.

FACT receives no statutory support or funds for the services it delivers and is constantly fundraising to allow its work to continue and to grow. Can you help?



For further information email [info@fact-cancersupport.co.uk](mailto:info@fact-cancersupport.co.uk) or call 0191 4420833.  
Facebook @FACTCancerSupport Twitter @FACTCancer



## RDA CREATE NEW COSTA COFFEE FOR LEADING NHS TRUST

As well as bespoke high street projects, we work across a range of sectors and brands. One of our latest projects saw us being appointed by a leading contract caterer to create a new Costa Coffee for a community-based hospital.

Our team of designers worked with the contractor and the hospital, which is part of the largest healthcare provider in South West London, to transform an outdated café into a new look Costa Coffee.

The interior fit out was based on the latest Costa brand and specification with a modern and vibrant look and feel and state of the art equipment.

The result is a fresh and contemporary space located within a prime position on the hospital's ground floor, ready to serve the thousands of patient's, staff and visitors.

Neil Addyman, Director at RDA said: "RDA has worked on several Costa Coffee's for NHS Trusts across the UK and we are delighted to bring a fresh, modern and welcoming look and feel for the hospital community."

Nick Galloway, Business Director, Healthcare said: "I am delighted with the finished unit as it brings the high street to our hospital. We have received numerous compliments about the look and feel of it from our patients, visitor's and staff, and this is reflected in a 30% increase in sales since it opened"

To find out how RDA can help with your next catering project call 0844 873 4993 or visit [www.rdalimited.co.uk](http://www.rdalimited.co.uk)

## NORTH EAST FUND LIMITED APPOINTS NEW EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT OFFICER



James Holloway

**A Newcastle-based funding provider has created a new position within its business team.**

The North East Fund Limited, which is overseeing the delivery of the £120 million North East Fund across the region over the next five years, has expanded its team with the appointment of an external engagement officer.

James Holloway joins the team from Business Northumberland where he worked as a growth advisor. Prior to this, James worked for a fund management company, helping organisations access finance to start up or grow. He will use this diverse skill set together in his new role at The North East Fund Limited by

working with businesses, local authorities and professional networks, to ensure that companies across the North East know how to access the right type of funding to start or grow their businesses.

In addition to this, he will host and attend events to support the organisation's fund managers and to raise awareness of the capital available to businesses.

"I'm delighted to be joining the team at The North East Fund Limited," James said.

"The funding opportunities available to SMEs operating across the region through the North East Fund are going to make such a huge difference to so many different businesses. It is exciting to be working alongside the team as these funds are delivered and also with the operators themselves to help them gain access to the information they need to help take their businesses to the next level."

Andrew Mitchell, chief executive of The North East Fund Limited, said: "James' appointment will reinforce the great work that the fund managers are doing across the North East. His energy, experience and commitment to supporting local businesses will help to ensure that all eligible companies have the opportunity to access the right type of funding to fulfil their potential."

The North East Fund is a suite five venture capital and loan fund available to small to medium-sized enterprises operating across Gateshead, Durham, Sunderland, Northumberland, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Newcastle.

Managed by The North East Fund Limited and delivered through four specialist fund management organisations including Maven Capital Partners, NEL, Northstar Ventures and Mercia Fund Managers, the Fund was established in April 2018 with the aim of investing £120 million in around 600 North East businesses and creating over 2,500 new jobs in the process by March 2023.

For more information, visit [www.northeastfund.org](http://www.northeastfund.org).

## NORTH EAST PLASTICS FIRM ADVISES "RELOCATION, RELOCATION, RELOCATION"

**Award-winning North East England-based Omega Plastics advises that in the current industry climate relocating [reshoring] can reduce costs on logistics, material supply and packaging. This adds an element of reassurance for the customer that a product is being made in the United Kingdom and also helps to eliminate the risk of 'currency fluctuation'.**

Omega Plastics, which employs over 150 staff across three regional sites including factory units in Blyth, Hartlepool and Washington, can proudly name Aston Martin, Jaguar Landrover, Nissan and Honda on its client list; and in 2017, Omega Plastics won Company of the Year at the North East Business Awards.

Omega Plastics would like to express to new and existing customers thinking of reshoring "why not knock on Omega's door".

For example, they have a 1,300-tonne production machine capable of producing plastic components up to a meter square and 5 kilos in weight.

The kind of products this particular piece of machinery excels in turning around in high volume are well suited for the automotive, construction, white goods and aerospace industries.

The list includes automotive parts from engine covers to seat and fuel system components; large panels for white goods; Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) covers; large structural components used in aerospace; filtration systems; and items for the construction industry (loft hatches, ventilation grills and drain covers).

Julian Jamieson, Operations Director for Omega Plastics, said: "The world of manufacturing is all about quality, costs and time. The trick is to find a healthy balance between all three. What we offer at Omega Plastics is a good quality product that can be shipped anywhere in the world. But in these current times of uncertainty when UK companies are being more cautious, then why not look closer to home when placing your next order."



Jamie Wheeler, a Production Operative staff member from Omega Plastics.

For more information about Omega Plastics please visit [www.omega-plastics.co.uk](http://www.omega-plastics.co.uk) or email [sales@omega-plastics.co.uk](mailto:sales@omega-plastics.co.uk)



Paul Hughes of Mincoffs, Aphrodite Christodoulou and Jabad Jaigirdar of Peter Millican Law, Christopher Hughes of Mincoffs, Michael Cantwell of RMT Accountants, vendors Adam and Ruth Brenner and purchasers Richard and Julie Bennett

## ENTREPRENEURS DRAWING UP BIG PLANS FOR NEWCASTLE PRINT SOLUTIONS AFTER ACQUISITION

Two well-known North East entrepreneurs are planning to build on the long-standing reputation of a specialist regional print and design firm after acquiring it for an undisclosed sum.

Richard and Julie Bennett, the founders of Derwentside Environmental Testing and former owners of Gateshead Football Club, have purchased Newcastle Print Solutions (NPS) from Adam and Ruth Brenner.

The sale was brought about by the Bennetts' plans to move south to be closer to their children, but Adam is set to remain involved with the business, helping to build its presence in London and the South East.

The remainder of NPS's 12-strong workforce have also all stayed in place, and new jobs are expected to be created as the business expands, most especially in the healthcare, digital marketing and archiving sectors.

Gosforth-based RMT Accountants and Business Advisors brought the purchasers and vendors together and advised the Bennetts on the disposal, while Mincoffs Solicitors LLP provided their legal advice.

Clive Owen LLP and Peter Millican Law worked with the Bennetts on their side of the acquisition.

The Bennetts originally purchased the existing Prontaprint franchise in Collingwood Street Newcastle in 1997 but have operated as an independent business since 2011 from the company's premises on the Whitehouse Industrial Estate.

Its services crystallise around its brand management software 'Brand Sentinel' ([www.brandsentinel.co.uk](http://www.brandsentinel.co.uk)) which has been developed to offer multi-site companies brand control of their printed and promotional collaterals.

NPS covers all aspects of print and design, including

lithographic & digital printing, graphic design, exhibition & display materials, direct mail, web design and promotional items.

It also offers a scanning and archiving service, enabling clients to free up valuable office space that is currently used for storing old documentation by digitising their records.

Adam Brenner says: "NPS has evolved out of all recognition over the last two decades, but our success has always been based on the same principles of identifying and providing what customers need to meet their individual objectives.

"Many of our staff have been with the company for as long as we have, and it was an essential part of the sale process that we found buyers who recognised and valued their ongoing importance to the business's success.

"We wanted to pass the business on to people who saw the potential for further growth, and in Richard and Julie, we think we've found the perfect buyers.

"RMT's and Mincoffs' advice and support all the way through the sale process was excellent, and I'm looking forward to seeing the business continue to develop from a different vantage point."

Richard Bennett adds: "We've been looking to buy an established business with growth potential to realise, and NPS was the perfect prospect. After being introduced to Adam by RMT, we quickly established a positive relationship that helped the sale process go forward smoothly.

"There are a lot of parallels between the commercial expertise that Julie and I have built up over the years and the systems-driven environment at NPS. Our aim is to use our experience to further

enhance the ways in which the business operates.

"The teams at Peter Millican Law and Clive Owen LLP have provided us with vital support, which was invaluable in progressing to completion of the same and gaining a positive outcome for all parties."

Michael Cantwell, head of corporate finance at RMT Accountants, says: "We felt that there was a strong synergy between both parties' objectives and are very pleased to have helped both the Bennetts and Bennetts get what they were looking for."

Paul Hughes, senior partner and head of corporate at Mincoffs, adds: "Adam and Ruth have been long standing clients of the firm. We were delighted to act for them on the sale of NPS and help them in making their plans for the future a reality. We wish them and the Bennetts the best of luck."

Jabad Jaigirdar, partner at Peter Millican Law, says: "The team here at Peter Millican Law carried out a detailed review of NPS to give our clients a comprehensive understanding of the company prior to purchase. Richard and Julie will now bring their vast experience in many business sectors to the running of NPS, and we're delighted to have worked with them towards a timely and successful completion of this deal."

David Wilson, corporate finance associate director at Clive Owen LLP, adds: "NPS is a long-established business with an excellent reputation. Combine this with Richard and Julie's proven track record in creating and growing successful businesses and it's a great fit. As valued clients of the firm, we wish Richard and Julie all the very best and look forward to working with them in the future."

[www.callnps.co.uk](http://www.callnps.co.uk)



Martin Ferguson (left), founder and managing director of MJF Facilities Management, with Michael Cantwell, RMT's head of corporate finance.

## MJF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT TARGETS M62 CORRIDOR GROWTH AFTER COMPLETING LEEDS ACQUISITION

A successful North East facilities management firm is targeting new customers along the M62 corridor after acquiring a Leeds-based industry rival.

MJF Facilities Management has acquired the assets of Swift Facilities Management UK Ltd out of administration for a five-figure sum, saving 70 jobs in the process.

The Darlington-headquartered firm is now looking to build on its new acquisition's existing customer base, which stretches from Hull across to Manchester, as well as targeting additional business development opportunities in the area.

The MJF management team has worked with Gosforth-based RMT Accountants and Business Advisors on all aspects of the Swift FM acquisition and the development of its growth strategy, while Mincoffs LLP provided legal advice on the acquisition.

MJF is also looking at further possible acquisitions which will help to fulfil its ongoing growth strategy. Founded in 2006 as a window cleaning business,

MJF Facilities Management has expanded to now provide a wide range of commercial cleaning services, including deep cleaning in industrial premises and installing hard-wearing resin flooring in busy locations such as supermarkets and factories.

It now employs around 150 people, and works with a wide range of clients, including Aldi, Coca-Cola, Willmott Dixon Construction and the St George's Park National Football Centre.

Martin Ferguson, founder and managing director of MJF Facilities Management, says: "Most of our existing clients are based in the North East and North Yorkshire, so the area covered by the Swift business complements what we already do extremely well and enables us to substantially widen our footprint.

"Our growth so far has predominantly been organic, but we're also now looking at other acquisition

opportunities that could help us speed things along even more quickly.

"The RMT team has provided an excellent sounding board as we've developed our growth plans and moved very quickly to put everything into place that we needed to take advantage of this latest opportunity."

Michael Cantwell, head of corporate finance at RMT Accountants, adds: "MJF has sound systems and structures in place which will support its continuing growth, while Martin and his team have the ambition and drive required to make the business even more of a success."

Chris Hughes, associate solicitor in the corporate team at Mincoffs Solicitors LLP, says: "It has been a pleasure to work with Martin and MJF on the Swift acquisition, it is great to see a local firm enjoying such success and growth. We wish Martin and the team all the best of luck for the future."

# WHAT IS OPEN BANKING AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Dr Emma Black, managing director of Cascade Cash Management, explains here why the UK needs Open Banking.



In January 2018, the UK's open banking regulation became effective. This legislation forces UK banks and building societies to open up customer data with the customer's consent to regulated UK companies. Nearly nine months later, however, and a YouGov poll has reported that 72% of UK adults don't know what it is.

"Open Banking, along with the EU's second Payment Services Directive (PSD2), has modernised payment regulation and the sharing of customer data to improve competition in markets by making it easier for customers to have more choice and more control over their money and financial information.

"The nine largest UK retail banks and building societies (namely Barclays plc, Lloyds Banking Group plc, Santander, Danske, HSBC, RBS, Bank of Ireland, Nationwide Building Society and AIBG) are now legally required to allow certain customer information to be shared securely online via Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) with other regulated companies. Other banks and building societies are allowed to voluntarily do the same. As it stands, HSBC is the only major bank to have created an app ('Connected Money') for its customers to hold all of their accounts in a single place.

"There has however been a wide divergence of interpretation when regulation and legislation is enacted in the financial sector and so Open Banking requires banks and building societies to standardise the APIs used to allow for consented third-parties to 'talk to' providers using a similar architecture.

"In the first instance, the benefits of open banking allow for customers to compare the details of different current accounts and other banking services (such as the location of branches and ATMs) more easily. It is envisaged that in due course, Open Banking technology can help improve customer outcomes making it convenient to view all of your accounts in one single place, with opportunities for personal financial management apps to be created to help customers understand their spending habits better and manage their debt with pro-active alerts to choose lower interest rates or lower overdraft charges. It is also intended for business customers to obtain a series of tools to help cash flow management, access to credit and day-to-day management of accounts.

"Despite these benefits, a YouGov poll indicated that 72% of adults do not know what Open Banking is while only 14% of those aged 18-24 aware of the legislation. The poll showed that the more affluent ABC1 group is more aware of Open Banking with 35% of those polled stating they have heard the term. For those who have heard of open banking, 20% stated that account aggregation would be the biggest benefit with 8% stating money management would be useful and 7% highlighting the benefits for choosing the right account."

Cascade Cash Management, an online savings platform, allows for customers to view their savings accounts in one place. The service was created to generate enhanced cash returns and increased protection on deposits through professional cash management. The Cascade team can manage funds on behalf of clients or depositors can use the portal with their advisor to manage their own savings. Partners including IFA's, solicitors, attorneys, accountants and many more can also self-brand the product for presentation to their own clients.

Emma continues: "We are very excited at the truly positive impact Open Banking can have on the UK financial sector. Here at Cascade, Open Banking is a core part of our future strategy and we are confident that customers will be able to reap the benefits in the next five years.

"We have a mountain of case studies where longstanding customers of the major high street banks and building societies have earned very little on their hard-earned cash year after year. Through Cascade, our customers have significantly increased the interest earned on their savings through shopping around. We are encouraged by Open Banking and will be working hard to share these benefits with our exclusive community."

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

# READY FOR BUSINESS

And with offices  
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**Commerce House, the outstanding, iconic, grade II listed building in the heart of Middlesbrough is now fully refurbished and has released the last of its stunning office space. With rooms available for two to fourteen people.**

With enviable facilities, Commerce House is the perfect opportunity for a head office, satellite office or to expand operations within the prestigious TS1 area of Middlesbrough in the heart of the newest regenerated location in the region. And now we have some great deals available for a limited time only!

**To find out more and to take advantage of this offer, you'd better get moving!  
Contact Christine Huntington on 01642 917 116 or [Christine@commercechambers.co.uk](mailto:Christine@commercechambers.co.uk)**

Your business can be part of the growing Commerce House community!

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Commerce House,  
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Middlesbrough TS1 1DE  
t: 01642 917 116

**[commerce-house.co.uk](http://commerce-house.co.uk)**

## AUTUMN IS THE BEST TIME TO MOVE OFFICE

### Top Three Tips on How To Make a Seamless Move

With children back to school over the next week, it seems everyone is turning their attention to work mode again, and to keep the buzz going, many companies are considering moving office.

According to Commerce Chambers Ltd, purveyors of luxury business space, there are certain times of the year that are better to change offices than others. And it would seem Autumn is one of them.

Commerce House in Middlesbrough is owned by Commerce Chambers and is a recently converted business community. The team there is geared up for an influx of new tenants moving in over the coming weeks. As well as office space the building offers meeting rooms including a stunning boardroom, a business lounge, hot desking, co-working and virtual tenancy, all of which are proving popular.

The office space is being reserved fast with a few of larger offices left available, seating between five and 15 people. Christine Huntington, Facilities Manager at Commerce House, explains why the most recent influx of tenants seem to want to move in September:

"Autumn seems to be a time when the summer is over, but the end of the year is fast approaching. There are just a few months left to make an impact and make those business improvements you might have been planning for this year.

"It is also a good time of year for removals – removal companies aren't tied up with as many house moves and the weather should hold, meaning there is more of a chance of it being dry on your move in date.

"Moving in the Autumn also means you can get settled – many other companies are back to full strength with their team, so you can rely on services being executed and all important things like broadband and telephones being sorted quickly!"

However, with any move there can be issues, so Christine has compiled her top three tips that tenants of Commerce House have shared with her:

- **1. Plan and pack accordingly.** OCD is a good thing in this scenario – label and keep those documents and items that are key to you being to start work in colour coded packing boxes, so they can be found as a priority.
- **2. Announce your move before you go, and as soon as you are settled.** To all clients and customers, prospects, suppliers and of course, the media. Commerce House offers a free press release to all new tenants for this very reason.
- **3. Pre plan employees.** Make sure they know which will be their desk, where to park, how to get in and out of the building. Commerce House is delighted to host pre moving in sessions for companies so employees can familiarise themselves accordingly.



Christine Huntington

More information on office space available and pricing from £200 per desk all inclusive, is available at [www.commerce-house.co.uk](http://www.commerce-house.co.uk)

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS  
SELF ASSESSMENT  
PAYE COMPLIANCE  
VAT COMPLIANCE  
MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS  
STATUTORY AUDITS  
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CONTRIBUTION AGENCY  
INVESTIGATIONS  
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## GO FOR GROWTH WITH ALLIED IRISH BANK (GB)\*

Anyone involved in business knows these can be rather uncertain times, but there is one vital quality that will help guide you through.

It's called 'experience'.

**And that's what Chris Dixon and Martin Rankin at Allied Irish Bank (GB) in Newcastle have got by the bucketload.**

Chris is Senior Relationship Manager at Allied Irish Bank (GB) and fronts the team at their offices in Broad Chare, just off the Quayside in Newcastle. Martin is part of his team and between them, Chris and Martin have over 40 years' combined experience in the North East. This means they have both an extensive knowledge of the region's economy and key players, as well as access to the wealth of sector-specific insights that Allied Irish Bank (GB) have.

### **SO, WHAT SORT OF BUSINESS CAN CHRIS, MARTIN AND THE REST OF THE TEAM AT ALLIED IRISH BANK (GB) HELP WITH?**

The team has enjoyed spectacular success over the last few years in key sectors such as healthcare, hotels and leisure, manufacturing, and in the professional sectors. Allied Irish Bank (GB) is also attracting a lot of interest from companies working in energy, renewables and recycling.

A typical customer will be medium-to-large businesses with a turnover in excess of £5m, with a need for financial support in excess of £1m. Invariably stable, with a proven financial track record and with an experienced and ambitious management team, they will also be smart enough to recognise how Allied Irish Bank (GB) can help them grow their business and make full use of the bank's professional relationship service.

"The past two years have seen the Newcastle branch of Allied Irish Bank (GB) enjoy a huge period of growth," said Martin Rankin, "The signs are that 2018 will be one of our best ever. We are confident that our successful business models can help companies, small and large, here in the North East. We want to help those businesses flourish and, as our track record shows, we can help them achieve their aims. We are on target in 2018 to triple the amount of lending we provide and we want to share that success."

### **SO WHAT CAN ALLIED IRISH BANK (GB) DO FOR YOU AND YOUR BUSINESS?**

Allied Irish Bank (GB) can support you with business loans and overdrafts, as well invoice finance, asset PromptPay and insurance premium finance. Everyday banking needs such as credit cards, savings, currency and deposit accounts are of course provided, along with private banking or merchant services. There'll be interest rate and foreign exchange risk management, international payments, export collection services as well as trade finance and guarantees.

In other words, Allied Irish Bank (GB) will work with you to help you run your business and maximise revenue streams. Chris, Martin and the rest of their regional team have been there, done it, and their experience means they can spot an opportunity, and guide you through your best options.

**Give them a call on 0191 230 3000 or email them at [Martin.g.rankin@aib.ie](mailto:Martin.g.rankin@aib.ie), [Christopher.j.dixon@aib.ie](mailto:Christopher.j.dixon@aib.ie) to arrange a meeting. (Call charges may apply, charges may vary depending on operator).**

\*The AIB logo, Allied Irish Bank (GB) and Allied Irish Bank (GB) Savings Direct are trademarks used under licence by AIB Group (UK) p.l.c. incorporated in Northern Ireland. Registered Office 92 Ann Street, Belfast BT1 3HH. Registered Number NI018800. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.



## THE EMPLOYMENT STATUS CONUNDRUM

Being an employee brings with it a number of advantages such as paid holidays, sick pay and maternity/paternity leave. From an employer's point of view, however, not only do they have to provide these rights, it also comes at a cost, being employer's national insurance.

It is not surprising, therefore, that where employment status can be legitimately avoided some employers are keen to take advantage. But how do you know whether somebody is an employee in the first place?

Ultimately this is a question of applying the law to the facts. Even apparently straightforward cases can take hours or days of a tribunal's time where there is need for status to be formally determined.

Of course, it is not practical for everybody's status to be litigated. In general, people have to make their own decisions and hope that if the position were ever investigated by HMRC, perhaps years later, they would not have made the wrong call.

Over the years HMRC has made various attempts to help people make the right decision, from the early days of printed guidance through to various online tools. These are helpful, of course, but only if they give the right answer.

HMRC has recently published an analysis in which it puts the facts of some recently published decisions on employment status through its online CEST system and compares the results to the conclusion reached by the tribunal. This was conducted on the back of widespread criticism of the system.

Of the 24 cases in the sample, the CEST gives the same result as the tribunal in 22 instances, but there are two where the tool concluded that the individual was employed but the tribunal found that they were self-employed. There were no cases where the decision went the other way.

A 90 per cent success rate is probably as high as any simple online test can be expected to achieve,



Stuart McKinnon

given that employment status is such a difficult area. However, there are concerns that the test is excessively weighted towards factors which would point to employment and does not give enough emphasis on matters such as mutuality of obligation which might point the other way.

Critics suggest that this is deliberate. Engagers in the public sector now bear the responsibility for accounting for tax on deemed employees working through service companies (and there are proposals to extend this to the private sector). And if some workers who are arguably self-employed are treated as employees by those engaging them because of excessive caution built into the tool, HMRC is unlikely to object.

Employment status is one of those areas which requires a hard and fast binary decision to be made along a spectrum of many shades of grey. The reality is that in borderline cases the distinction can seem almost arbitrary.

No diagnostic tool is ever going to be perfect. While some of the criticisms of the CEST methodology seem well-founded, it is hard to think that any easy-

to-use tool could ever be 100 per cent reliable. The real solution is to reform the tax system so that status ceases to play such a fundamental part in determining how much tax is payable.

Recent cases, such as that involving Uber drivers, have established a hybrid status of 'worker'; someone who is self-employed but has certain rights like an employee. The tax system has not caught up with this changing landscape and is unlikely to do so in the foreseeable future. However, by being bold and reforming the system we could sweep aside uncertainty and have a level playing field for all.



**For more information on employment taxes or other taxation issues, please contact Stuart McKinnon, Partner, at [stuart.mckinnon@rsmuk.com](mailto:stuart.mckinnon@rsmuk.com) or your usual RSM contact.**



## PERSPECTIVE (NORTH EAST) SPONSORS MORPETH RFC VERSUS BRADFORD & BINGLEY RFC: 1ST XV 22 - 21

Perspective (North East)'s clients enjoyed watching Morpeth secure their fourth successive league win with a hard-fought victory against a talented Bradford and Bingley outfit who must have felt a little hard done by at losing with the very last play of the game.

Perspective (North East), the new name for Rutherford Wilkinson, is delighted to be sponsoring Morpeth RFC for another season. As leading Chartered Financial Planners, the firm works with many companies, individuals and trusts throughout the region and beyond.



# THE NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL FUND MANAGED BY MAVEN CAPITAL PARTNERS COMPLETES FIRST DEAL, INVESTING £350,000 IN ROKSHAW



Sunderland-based pharmaceutical manufacturer secures investment to increase manufacturing efficiencies and develop innovative new products

The North East Development Capital Fund (NEDCF), supported by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Maven Capital Partners, has completed its first deal investing £350,000 in Sunderland-based pharmaceutical manufacturer, Rokshaw.

Approved by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), Rokshaw is a highly accredited Pharmaceutical Specials Manufacturer and NHS accredited Unlicensed Medicines Supplier.

'Specials' - bespoke medicines of prescribed drugs reformulated for the needs of small patient groups - play a vital role across the healthcare industry, advancing patient treatment, increasing compliance and improving patient outcomes.

One of the largest providers of 'specials' to independent pharmacies in the North East - the UK region with the highest demand for prescriptions of specials - Rokshaw can manufacture over 5,000 different formulations of drugs in a variety of dosage forms (such as creams, ointments, solutions and capsules) in its purpose-built, state-of-the-art laboratory.

Clients include hospitals, wholesalers, independent pharmacies and dispensing doctors across the UK with the company supplying 1,500 different pharmacies a month. The company will use funding to increase manufacturing efficiencies in addition to developing new products with longer shelf life.

The business has agreed a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) with Sunderland University's



School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences that further increases their capabilities for innovation and efficiency.

Rokshaw was founded in 2012 by brothers Jonathan and Richard Hodgson, Richard, MD, has worked in commercial management for almost 15 years and Jonathan, CEO, has 20 years' worth of experience in sales and marketing in the pharmaceutical sector, working for major corporations such as Johnson & Johnson, Cardinal Health and Smiths Medical.

The North East Development Capital Fund is part of the £120m North East investment programme, supported by ERDF and available to SMEs across Durham, Northumberland and Tyne and Wear. The Fund can invest up to £2 million to support established businesses via debt finance, mezzanine loans or equity investment to help fulfil their growth potential.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager of Maven

said, "We are delighted to complete our first deal from the North East Development Capital Fund. Rokshaw has a strong market position and is at an exciting point in its development. Jonathan and Richard have combined their sales and business management skills with their substantial experience in the pharmaceutical sector to become one of the leaders in their field. We look forward to working with the team to drive the business forward and accelerate growth."

Richard Hodgson, MD of Rokshaw, said, "We are excited to have completed the deal which enables us to significantly strengthen and scale up our business with some highly innovative projects. We would like to thank Maven and NEDCF for the investment and thank Sunderland Council as well as the University and College for all the ongoing support which has been fundamental in our success to date"

Cllr Graeme Miller, leader of the City Council said: "Rokshaw is an excellent example of the city's growing knowledge economy, which is attracting new investment and creating highly skilled jobs to benefit the city, region and UK. Rokshaw's strong expansion reflects Richard and Jonathan Hodgson's drive and commitment, and the team's leading expertise in a niche field."

The North East Development Capital Fund can provide the financial resources to back business growth for ambitious companies. If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, contact Maven's North East investment team today.

Please contact Maven's local team to discuss your business and its plans, or visit [www.mavencp.com](http://www.mavencp.com) to find out more.

# NORTH EAST DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL FUND



The £27 million North East Development Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund, backs high growth and established businesses via debt finance, mezzanine loans or equity investments from £400,000 up to £2 million.

**If your business is in need of funding to help unlock its growth potential, please contact Maven's local investment team on:**

**E:** [enquiries-northeast@mavencp.com](mailto:enquiries-northeast@mavencp.com) | **T:** 0191 731 8590

Earl Grey House, 75/85 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6EF | Salvus House, Aykley Heads, Durham DH1 5TS



## MAVEN

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

Maven Capital Partners UK LLP/[www.mavencp.com](http://www.mavencp.com) is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

## CAN YOU AFFORD TO GIFT YOUR WEALTH AWAY?

If you are retired or coming up to retirement you may be considering sharing your wealth by making financial gifts to your children or grandchildren.

But it is crucial to work out in advance whether you are likely to need that money in the future - because once you give it away you may not be able to get your hands on it again.

Financial planners therefore suggest that people thinking of giving away wealth conduct a cashflow forecasting exercise to try to work out as best as possible what their assets and liabilities - and income and expenditure - could be in the future. This will give them a picture of what their financial position could be.

"It's important to remember that expenditure in retirement, as well as investment growth, are non-linear - they do not grow by the same amount each year" says Chris Black, divisional director and financial planner at wealth manager Brewin Dolphin.

"Spending can actually creep up in the early years of retirement as people have more time on their hands and go on more holidays, but then as they hit their mid to late 70s it tends to reduce as lifestyle become less active, only to creep up again in the 80s as the costs of social and nursing care become an issue."

A financial planner can help you with this cashflow exercise. It involves compiling a list of all expenditure in the years directly before retirement, and then assessing which will no longer apply after retirement - travel to work, for example, lunches in the city and other work-related costs. It is important to identify the kind of lifestyle you want in retirement and how much this is likely to cost. Questions you need to ask yourself may include: how many holidays do you want; what is your fixed/essential expenditure in retirement, and what is your discretionary spend; whether you might trade down to a smaller property and what sort of surplus that might leave you with.

"Many of these things can be difficult to predict. Circumstances are constantly changing so we advocate doing a cashflow analysis then updating



Chris Black

it every year to take account of developments in your life" says Chris.

"A regularly updated cashflow plan can provide a snapshot of your financial position and really help with financial planning for future costs and inheritance tax plans. It can be a very powerful tool."

Once you know where you stand, you can develop strategies with your financial planner. If you are facing a shortfall it might require a change in investment strategy to try and plug the gap. If you have a surplus you have scope for gifting to children or grandchildren.

### TAX-FREE GIFTING

When it comes to gifting, there are various options. Smaller gifts of up to £3,000 a year are automatically exempt from inheritance tax (IHT), as are gifts on marriage of up to £5,000 from parents and £2,500 from grandparents.

Larger gifts are covered by the Potentially Exempt Transfer (PET) rules. If you survive seven years after making the gift and no longer derive any benefit from it, then the gift is outside of your estate for IHT purposes.

There is also an exemption for gifts made of "normal" expenditure, which can be of any size but must meet three conditions:

- The gift forms part of the donor's normal expenditure
- It is made from income

- It must leave the donor with enough money to continue their normal standard of living

It is hard for one-off gifts to qualify - such gifts usually need to be regular, with evidence that they are part of a regular series, for example a payment into a life assurance policy or school fees.

Indeed, gifting to pay for school fees is an excellent way for grandparents to make substantial gifts to grandchildren while indirectly helping the parents, who will have a big financial burden lifted from them.

### CONTROL WITH TRUSTS

You may want to maintain some control over the gift, or require some future access to the assets, in which case you might consider using a trust.

There are various types of trusts and they vary in terms of flexibility, access, control and tax efficiency.

"Essentially, the more access, flexibility and control you require over the money, the less tax efficient they tend to be from an IHT perspective," says Chris. "But for people who want to make gifts but still retain some benefit or access, trusts may provide an effective solution."

Trusts, however, are an extremely complex area so specialist advice is essential.



**BREWIN  
DOLPHIN**

If you have any questions or would like to get in touch, Chris Black is available on 0191 279 7793 or you can email [chris.black@brewin.co.uk](mailto:chris.black@brewin.co.uk)

## IMMEDIATELY EFFECTIVE IHT PLANNING

Here at Rutherford Hughes, we like to think we know a thing or two about Inheritance Tax Planning. However, it is an area which causes some confusion with the public.

Firstly, there is the common misconception that you must live seven years if you give away money, or assets, before they are out of your estate. Sometimes that is true but not always. It depends upon who is receiving the gift and the value of it.

Secondly, there is the belief that you have to give assets away to avoid or reduce IHT. You do not. There are specific investments (Business Relief Schemes) which are outside the estate after two years. In fact, it is possible to invest and to have the money outside of your estate immediately. Yes, now. No waiting.

This is true if someone, for example, owned a business that qualified for business relief (BR), sold it and invested in a BR scheme within three years of sale. The investment is immediately outside of the estate.

To be fair, this is likely to be a fairly small group of individuals. However, it is possible for anyone under the age of 90 to achieve the same result.

You may be wondering "how could this be possible?"

There are a very small number of BR providers which offer an option for life insurance covering the potential IHT liability for the first two years of the investment, until it fully qualifies for Business Relief and is free of IHT. So, the investment is made, the life insurance is in place, and if death occurs within two years, the IHT liability on the value of the investment is covered by the insurance. The full value of the investment is available to the beneficiaries.

This immediately raises two questions; is it going to cost a fortune, and will it involve lots of health questions and medical examinations.

To answer the first question, yes, there is a cost which varies with age, but even for an 89-year-old, it is nowhere near the potential tax liability.

As for the medical issues, the good news is, that as long as you can confirm that you have not been diagnosed with a terminal illness, then you qualify for the life insurance.

Clearly, many people in their 70's and 80's are likely to have been diagnosed with something that will ultimately lead to their deaths. So, you may imagine that they will not be able to answer that they do not have a terminal illness. In fact, as long as they have not been told that their condition gives them a life expectancy of less than 12 months, they can get the cover.

Another, cheaper option, is to insure against accidental death. Particularly for a younger life, health may be good, but you never know when fate may take over and that number 49 bus appears from around the corner.

One of the advantages of BR schemes is, apart from being effective from two years, or immediately if you are prepared to pay, you also retain use of the money. Unlike a gift, you can receive the income from the investment and have access to the capital. These are major considerations for the individual who need their money or believe that the beneficiary of a gift will not be mature enough to receive it.

If you or would like more information, or would like to discuss this, then please do not hesitate to contact me or one of my colleagues, David Hughes and Paul McAtomey.

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UNW's Peter Neal (left) with Bede Non-Executive Director Andrew Marsh

## BEDE GAMING ENTERS NEW INTERNATIONAL MARKETS AND RESTRUCTURES BOARDROOM AFTER STRATEGIC NED APPOINTMENT

Over the past seven years, Bede Gaming has established itself as one of the first-choice gambling platform options for innovative operators across the globe.

As part of its development, the firm sought guidance in areas of corporate governance and, with the support of UNW's Strategic Talent team, appointed Andrew Marsh as Non-Executive Director in January 2017. The fresh perspective has allowed Bede to continue its successful journey, taking its business to the next level both domestically and overseas.

Bede Gaming is an award-winning software company that offers completely flexible gaming solutions with robust security measures, allowing users to bet online using a single sign-on centralised account. With over 3 million registered players and 200,000 monthly users, the firm now supplies its software to over 30 online casino, bingo and lottery websites in regulated markets.

Established in 2011 by Michael Brady, Dan Smyth and Joseph Saumarez Smith, Bede was born out of the trio's desire to create a gambling platform that improved the customer facing experience.

Over the next five years, the company emerged from its initial growth phase with a seven-figure revenue stream. Whilst the boardroom contained a wealth of knowledge on the technical and production aspects of the business, it was seeking a fresh perspective on business strategy and expertise.

In late 2016, the decision was made to appoint a Non-Executive Director (NED) and Bede approached UNW Strategic Talent, a niche service that works closely with clients to source and recruit board-level and senior finance candidates to drive and sustain business growth.

UNW's Peter Neal, working closely with Bede's Dan Smyth, introduced the firm to Andrew Marsh. The match proved to be a good one and Andrew joined Bede in January 2017.

Andrew's role is centred around Bede's governance but, as he explains, has expanded to enable more open and transparent discussions focused on long term strategy: "My role at Bede has enabled the founders and board members to better understand their duties, including scrutiny and decision making. I have been conscious not to overburden the entrepreneurial and creative spirit that got Bede to where it is today but to focus the discussion on items that really matter.

"This shift has allowed the company to substantially increase revenue streams whilst still having the capability to implement its growth agenda and open new international markets."

Andrew, who is also Group Chair for Executive Peer Group organisation Vistage International, boasts a wealth of experience of creating sustainable growth for businesses in a wide variety of sectors, including technology and IT.

Whilst seemingly an ideal fit on paper, Andrew emphasises that the Strategic Talent team at UNW went beyond this to ensure the appointment was right for both parties: "Peter spent a great deal of time getting to know me not only as a NED, but as a person too. It was a well thought through connection, and the team at UNW really made sure that I was right for the role and wouldn't impact the culture.

"It was never about going in and making wholesale changes, but rather prioritising a few key areas to deliver greater impact, ensuring Bede can evolve to a more mature business. The growth of the business over the past year emphasises this."

Bede now has a strong eight-figure revenue stream and is entering new markets in Africa, Scandinavia and most recently North America, where it has been announced that the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation (OLG) has selected Bede as its new digital platform supplier.

It was during this time that the board saw fit to refocus its senior leadership team, which has seen Dan and Michael move into more strategic roles at board level, with Chief Technology Officer Alex Butcher promoted as Bede's new Managing Director.

Speaking on the success of Andrew's appointment at Bede, Peter Neal, Head of Strategic Talent at UNW said: "The appointment of the right NED at the right time can be transformative for an ambitious business, providing a wide array of benefits including filling knowledge gaps within the boardroom, strengthening governance, bringing strong business connections and an objective view on the possibilities and opportunities for business growth.

"It is fantastic to see all of these attributes replicated in Andrew's appointment at Bede as the company goes from strength to strength. This is an extremely exciting time for Bede, and we wish them and Andrew all the best in their future endeavours."

UNW is a leading independent firm of chartered accountants that delivers a wide range of accountancy and business advisory services to its clients. [www.unw.co.uk](http://www.unw.co.uk)

bede

## ADVANCED FUNDING SOLUTIONS FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Do you need short term finance support to help you develop an idea or expand a rapidly growing area within your business? Here at Advanced Funding Solutions, we can provide access to funding quickly when you need support.

Our panel of funders support investment, commercial, land acquisition and development finance requirements as well as providing funding support to clients who are looking to purchase through auctions.

We can help determine the best type of loan for your business by clearly outlining what kind of need the loan will fulfil. We'll look at the best borrowing option for you, with the right lender, and find a result to help finance your need. A short term loan is an option that does work for any businesses that experiences seasonal revenue fluctuations as well as providing a quick revenue injection that will be repaid in under a year. People usually go for this option if they are looking for an immediate purchase of something that will return higher profits for the business, making it easier and quicker to repay the loan to the lender.

Often though, the downside of a short-term loan is that it usually comes with a higher APR and interest rate as well as higher fees, however we will discuss all suitable options with you prior to any application to ensure the most cost-effective funding solution for you and your business.

Another option for business funding is invoice capital release. Do you have a lot of funds tied up in invoices that is causing you cash-flow issues within the business? As your turnover increases and your finance grows, you may be finding it difficult to manage, especially if you have some large invoices awaiting payment or if you have businesses who pay regularly but later than your payment terms.

Invoice Discounting is an effective solution for any business that trades on credit, has plans to expand, is trading with overheads, or is looking to grow.

Being able to release working capital from unpaid invoices, typically one of the biggest untapped assets in a business, allows you to focus on your growth plans without salvaging your working relationship with any clients or suppliers by having awkward payment conversations.

Here at Advanced Funding Solutions, we have access to the whole of the market as well as specialist lenders who'll assess all cases individually for any sort of business finance.



Chris Adlam

Find out how we can help your business with a cash injection visit our website at [www.advancedfunding.co.uk](http://www.advancedfunding.co.uk) or call 0191 486 2089.

## ACCOUNTANCY FIRM TO HELP REGION'S BUSINESSES GET AN EXTRA £1M AND GIVE A MILLION SMILES

Newcastle-based Robson Laidler Accountants has launched a major new initiative to help the region's businesses get an extra £1million and make the world a happier place by creating a million smiles.

The "Get and Give A Million" campaign will help businesses in the region gain or save an extra £1million and to help the UN achieve its Global Goals by creating a million micro-impacts and smiles for people in need.

Launching the initiative, Robson Laidler's managing director Graham Purvis said: "We want to make a real impact on the lives of business owners. An impact that flows over into their families, communities, economies and the wider world. An impact that will help make the world a better place.

"So we have launched "Get and Give A Million" as a free initiative that helps in two ways. Firstly, by making life better for business owners, their businesses and their loved ones (this is the "Get A Million" part). And secondly by helping them to play a bigger game, so they can have more of an impact, and create more of a legacy by supporting the UN's Global Goals (this is the "Give A Million" part).

"Business owners can get involved in three ways; by becoming a client, having a free 'Get and Give A Million' meeting, or by attending one of our events. Whichever one it is they choose the contribution we make from the UN's sustainable development goals, which have been narrowed down by our staff, including Clean Water and Sanitation, Quality Education, No Poverty, Zero Hunger and Good Health to families in countries such as Nepal,



Cambodia and Ethiopia.

"And for every person who signs up to one of our events, seminars or training sessions we will provide e-learning to a child in a developing country."

Since launching the initiative Robson Laidler has already saved its clients over £140,000 and made 18,000 impacts or smiles around the world.

Graham continued: "During the Give A Million meeting we use our skills as great accountants to identify ways to add thousands, and even millions, to their business and personal bank accounts. The areas covered will usually include profit improvement, tax planning, cost reduction, wealth management and

personal finance.

"They leave the meeting with a detailed action plan, a clear understanding of their top three priorities and the lovely warm feeling that comes with knowing they have also helped us take a step towards our target of creating a million micro-impacts and smiles for those in need."

One of the first clients to come on board with the initiative is leading home ventilation company Envirovent North East, who will save £40,000 over five years thanks to tax advice from Robson Laidler.

27-year old Anthony Hunter has recently taken over the North East franchise aiming to make it a £380,000 turnover business in his first year and is projecting a 10% increase year on year within the first five years. He also hopes to create up to seven new jobs within five years.

Mr Hunter has been so impressed with the Get and Give a Million campaign that he has also launched it to its customers, by stating for every new installation the company will provide access to bathroom facilities to a family in rural India for one month.

Anthony Hunter said: "Robson Laidler are a forward thinking and charitable business. Not only do they give sound business advice but are always looking at other innovative ways to help businesses achieve success such as the Get and Give A Million campaign."

[www.robson-laidler.co.uk](http://www.robson-laidler.co.uk)

# PREPARE FOR A SOFT LANDING ON MAKING TAX DIGITAL

As a business owner, I'm sure (or I hope) you're aware that HMRC are introducing new systems to replace the existing VAT and Income Tax returns. The aim is to "Make Tax Digital" (MTD), starting with VAT in 2019, and to have the majority of businesses using cloud accounting software that will enable them to update their tax accounts directly from the software.

Since being introduced in 2017, HMRC have released a number of updates along the way which you may not be aware of. First of all, it's good news, they've assured us of a soft landing (phew). HMRC has confirmed that digital reporting requirements will be relaxed during the first year of Making Tax Digital for VAT-registered businesses.

Whilst businesses across the country adjust to the new software, the HMRC VAT notice, published in July 2018, confirmed the relaxed reporting requirements but made no mention of how the soft landing on penalties will apply.

From 1 April 2019, VAT registered businesses with annual taxable turnover of more than £85,000 will be required to maintain digital records for VAT and submit VAT returns using MTD-compatible software. Under the requirements of MTD, any transfer of data must be carried out using the software which is capable of maintaining the records stated in the regulations, preparing VAT



Returns using the information in those digital records and communicating with HMRC via the Application Programming Interface platform.

However, for VAT periods starting in the 2019/20 tax year, businesses will not need to have digital links for all software and will be able to manually transfer or cut and paste their records instead. Though, this does not include the submission of the VAT return itself, which must be shared with the Revenue using an application programming interface (API).

Now, you're probably trying to wrap your head around all of the HMRC jargon, but don't panic, that's what we're here for. We have partnerships across the country with some of the leading cloud accounting software providers so our specialised team can liaise and assist you in the transition to make sure that you and your business are ready for the big launch in April 2019.

With more updates from HMRC inevitably due throughout the upcoming months, we'll be here to guide you through.

**If you need any advice regarding MTD please visit our website at [www.wellway.uk.com](http://www.wellway.uk.com) or call 01670 514 433.**



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# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## DONNA BULMER

Managing Partner,  
Haines Watts North East.

Donna has worked her way through the ranks to Managing Partner at Haines Watts North East, having joined the firm as a graduate over 20 years ago.

Being a strong advocate of social mobility and diversity in the workplace, has helped her build an organisation that reflects her person-centred style of management.

Having facilitated the growth of the region's two offices and more than doubled turnover over a four-year period, she is now helping to drive national strategy through her position on the Haines Watts' national board. We discovered more about her own path to success...

### WHAT WERE YOUR CAREER AMBITIONS GROWING UP?

As I was going through the education system, there seemed to be very set roles for certain skills. I remember being very proficient at touch-typing and so being encouraged to become a typist. In fact, it's turned out to be one of a variety of transferrable skills that comes in handy to this day.

I think the opportunities now are a lot more diverse for those starting in their careers, and as employers we should be looking at the range of skills people can bring to a role, not necessarily just the educational qualifications they possess.

### WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT?

Being invited to join the board of Haines Watts was a huge accomplishment and it makes me incredibly proud. It was a real honour to be identified nationally, out of over 1,000 staff and 150 partners, based on the strong growth achieved in the North East offices. Our company is going through an exciting period of change and it's great to have a strong role in influencing its future direction.

### HOW HAS YOUR INDUSTRY CHANGED IN THE LAST DECADE?

As is the case with most industries, technology has played a huge role in how accountancy has changed. I think search engines are something of a double-edged sword – they can provide a wealth of answers but, in many cases, a lack of experience or understanding means people are asking the wrong questions and so aren't getting the full picture that they would working with a trusted advisor.



The flipside of this is that a lot of process have become digitised and, as a company that specialises in working with SMEs and owner-managed businesses, it's the strong relationships we develop with our clients that makes us stand out.

Our recruitment process places a far bigger emphasis on people skills than possibly it did ten years ago – there is a perception that accountancy is all about number-crunching and is not often thought of as a 'service industry'. In reality, approachability, interaction, and teamwork are what make the difference to our clients.

### WHAT IS THE BEST PIECE OF BUSINESS ADVICE YOU'VE EVER BEEN GIVEN?

The best advice I was ever given was to forget about the barriers you may think stand in the way of your goals, because you can wind up being the one creating your own limitations.

It's advice I'm very keen to pass on to school-leavers. Whether it's feeling you don't have the right connections, the right exam results, the right background even. There are a lot of opportunities for people who are enthusiastic, willing to learn and have the ambition to grow and drive their careers forward. I think the drive around apprenticeships in

recent years has had a significant impact on inspiring people into roles they may not have thought possible in the past.

### WHAT IS THE BEST THING ABOUT WORKING IN THE NORTH EAST?

Undoubtedly, it's the atmosphere you can find in the North East. Given the size of the region there is still a strong feeling of community and friendliness. The work-life balance here is also difficult to find elsewhere, particularly living only three miles away from work and only three hours away from London by train.

The other aspect I think is unique to this area is the variety of landscapes – we're surrounded by beaches, countryside, buzzing towns, excellent sports facilities, spas, famous landmarks, the list goes on. There's little wonder Newcastle won the Rough Guide award for '2018 best place to visit'.

### HOW DO YOU LIKE TO UNWIND?

I like spending time with my family and exercise is really important to me, it helps me to relax and focus. My typical day starts with a PT session and ends with quality family time, and a glass of wine – with the occasional trip to Ramside Hall spa for some indulgence.

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## JIM MEAKIN JOINS ARMSTRONG WATSON AS HEAD OF TAX

Armstrong Watson LLP, Accountants, Business and Financial Advisers are delighted to announce that Jim Meakin has joined the firm as Tax Partner and taken on the role of Head of Tax across the firm's 16 offices.

**Jim has joined Armstrong Watson from international accounting firm RSM, where he held a number of senior positions including Managing Partner of their Newcastle Office, Head of their London Tax Practice and until recently he was RSM's National Head of Tax.**

Jim has extensive experience across a wide range of sectors, in growing and developing businesses and in helping to solve client problems with a practical commercial style. He works proactively with businesses and their owners as a trusted adviser, using tax as a tool to deliver value and assisting with business challenges and long-term tax planning.

Jim will also play a key part in helping to meet Armstrong Watson's ambitions to develop a stronger presence in the North East, where the firm has already established itself but wishes to create a local presence as a leading firm in its chosen markets. Their first Newcastle office opens in October and comes at a time when the firm has been ranked 28th position in the list of top 100

accountancy firms in the UK.

Commenting on his appointment, Jim Meakin said, "I am delighted to join Armstrong Watson as Head of Tax at a time when the firm is demonstrating real ambition to establish itself in the North of England, the Borders and Central Scotland as the leading adviser to owner managed businesses – these are the economic powerhouses of our region. I really believe the firm is uniquely well placed to meet their needs because of our ability to offer real depth of capability through an experienced team who have a genuine commitment to the success of our clients and of course that of our own business.

As part of this, I look forward to developing our tax capability even further into one which our clients value as a source of proactive solutions to commercial problems and which adds real business value."

Jim's appointment continues Armstrong Watson's investment in their Tax practice and is one of a number of senior appointments in recent months,

including that of Alex Nicholson who joined the firm from PwC in August as VAT Director.

Paul Dickson, Armstrong Watson CEO and Managing Partner added, "We are very pleased to have Jim join us in the role of Head of Tax. It is essential we have focused and ambitious leadership to grow both our tax capabilities and the firm as a whole. Jim's skills, experience and proactive approach complement the Armstrong Watson culture and will greatly benefit the businesses and clients we advise and support. Our ambition is to grow organically and to be the go to firm for family owned businesses in the North and having a strong tax practice is a vital corner stone to achieving this."

"Jim joins us at an exciting time as we continue our commitment to strengthen and develop our position as the largest Independent Accountancy, Business and Financial Advisers in the North and he will particularly help us to expand our presence across the wider region."

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## HELP! MY MORTGAGE PAYMENT HAS INCREASED

So, after years of monthly “no change” interest rate announcements (other than the post referendum decrease being subsequently reversed), Bank of England base rate increased from 0.5% to 0.75% in August, this is the first increase above 0.5% since 2009.

Many mortgage holders have happily remained on standard variable or tracker rates of interest during the intervening nine years, whilst some of these rates will be competitive by historic standards, others aren't. I believe that many of these mortgage customers have failed to review the options purely because their monthly payment hasn't increased, rather than looking at the competitiveness of the interest rate and considering the risks of a variable rate versus a fixed rate for between two and ten years.

So, if you are one of the many people who have seen their payments increase (or at least received a letter from their bank or building society advising of an increase) what should you do?

Of the many options available, doing nothing, however small the increase, is the worst one, a no obligation review with an independent mortgage adviser can consider the numerous routes available to you, and it may be that the advice after carrying out such a review is to do nothing, but why take the risk?

When talking to clients we will consider: -

- Staying with the current lender on a standard variable or tracker rate – this can be the way

forwards if you intend to move to a new house very soon.

- Staying with the current lender but switching to a new rate – having considered the option of re-mortgaging elsewhere – this can sometimes be a good option.
- Re-mortgaging to a new lender to take advantage of some extremely competitive rates which are available currently.

At the same time it is also possible to: -

- Fix the interest rate for between two and ten years to provide certainty of monthly costs for that period.

- Remain on a variable rate to give flexibility to move home or make unlimited overpayments.
- Reduce the overall mortgage term whilst maintaining previous payment levels due to the competitiveness of fixed rates available.
- Arrange an offset mortgage to take advantage of savings which still gain very little in terms of interest received on a standard savings account

The overriding and important message is to talk to a professional and fully consider your options.

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](mailto:paul@innovatempl.co.uk) or [tony@innovatempl.co.uk](mailto:tony@innovatempl.co.uk) or call 0191 223 3514.**

*Your home is at risk if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it.*

Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans





## NORTH EAST FIRM CHANGES THE FACE OF URBAN REGENERATION

Lugano Property Group is building up an impressive back catalogue of work, putting conservation and architectural integrity at the heart of its developments.

The firm is already responsible for the regeneration of part of the former Tyne Tees TV base above Newcastle's Quayside, named Aerial House, as well as operating apart-hotel Kensington House in Jesmond.

Now, Lugano Property Group has embarked on Dissington Garden Village. Spanning 2,500 acres, the estate contains land wrapping around Darras Hall, one of the prime areas of residential real estate in the region.

Lugano Property Group front man Richard Robson said: "We're working on an exciting scheme to create nine luxury town houses near the Town Moor and we have a project in central Hexham to convert a prominent building to new apartments. We still have a great deal on our plate!"



## DERE STREET LAUNCHED LONGHIRST APARTMENTS

Dere Street Homes launch the final stage of their prestigious Longhirst Hall development, with the release of apartments in what was originally part of the former Longhirst Hall Hotel.

The 20 apartments range from one bedroom to three bedroom designs and include several duplex homes over two floors of the three storey building.

Joan O'Connor, Dere Street Homes' Development Sales Manager, said: "There has been an incredible interest in the apartments ever since we first announced our plans for the development. Each apartment is unique and has been thoughtfully designed with a variety of high quality fixtures and fittings."

The wider Longhirst development offers a selection of beautiful homes for all tastes and budgets, ranging from three bedroom townhouses to four bedroom detached homes.

Surrounded by mature woodlands, the development offers residents the perfect location to enjoy the rural lifestyle while being just a few minutes' drive from the beautiful market town of Morpeth.



## BERNICIA'S £190M INVESTMENT PLANS FOR THE NORTH EAST

North East social housing provider Bernicia has recently unveiled ambitious plans to invest £190m into new homes, existing properties and communities over the next five years.

The investment package will deliver at least 500 new homes by 2023 to help tackle the demand for affordable, high quality social housing in the North East.

Bernicia will also invest £60m to improve its existing housing stock and boost support services for its 60,000 customers who live in properties across Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, County Durham and Hartlepool.

John Johnston, Chief Executive at Bernicia, said: "Bernicia is in an ideal position to help drive forward the North East's vision for growth and prosperity. Our investment strategy is an exciting opportunity for us to build on the high levels of customer satisfaction we have, delivering the high quality, affordable homes that our region badly needs."



## SUBSTANTIAL SEA FRONT HOTEL IN WHITLEY BAY ON THE MARKET

Specialist business property adviser Christie & Co has brought to the market The Royal Hotel in the iconic seaside town of Whitley Bay.

Sitting on the promenade, the seafront hotel provides 40 guest bedrooms, a substantial bar and restaurant, a breakfast room with an adjoining kitchen and off road parking for guests. The ground floor is leased to an Italian restaurant, which generates additional rental income for the owner.

Ideally located, The Royal Hotel is situated a few hundred yards from the Spanish City, offering tourists an ideal base to explore the area and its major attractions.

After building up the business, owner Paul Johnstone has decided to sell the hotel to concentrate on his other business ventures.

Paul explained: "This is a great opportunity for someone to take over an already successful business and to also capitalise on the huge regeneration of Whitley Bay seafront."



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## The Croft Adderstone Crescent, Jesmond

The Croft is a fabulous detached property on the corner frontage of Adderstone Crescent and Lindisfarne Road. It was originally built in 1925 with significant refurbishments and improvements made since that time. In 2008 a fabulous single storey extension was added to provide beautiful accommodation.

**Price Guide: £2,500,000**

7 3 4 D



**rare!** From Sanderson Young

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





# Willoughby House Walled Garden, Matfen

An outstanding stone-built detached house, constructed in 1996 by local builder David Meakin, and then extended to create a magnificent family home. It enjoys a fantastic and mature garden plot of approx. 1 acre with south facing views towards the adjacent golf course at Matfen Hall.

Price Guide: £1,750,000

6 4 4 D



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www.sandersonyoung.co.uk





PROPERTY OF THE MONTH

## END HOUSE, BROOM LANE, WHICKHAM



## PRICE GUIDE: £795,000

End House is a unique and very special detached house, significantly extended and remodelled to create a fabulous family home, completed to a very high specification with delightful interior design. This beautiful property has extensive and versatile accommodation with six bedrooms, the master stretching the full rear width of the house, a well equipped kitchen with high gloss cabinets, and underfloor heating in all of the bathrooms. The gardens surrounding End House are immaculate and include a tall, walled garden providing very good privacy and seclusion and a highly impressive rear terrace finished with timber decking, raised flower beds, beautiful lighting and an outdoor seating area. The property has a private driveway, leading to a courtyard and garden area, and provides parking for many cars as well as access to the detached double-plus garage with excellent storage space.



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



# The Steadings Bonas Hill, Ogle

The Steadings provide two luxurious Grade II listed stone-built homes which have been superbly refurbished to a high standard. East Steading is now fully complete and benefits from a magnificent open plan living, kitchen and dining area. West Steading is due for completion by November 2018.

Prices from £675,000

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4 5 3



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ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk  
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# PROPERTY PEOPLE...

## NEIL HART

Group managing director, Bradley Hall.

### DID YOU ALWAYS ENVISAGE A CAREER IN PROPERTY?

Not really, I'm a failed sports man. I desperately wanted to play pro rugby but was never good enough!

At that time those involved in elite sport seemed to be pushed onto a surveying course (probably because they knew that so many failed in their bids to become professional sportsmen, but they never told us that!). If I'm honest though in the end the surveying course probably contributed to my sporting failure as I totally fell in love with the industry.

### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CURRENT ROLE?

I began my role as managing director in 2015 and shortly after became group managing director as the firm grew and the group companies developed. BH companies now include BH Planning and Design, BH Financial Services and BH Mortgages.

The business has grown, I support the excellent staff and leadership team we have, whilst also remaining focussed on providing the very best service to clients I have worked with for a long time.

### HOW HAS THE HOUSING MARKET CHANGED SINCE YOU STARTED YOUR CAREER?

I began my career in 2000 with Bradley Hall. The millennium brought a great deal of excitement, and with the first five years commercial and residential property prices rose significantly before the recession hit in 2007 and the subsequent property price plummet during 2008 and 2009. Since then the North East property market has experienced ups and downs, however our business, amongst others in the region, has proven that both the commercial and residential market continues to strengthen.

### HOW WOULD YOU ADVISE PEOPLE LOOKING TO BUY PROPERTY?

The current market is littered with rumours of uncertainty due to Brexit and property shortages, however, our operations continue to go from strength to strength. Our residential offices have reported a 50% increase in year-on-year sales



revenue, which further supports the fact that now is as good a time as any to purchase a property.

I always urge people to engage professionals. You show me a property expert or chartered surveyor at Yopa or Purple Bricks and I'll show you a flying elephant!

I also advise everyone that 'just because it happens in London doesn't mean it will in the North East'. This is a great region to live and work, and while I believe the market is good and will steadily continue to improve, no one becomes a millionaire overnight!

### WHAT IS THE MOST EXCITING THING YOU'RE WORKING ON?

I still work closely with several clients on exciting sales and acquisitions both locally and across the country. Bradley Hall is a truly regional firm, however, now we have branched out to also support our clients with our national reach and capabilities.

Clients and the whole team at Bradley Hall will tell you that everything about the business really does excite me about this role - sometimes they think I'm mad.

### WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST CAREER MEMORY?

That's easy - the current management team is outstanding, and all were handpicked by me.

When each member was appointed we made a business plan, and everyone has exceeded that plan. This business is built on people and this team is delivering with real determination

### WHAT ARE YOUR REMAINING CAREER ASPIRATIONS?

Strategic growth for the group business. Rome wasn't built in a day, but is pretty spectacular now.

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

I have a dream of living in semi-rural Northumberland, but as my wife says the traffic would torture me and I couldn't walk to the pub. I live in Gosforth and it really is the centre of the universe - everything on the door step and only 3 mins to the office.

### TELL ME ABOUT YOUR TEAM?

We have a big team with some big personalities. Our entire business is rooted by the great relationships we build with clients. Our team aren't just a dedicated and dynamic group of industry experts, they are also a team of personable and sociable individuals who enjoy spending time with their colleagues and clients. Everyone is truly driven, passionate and invested in their role and in the company, which I believe has been a key factor in our success.

[www.bradleyhall.co.uk](http://www.bradleyhall.co.uk)



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the way.



## LEADING PROPERTY FIRM APPOINTS CHAIRMAN TO SUPPORT CONTINUED GROWTH



Neil Hart and John Marshall

One of the region's leading property firms has announced plans to introduce advisory board amid the rapid growth of the company during its 30th year.

Bradley Hall Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents has appointed established local businessman and solicitor John Marshall as chairman of the advisory board. He will work in close partnership with the senior management team to support its ambitious, continued expansion strategy.

The firm's turnover has increased by 87% in the past three years under managing director Neil Hart, alongside the opening of new offices and a significant increase in staff numbers and its services. Bradley Hall now has operations in Alnwick, Morpeth, Gosforth, Newcastle, Durham and Sunderland with plans to launch further offices.

John said: "I am delighted and proud to be appointed as the chairman of the advisory board for Bradley Hall at such an exciting time in its development.

"The firm has displayed significant growth across every aspect of the business and has become one of the region's leading, and most dynamic organisations."

John built his legal career between 1989 and

2016 at Dickinson Dees LLP, which became Bond Dickinson LLP in 2012 following a merger facilitated by a team including John. In April 2010 he was elected as senior partner at the firm and in 2012 became vice chairman.

John's other roles include being chair of Newcastle Gateshead Initiative, as well as a non-executive director of North East Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust and North East England Chamber of Commerce. John is also involved in the region's charities, and is chair of trustees of Newcastle United Foundation and chair of the Regional Development Committee of the Prince's Trust for the North East.

John is also heavily involved with a number of the region's educational organisations and is a member of the governing body of St Chad's College, Durham University, a member of the international advisory board for Newcastle University Business School and a governor of Northumberland Church of England Academy, Ashington.

Group managing director Neil Hart said: "We've

had an absolutely outstanding few years in terms of growth and business success, and it's showing no signs of slowing down.

"We have a very talented and dynamic team with a great deal of passion and experience behind them. The advisory board has been appointed to further add to that knowledge of the regional and national marketplace and to support us with growing our network and opportunities moving forward."

Recent growth has also enabled the firm to become established as a full-service agency with specialist departments including; mortgages, residential agency, land and development, commercial agency, property management, professional services including valuations and lease renewals and building surveying.

Sister companies of Bradley Hall have also been launched under BH Group, including BH Planning and Design and finance brokerage service specialising in sourcing and financing cars and business BH Financial and building firm Anwood Construction.

For information on its services please visit the Bradley Hall website [www.bradleyhall.co.uk](http://www.bradleyhall.co.uk)



# THE COURT

## UNDERCLIFF HALL, CLEADON VILLAGE

**OIEO £995,000**

EPC Rating - Exempt



x 4



x 5



x 5



The Court at Undercliff Hall is a beautifully preserved Victorian property, in the sought-after village of Cleadon. Sitting in one acre of walled mature private grounds, The Court is a fabulous family home with a one bedroomed restored cottage within its grounds.

The current owners have invested in

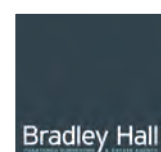
carefully renovating the property while maintaining its original features.

This luxurious and traditional property is just three minutes' walk to the heart of Cleadon Village, with all its wonderful amenities including; boutique shops, restaurants, tea rooms and historic public houses.

Seldom does the opportunity arise to acquire such a property and viewing is highly recommended to appreciate this property's full splendour.

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## ORGANISING EXTRAORDINARY MORTGAGES FOR EXCEPTIONAL CLIENTS

By Director of Mortgages and Finance, Lewis Chambers

As the famous saying goes; with great power comes more complex mortgage applications – or something along those lines.

High earning individuals employed full time by an organisation can benefit from a simple mortgage application process, however, business owners or those who have more than one enterprise iron in the fire could possibly encounter a more complex process.

For example; those who have an inconsistent income, sole traders and those who receive vested share bonuses or have additional investment incomes will encounter a more complex mortgage application process. Those who have careers in 'risky' industries such as professional sports or performing arts will also certainly fall within the same category.

Earnings might be high during a certain period of the year or during their career and lower during others, which means that finding proof of high income to lenders who need to underwrite them can be difficult and time-consuming.

Business owners and high earners who take out larger mortgages are often seen as more 'at risk' - which is why a concrete application is essential in order to be accepted.

These mortgages could be for a high end residential property which the applicant plans on making their home, or one or more buy-to-let investment properties.

We specialise in handling cases from across the board and have a breadth of experience in managing complex cases for high earners and entrepreneurs. We provide the best possible quality of service by going through the following steps;

### WE KNOW OUR LENDERS

We work tirelessly to maintain the highest standard of knowledge of the best offers from all lenders. We have developed great relationships with mortgage providers, keeping in touch regularly and even securing exclusive deals.

### WE GET TO KNOW YOU

We know everyone is different and no two cases are the same. Our team get to know our clients inside out to ensure we provide a mortgage offer which is perfect for them. We communicate in an efficient way to find out all the relevant information to build the strongest case possible to lead to a successful solution which the client is happy with.

### WE KNOW THE APPLICATION ESSENTIALS

For larger and more complex cases lenders will require additional information to support the application. These additional documents may not be obvious, and with our expertise we know what information will sway a lender to provide a good mortgage offer. For such cases this may include directors' tax assessments, dividend statements and retained profits as well as certain accounts.

Not supplying the correct documentation can lead to being declined or delaying the process considerably.

### WE TAKE THE STRESS AWAY

We know that high earners and business owners are often busy. We respect all of our clients' time - so we endeavour to take the stress away, managing each bespoke application while communicating the appropriate and relevant information to maintain our clients are well informed and content throughout the process.

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## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF IAN TEW

Partner at Knight Frank Newcastle

**6.30am.** I get up, make breakfast for me and my two boys who are 9 and 13, take our dog Murphy for a walk and then set-off for work. I drive and it usually takes me about 20 minutes, followed by a short walk along the river, which isn't the worst way to start your day!

**8.15am.** Coffee. Possibly two. Needs must. At this time of day it's quite calm and still in our usually busy, open plan, office on Newcastle Quayside. We overlook the Tyne and the view never gets old. I can sit and think through everything my team has got going on, before the phones start to ring and the emails start bouncing through.

**9.00am.** I have a two-hour conference call with the lawyers of a client that we are managing a build project for. They are a global manufacturing giant spending over £10m on huge improvements to their facilities and we are managing the project from beginning to end – from the design, to procurement, to the build itself.

On the call we talk through a range of legal requirements that need to be actioned before we can start the build at the end of the month.

It's a really exciting project to be involved with and will provide a step change for the business but it hasn't been without its challenges. Together with the architect, and the client, we have been in lengthy consultations with planners and heritage bodies because part of the development includes the regeneration of a fairly significant listed building.

**11.00am.** I have a catch-up with one of my team, Puneet, about how he's getting on with some Due Diligence surveys that we carried out last week for a London-based fund. This job came on the back of previous surveys we've done for this particular client and this time they've instructed us to survey a portfolio of care homes that they are considering buying.

The whole point of the survey is to reduce the risk in the purchase. We do this by highlighting any structural issues with the buildings, any statutory non-compliance, lack of maintenance and end-of-life issues, but we also point out potential opportunities for improvements. Most importantly, we tell them what capital works need to be done, the cost of that and who has responsibility to pay for it.

The report helps the client fully understand what they're buying, at a glance, and ensures they've considered the impact of any significant issues within their financial figures and analysis.

We do Building Surveys and Dilapidations Surveys on a whole range of different property types – from offices, to hotels, to leisure centres, to factories. And throughout any typical day I take several phone calls to deal with technical or other queries.

**12.30pm.** Lunch is usually on the hoof. I grab something from a café on the Quayside, or a supermarket if I am out on inspections. Not too many glamorous, Michelin-starred, corporate lunches for me I'm afraid.

**1pm.** I head off to the hills of County Durham for a site visit with my colleague Sarah to check on the progress of a £1m, 17,000 sq. ft. HQ office relocation that we are project managing. Now this one has been a labour of love because the client is really fun to work with and very passionate about their vision for their building. Seeing it coming to fruition after many months of planning and construction is really satisfying.

Enabling businesses to move from old to new premises is a big part of what we do. A move can involve so much more than physical build work – from rebranding, to IT solutions, to HR – it's so important that all of these are taken into consideration.

**4pm.** I have a meeting with one of our building surveyors, Wilf, about a dilapidations exercise we're doing. The client is a landlord of a large factory in Northumberland where the long-standing tenant has recently moved out.

The tenant has significant repairing obligations under the terms of their lease, which we have identified and costed to demonstrate the expenses involved. To make sure we have captured as much as we can, we've also been running tests on the building's services. All of this will form part of a claim that we'll submit to the tenant's surveyor.

**6.00pm.** Both my sons play cricket, football and rugby and I'm a volunteer at two of those clubs so many an evening, straight after work, I'm heading off to some sports pitch or other. If they aren't playing sport, then I probably am. Then it's home to have dinner with the boys and my wife Kate.



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](mailto:ian.tew@knightfrank.com) 0191 594 5012.



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# WHAT IS TOWN PLANNING?

By Edward Vaudin, Town Planning Assistant, Planning House



Edward Vaudin

Photograph: Liam Plesley

Think about where you live, where is your local shop? Where is the nearest park? Where can you get something nice to eat? Are these places easy to get to? You would probably like to improve things where you live, maybe there needs to be more shops or things to do. Once you start thinking about these improvements, where would you put them? Where can they go?

Apply this to other aspects of your local area like new homes for the growing population and you will start to realise how many important questions need to be answered about the places we live; these places have communities that have and will exist for years to come.

People are in general passionate about where they live. However, are they fully aware that the decisions made on 'what goes where' could impact the community for generations?

Over time, different people have voiced their ideas, some have succeeded, and some have failed, but throughout we have come together to work on a system that supports everyone, everywhere. As much as I find people passionate about the places they live, they see planning as somewhat of a mystery or a barrier. So, what is the system? What is town planning?

Town planning is what controls how we build our neighbourhoods, our towns, our cities, how we build our surroundings. Importantly how we shape our communities. Town planning sets

guidelines to make sure developments do not have adverse effects on their surroundings. It also protects listed buildings – buildings that we have deemed important to heritage, culture and history. It is also important to protect our green spaces and countryside. Imagine if there were no rules on where you could build! Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty could be disrupted with inappropriate development and habitats could be destroyed, driving away nature.

National planning policy is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework; it provides guidance for how local plans should be made and how to approach supporting local needs by promoting sustainable development in terms of economic, social and environmental needs.

Of course, planning is a complicated machine with many cogs turning away at different speeds, meaning planning is controlled by different bodies at varying levels dependant on where you are. Town planning is mostly handled at a local level of government. Typically, local government has three tiers:

- County Councils;
- District, Borough and City Councils;
- Parish and Town Councils.

Most planning matters are handled by the second tier of councils; this can vary from place to place. Areas that have parish or town councils can provide more location specified plans called neighbourhood plans which form part of policy that are used to make decisions in planning.

Communities generally have Councillors to represent people and their aspirations in terms of how a place develops. Councillors may sit on planning committees to make decisions on planning applications and local plans, but all of us are responsible for shaping the area we live.

In my opinion engagement is the key to shaping communities without it the Town Planning system fails to be effective. If you're asked for your views on a proposal or an emerging local plan take time to think of your vision for the area and needs of the community and have your voice heard by participating.

PLANNING HOUSE can be contacted on 07944844882/info@planninghouse.co.uk or by visiting [www.planninghouse.co.uk](http://www.planninghouse.co.uk)

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## BERNICIA £190M INVESTMENT PLAN FOR NORTH EAST HOMES AND COMMUNITIES

North East social housing provider Bernicia this month unveiled ambitious plans to invest £190m into new homes, existing properties and communities over the next five years.

The investment package will deliver at least 500 new homes by 2023 - and significantly exceed this number if opportunities arise - to help tackle the demand for affordable, high quality social housing in the North East.

Bernicia will also invest £60m into improving its existing housing stock and boost support services for its 60,000 customers who live in properties across Northumberland, North Tyneside, Newcastle, Gateshead, Sunderland, County Durham and Hartlepool.

The company is headquartered in Ashington, employing 550 people at four North East sites with a £70m annual turnover.

Its new corporate investment strategy 'Housing People, Helping People' is building on its reputation as one of the region's fastest growing companies.

The £190m investment plan comprises:

- £70m funding to build at least 500 new homes
- A £60m planned programme of investments in its existing 14,000 properties
- A £50m responsive repairs programme
- £7m spend on improving the communities and neighbourhoods Bernicia manages
- New digital technology to make it easier for customers to access services

Bernicia Chief Executive John Johnston said: "Bernicia is in an ideal position to help drive forward the North East's vision for growth and prosperity, especially within the housing sector.



John Johnston, Chief Executive at Bernicia

"Our investment strategy is an exciting opportunity for us to build on the high levels of customer satisfaction we have, delivering the high quality, affordable homes that our region badly needs now and in the future.

"As a company formed and based in the North East, we care deeply about our tenants and the communities they live in.

"We will be investing in those neighbourhoods by not only improving our existing homes but by supporting community projects bringing people together and creating opportunities for people to improve their lives.

"Bernicia is also investing in digital technologies to transform our services for customers, so that they can access our support at times and in a way that suits their needs."

James Ramsbotham, Chief Executive, North

East England Chamber of Commerce said: "This substantial investment is a tremendous boost to our regional economy and excellent news for businesses who work with Bernicia.

"The North East has a shortage of high quality homes, and it's great to see one of the region's housing providers making such a strong commitment to change that and help build an environment for economic growth. These plans are an exemplar in social housing and really help to set the bar for the homes of the future."

As well as building new homes and delivering high quality rental properties, Bernicia provides specialist care and management services.

It provides housing services for single people, couples, families and older people and customised help for those that need additional support.

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



Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

## FREEHOLD OR FREEDOM?

This month I thought I would take a look at the joys for young professionals of renting property.

As someone in the office pointed out, this is akin to an undertaker asking if people wouldn't mind dying more often since I am the owner of an award winning property management company. We specialise in lets for young professionals. **Mea Culpa.**

But my job brings me into contact with a large number of young professionals so I am uniquely placed to feel the zeitgeist. Newspaper headlines tend to focus on the gloom of young professionals unable to get onto the property ladder and the statistics are indeed alarming.

Massive student load debt means more than a third of first time buyers are now over thirty. According to research by Bradford & Bingley, the average house deposit is £34,500. Yet 15 percent of people under 30 have no savings at all, a further 8 percent have less than £1,000 and 27 percent have saved £1,000 to £6,000.

Yet the news for 'Generation Rent' is not all bad. A large number of our young professional tenants

have no immediate plans to jump on the housing ladder, preferring to rent a refurbished property in a nice area. The rent is within their budget for a property they couldn't possibly afford to buy. This is largely a lifestyle choice which means they can afford a nice car, holidays and perhaps a pilgrimage to Glastonbury in 2019.

When young professionals do decide to climb onto the property ladder I always advise caution. Plan for the long term and do not be panicked by rising house prices into jumping at the first attractive deal. Problem is, there is no dedicated advice service for first time buyers. The Conveyancer is a property professional but their job is to ensure the legals are correct, not to hold the buyers hand. There is a lot of sound information on the internet but there is also a fair bit from people who appear to talk to space aliens.

Buying a flat is an attractive option for first time buyers since a flat will typically be 10 percent cheaper than a similar size freehold house. But there's the rub. With a freehold you own the

property lock, stock and barrel. With a leasehold you are effectively paying someone to live in their property for, typically, ninety-nine years.

This means the value of your lease diminishes over the years, as opposed to a freehold which will generally increase in value over time. If your lease gets to below 80 years, it can become an issue. You can usually pay the freeholder to extend it if you wish to sell or remortgage but you will pay thousands, sometimes tens of thousands of pounds to do this.

Does renting now look like the sensible option? For some young professionals the answer is definitely 'yes'. For others the dream of owning your own bricks and mortar still has a huge pull. When renting, maintenance is the responsibility of the owner. On the other hand, nobody ever got rich by selling their tenancy agreement. Whatever the decision, I would say ignore the doom laden headlines and enjoy the relative freedom of Generation Rent while it lasts. That Glasto tent has years of wear left in it.

## JT PLANNING SETTING SIGHTS ON NEW AREAS



L-R: Jon Tweddell with Kieran Atkinson

North East independent planning specialist JT Planning has this year made its first step into providing other complementary services by employing a full-time land surveyor.

**As a result of this investment in staff and equipment, JT Planning is now able to provide topographical surveys for developers and a wide range of professionals including architects, engineers and land agents.**

The addition of Kieran Atkinson to the team along with state-of-the-art laser equipment including a Leica Total Station has resulted in him winning new accounts for the firm as well as enhancing services to existing clients.

Prior to joining Jon Tweddell at JT Planning, Kieran, from Amble, had worked for leading national surveying group Greenhatch, working in Newcastle for several years.

Kieran said: "To date we have already carried out a wide range of topographical surveys in Northumberland, North Tyneside, Durham and Scotland.

"We're often asked to provide surveys for difficult sites that include significant tree cover and level changes. I'll generally spend a day on site collecting data, and then spend a day transferring

the information into Auto CAD for use by the developer's architect or surveyor.

"The information is particularly important for matters such as boundary disputes as a high level of accuracy is required to determine the route or ownership of a boundary."

Kieran recently undertook a topographical survey for a challenging site near Berwick, Northumberland. It is a heavily wooded area and the client is keen to demolish the existing building and erect a much larger, ultra-contemporary replacement.

Off the back of this job JT Planning has been appointed to collate and lodge a planning application for the new development. A planning application was recently lodged with the local council.

Jon Tweddell, director of JT Planning, added: "We're steadily adding complementary services to our core planning consultancy work. The rationale is twofold – to offer clients a broader, improved service while also hopefully growing revenues.

"Certainly, on the sites where I'm acting as the

planning consultant, we are often asked to price for the topographical survey too. Our established client base is certainly using our practice for their survey requirements when historically they would have used others."

The practice has also been asked to become involved with a wide range of other related services such as providing data for boundary disputes and Land Registry compliant plans.

Jon added: "When we submit a planning application we often need accurate site information including confirmation of boundaries and levels. Kieran's involvement in gathering and processing this information has become a fundamental part of the business.

"Not only has he been able to establish a new income stream but he also has a keen interest in planning so is also able to assist with collating planning applications."

Going forwards, JT Planning aims to gradually build the service offer, to provide clients with a wider range of expertise.

**For more details visit [www.jontweddell.co.uk](http://www.jontweddell.co.uk)**

## ARE YOU STILL LIVING IN THE 70'S?



The 70's most favourite object for the home was a conservatory, a grand addition at the time, and something many longed for during the Summer months, come Winter though, those doors were shut and the cold well and truly set in.

Additional living space has changed over the years and many built 30 or 40 years ago are no longer fit for purpose; sweltering in the summer and freezing in winter, and with this year's temperature extremes, we've had an abundance of calls to upgrade the old-style glass roofs on conservatories ahead of what's set to be a drastically cold turn of the year.

In the past, insulating a conservatory roof by converting it to a sunroom was a major construction job – requiring the removal of the conservatory roof, windows, the installation of steel supports and the addition of a full tile roof. Not anymore...

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WE HAVE A FEW QUESTIONS FOR YOU...



WITH ALL THE RECENT CHANGES IN LEGISLATION IS YOUR PROPERTY COMPLIANT?

DO YOU KNOW WHAT IT COULD MEAN IF YOU ARE NOT COMPLIANT?

E.G. DO YOU PROVIDE THE MOST UP TO DATE RIGHT TO RENT GUIDE TO YOUR TENANTS?

DO YOU KEEP DETAILED MAINTENANCE RECORDS?

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## ASK SILVER BULLET...

“  
SHOULD I  
FOLLOW  
MY IMPULSE  
OR DATA IN  
MARKETING?  
”

I knew an in-house Marketing Manager who said she had over 10 years of experience of marketing her particular company's service and she followed her gut instinct as it had never let her down.

But, maybe the manager actually had one year's experience 10 times over – she wasn't open to new methods and believed her old ways were the only ways. Just as importantly, her 'gut instinct' may have worked over 10 years ago, but her company's clients, the way they interacted with her company and the channels available to communicate a marketing message had all changed, whilst she hadn't.

And the crazy thing was that there was an abundance of customer data to show the company this, had anyone looked rather than basking in the loyalty of a rapidly aging and declining client base.

So, we're firm believers in using the data available – we may know the product or service intimately, be completely familiar with past sales success and even helped establish its route to market but we're not the consumer so basing our marketing on what we THINK the consumer likes is plainly reckless at best. We have to ignore our own tastes and tune into what the customers actually like about our offer and what triggers their decision to purchase



John Dias

a particular product or service. Taken to one extreme, it's why males can successfully market ladies lingerie and females are equally adept at promoting aftershave – neither group may be customers of their particular product but they can both identify and target their respective customers' tastes through analysis of data.

The same principle applies to marketing everything from legal services to aerial access platforms. Understand your customers, what leads them down the road to purchase and what diverts them, what media platforms are influential, what are their competitors doing, where are the gaps in the market and how can we take advantage of them. Once we have this data, and there's a plethora of sources available from Google Analytics for information about our own company to Market Research into general trends, then we can begin to formulate the marketing strategy.

The gut instinct strategy may involve advertising, for example, but the data is showing the Return on Investment is very low, whilst editorial coverage has been far more effective. Alternatively, the data

may reveal your brand is tired or your marketing collateral is dated or the external market has so radically altered that your offer is no longer attractive and maybe we should be thinking about a rebrand? Perhaps the growth and potential of digital marketing hasn't been fully utilised so that a whole new tranche of marketing tools have yet to be tried?

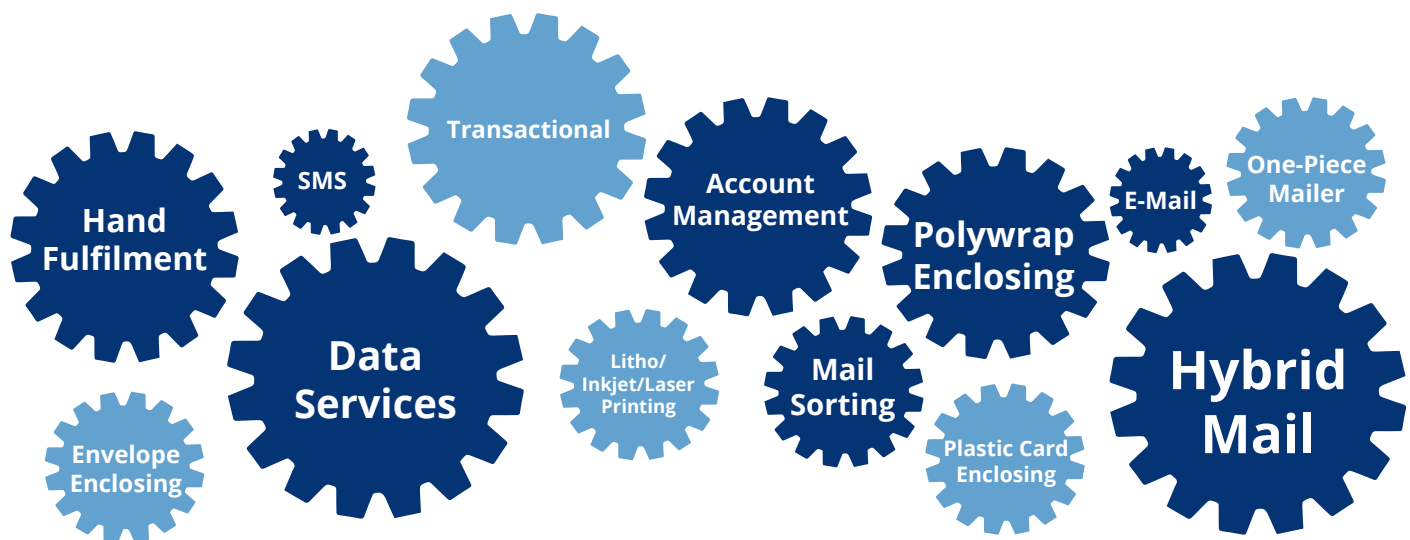
It's irrelevant whether this work is carried out in-house or externally sourced. If you have the resources for this internally, great, but external agencies come without the baggage of internal politics and history and can provide a completely neutral take on a marketing challenge with a fixed cost. The salient points are that, firstly, an agency understands from experience with diverse clients in diverse sectors that they are not the customer and their personal preferences and gut instincts are irrelevant. Secondly, they are divorced from your product or service and will offer an impartial strategy that delivers cost-effective solutions based not on history or past office allegiances, but on customer data.

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

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## METROMAIL CELEBRATE 30 YEARS

Since Chris Pygall, MD, took over the reins over two years ago, MetroMail has jumped from strength to strength. Fostering the "MetroMail Way" philosophy, the company has adopted a "people-centric" approach – investing in staff and making clients a top priority so everyone has the best experience with MetroMail. With this recent rebrand MetroMail is stronger than ever.

MetroMail first opened their doors in 1988 as a hand fulfilment company and have gone on to expand their areas of expertise in printing and mailing – giving clients a true 'full-service' mailing house. To celebrate their 30 years of being in business MetroMail recently hosted a family fun day event for all of their employees, celebrating their hard work over the years.

Through-out the day tribute acts performed music from across the decades. Starting in the 1980's and stretching to present day, artists included: George Michael, Gary Barlow, Meghan Trainor and Taylor Swift.

As well as this, families got to enjoy a mouth-watering complimentary hog roast lunch as well as many other sweet treats and goodies from the stalls that attended the event.

In this day and age, for a company to reach their 30th anniversary is a monumental occasion and MetroMail hope that they can continue offering innovative mailing-solutions to businesses for another 30 years!





# NIKE SHOW WHY BRANDS WHO STAND FOR SOMETHING WILL RISE ABOVE THE NOISE



'Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything.'  
Never have more prophetic words been spoken by a Nike Ad campaign.

To recap, Nike launched its new campaign in September, celebrating 30 years of its famous "Just do it" slogan. It's fronted by highly controversial figure Colin Kaepernick, the former Superbowl contending quarterback, who famously kneeled during the national anthem in protest at social injustices faced by black people in the United States.

Not since the days of Muhammad Ali has there been a more politically divisive figure in the sporting world and it's, quite frankly, overdue... and full credit to Nike for embracing it while many others may have shied away from his nuclear heat.

The reason the quote at the beginning of the article is so apt is that the ad hasn't come without its detractors. The company's stock price fell by 3% by the close of the market in the 48 hours after the ad first aired. Of course, social media was alight, ironically, with people burning their shoes and socks in protest of Kaepernick's inclusion in the ad and Nike's voluminous support of him. Let's not forget, this is a guy who hasn't played for a professional team since the San Francisco 49ers released him at the end of that famous 2016 season.

However, at the time of writing this article stocks had already rebounded to above pre ad values and the suspicion is they won't stop there. Nike was perceived to be losing ground on the youth market to the highly socially aware Adidas, with the three-striped brand utilising some of the biggest influencers in the world to out-influence



their competition (just after Nike released their ad, Adidas announce Kylie Jenner as their latest brand ambassador).

Nike's ad will no doubt swing that balance, with Nike going all-in on the gamble that the socially conscious millennial generation will counteract the, perhaps more stern, older market. More than a few, however, have been critical of Nike's calculated gamble of making commercial gain from political tension. However, cause-related activity is becoming one of the smarter ways of aligning your brand with something that actually matters to people. Is that such a crime?

On social, in the week after the first play of the ad, a very vocal minority of close on 9,000 were sharing the hashtag #JustBurnIt. When compared with the 719,000 uses of #JustDoIt, the level criticism doesn't appear that bad. It's pretty safe to assume Nike would have run this campaign knowing full well there would be some strong backlash.

Kaepernick wasn't the only athlete featured in the campaign, with flamboyant wide-receiver Odell Beckham Jr. and tennis great Serena Williams also included. Ironically, just days after the ad released, Williams unleashed a justified (or unjustified, depending on what side of the fence you stand on) outburst at the match umpire in the US Open Final. She was docked a game during the match, which she would go on to lose, and was fined \$17,000 for what many commentators said was no more or no less of a crime that many male players appear to go unpunished for. 'Stand for something, even if it means sacrificing everything.' Wow, Nike had it bang on. Even in the ad, they were already pointing an accusatory finger at tennis officialdom, when they highlighted the mistreatment Williams received while playing in a bodysuit in the French Open recently.

I think this should serve as a lesson to a lot of creators and communicators to embrace messages to their full effect. Far too many fall into mediocrity while sitting on the fence for fear of reprisal. I for one applaud Nike on giving back a small deposit of the profit and faith that African-American athletes have given them over the years.

Ben Holden is an account executive at W North. [www.wnorth.co.uk](http://www.wnorth.co.uk). Follow @WCommNorth on Twitter.

**SPOTLIGHT**

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## INNOVATIVE INBOUND APPROACH SEES GOLDEN RESULTS FOR GATESHEAD FIRM



While summer can often mean taking your foot off the gas a little, and comparing tans from far-flung destinations, the team at r//evolution have never been busier.

The last few months have seen the award-winning agency welcome new clients, bring in extra team members, introduce a dedicated Partner Growth team, and become the first agency in the North East to become a Gold-Certified Agency Partner with HubSpot.

The Partner status recognises the strategic approach r//evolution takes to developing a holistic marketing strategy for client accounts; from developing in-depth profiles of target audiences, known as buyer personas, to identifying the sales funnel of individual businesses and defining correlating marketing activity tailored to each stage.

Managing Director at r//evolution, Gill Burgess, explains: "We're delighted to have been recognised as a Gold-Certified Agency Partner with HubSpot. This is an acknowledgement of the dedicated approach we have taken to delivering results for our clients. We know that marketing can deliver

fantastic results when it is based on a solid strategy. "Our work with HubSpot allows us to deliver marketing strategies that are sustainable and can easily be scaled-up as businesses grow and expand. Whether growth means a new product offering or new audiences to reach, we work to give our clients a competitive advantage - helping them to define their business against competitors, recognise their USPs and understand how best to channel that into marketing activity."

This approach, alongside the results produced on behalf of clients, has seen the company welcome on-board new accounts from across the UK, representing a range of B2B and B2C sectors - including manufacturing, retail, construction, professional services, tourism and technology.

In order to continue delivering effective results for their extensive range of clients, the team recently welcomed seasoned Account Managers,

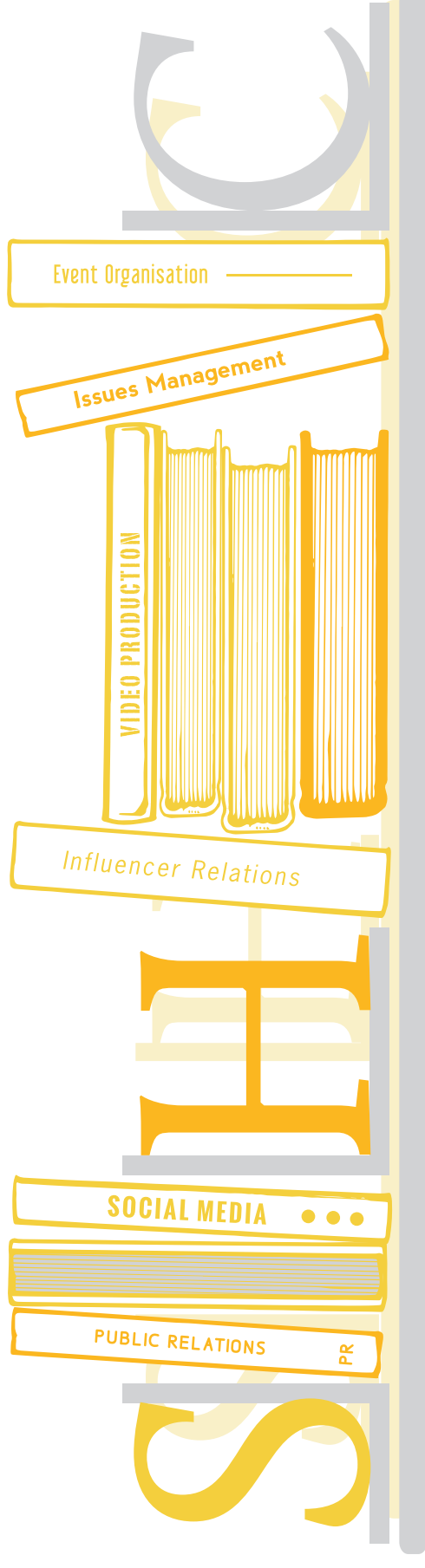
Samantha Wilcox and Chris Glancey, with further appointments in the form of talented Lead Generation Specialist, Steve Tomlin, and experienced Digital Manager, Danielle Woods. The new appointments bring with them the experience of working across a variety of regional, national and international brands, including Sanderson Weatherall, STA Travel, Ford, Ralph Lauren and Virgin Atlantic.

Gill continued: "We're delighted to attract new talent to our growing team, to ensure we stay at the forefront of results-focused marketing. The results we are achieving for our clients are clearly resonating and helping to fuel both their growth and ours."

To find out more about developing a growth focused marketing strategy, contact r//evolution on 0191 499 8428 or email [steve@r-evolution.co.uk](mailto:steve@r-evolution.co.uk)

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## DO DIFFERENT THINGS, AND YOU'LL DO THINGS DIFFERENTLY



Having had a busy couple of weeks early in September, I found myself wondering about the value of networking and doing different things.

Is this what continuing professional development is all about? Making sure we are continually updating our skills, contacts and knowledge to keep ourselves relevant for our jobs and life in general? How can we put an ROI on this activity?

It all started with the North East Marketing Awards judging day – organised by Echo Events it was great to see so many applicants shortlisted for interview and also to see so many senior marketers in one place. I made the acquaintance for the first time of my fellow judges, and we were blown away by the calibre of the shortlist for Rising Star – to be announced at the Awards dinner on 18 October.

That was followed by our CIM Meet with Drinks at the Crowne Plaza. We're never sure how many people will turn up, but what we do know is that we will meet old contacts, make new ones for our business and that all the participants enjoy networking with each other.

The following week I took part in the Sales v Marketing Debate, at TusPark in Grainger Street. Organised by John Tennant of Converge and

compered by James Ealey of NGI Solutions we had a great panel discussion and a broad audience. Collectively it was agreed that to get it into the back of the net you have to have everyone working as a team with the same objectives, and ideally rewards, in mind. Thanks to everyone for all the positive feedback on social media that this attracted.

It turned out to be another busy Thursday (is that a theme?) as CIM also hosted an event at the fab new PROTO building in the Baltic Quarter on Artificial Intelligence. The next morning, I felt compelled to text Pete Daykin (of Daykin and Storey) to thank him as I felt like I'd woken up the next day almost understanding what artificial intelligence was all about. Check out their website for some great case studies.

As the month has progressed, we have had some brilliant contract and course conversions, some of which date back to initial discussions in the autumn of last year. So, I guess the message is while you can't immediately identify the return on time invested in networking what you do know is that if you are canny and targeted with your time, it will always reap the rewards in the longer term.

**Veronica Swindale, Director, Chartered Marketer, FCIM, CIM Ambassador of the North. 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.**

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## TEESSIDE COMPANY LEADING HEALTH MATTERS RESEARCH IN UK FOOD INDUSTRY

### Latest Trade Interchange White Paper Highlights Solution for Controlling Antibiotics in Food Supply Chain

Research by a Teesside company released this week has been shared with the UK food industry in a bid to stop dangerous antibiotics in livestock reaching consumer's plates.

Trade Interchange, a leading supplier management solutions provider that specialises in the industry, collated the findings into the white paper 'Anticipating Change: Antibiotics in the Food and Drink Supply Chain'.

The paper shows that currently only four out of 10 businesses in the food service and food manufacturing sectors actually monitor antibiotic use in the supply chain. This is despite increasing evidence from the World Health Organisation that its administration to animals in the food supply chain is dangerous to long-term human health, as it can build up a resistance to the drugs.

However, a more heartening 77 percent of those in the industry are aiming to take the health threat seriously in the future and have concerns about the increasing pressure from customers and stakeholders to tackle the issue.

The white paper was conducted with 225 professionals directly responsible for managing food and drinks suppliers. It should, therefore, drive a change in the way that supplier information is managed across the food service, hospitality and food and drink manufacturing sectors to ensure the reduction of routine antibiotic usage in livestock.

Co-founder and managing director of Trade Interchange, Mike Edmunds, said: "This concern spreading through the food and drink industry is heightened when operators use manual systems to document and store vital supplier information, which can be unmanageable, especially if the supply chain is large.

"Major issues such as antibiotic use in livestock and the potential negative



impact on human health means full visibility must be sought when sourcing products, and when undertaken manually, this can be difficult to achieve.

"The solution lies in specialist software such as Trade Interchange's ARCUS® Supplier Information Management (SIM) module. This allows businesses to improve transparency of what matters the most, improving the quality of their supply chain and streamlining the process of on boarding and managing supplier data. This reduces risk to both the companies and the consumers, ensuring compliance, protecting company brand and reputation."

ARCUS® is a cloud based platform that is changing the way many prestigious brands, including Domino's, Brakes, PizzaExpress and Sodexo manage their supplier information.

The white paper is free to download and can be found at [www.tradeinterchange.com/resources/antibiotics-food-drink-supply-chain-white-paper/](http://www.tradeinterchange.com/resources/antibiotics-food-drink-supply-chain-white-paper/)

**More information is available at [www.tradeinterchange.com](http://www.tradeinterchange.com)**

## YOU'VE "HIGHLIGHTED" OUR BUSINESS – NOEL COMMON

Highlights PR is a successful PR agency run by Keith Newman. Uniquely, their office is a boat based on the River Tyne. Here we look at how Highlights PR have helped one of their clients.

Many of Highlights PR's clients are large organisations who are looking to raise awareness of their products or services to give them a competitive edge. However, not all of Keith's clients are business orientated.

One recent example is a 74-year-old freemason from Morpeth who has just completed the Great North Run in a little over three hours to raise money for a cancer charity.

Noel Common was diagnosed with Prostate Cancer earlier this year and wants to make a positive difference to help other men like him. He last did the Great North Run some 28 years ago and hasn't been running since.

Every year, approximately 1.1 million men are diagnosed with prostate cancer. It is the most common form of cancer (other than skin cancer) diagnosed in men. Prostate cancer has the potential to grow and spread quickly, but for most men, it is a relatively slow growing disease. Symptoms can include urinating frequently, especially at night, pain or burning with urination, passing blood and pain in the hips, pelvis, spine or upper legs.

Highlights PR featured Noel in a number of newspaper articles, online news sites and he also appeared live on BBC Newcastle where he met Alfie Joey and Anna Foster.

Noel said; "I'm really grateful to Keith for the exposure he managed to achieve for my run. Not only did it attract more sponsorship but it also raised awareness of Prostate Cancer.



To see how we can help you, let's have 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](mailto:Keith@highlightspr.co.uk)



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new customer (lol)



## NEW BUSINESS DRIVES GROWTH FOR GATESHEAD TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

North East technology company Synergi continues to go from strength-to-strength with a clutch of new business wins worth more than £200,000.

Synergi, which is marking its fifth anniversary with plans to grow its UK presence in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London, will be supplying Newcastle's Ryder Architecture with Nintex technologies designed to track and support the development of new starters.

The firm is also supplying the latest Microsoft Office 365 and Dynamics 365 financial cloud solutions to Cottam Brush Ltd in Hebburn, as part of a programme by the industrial brushes manufacturer to modernise its business processes.

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service will also be investing in Synergi's business transformation technologies to improve health and safety.

Elsewhere, Mayborn Group in Newcastle is digitising its requisitions, contract management and capital expenditure processes through Synergi-supplied Nintex technologies.

The new work is the latest success for the technology specialist, which focuses on providing advanced cloud solutions using a Microsoft toolkit of software and Nintex business applications.

Currently employing a 20-strong team of technology and digital transformation consultants at its Watermark business park head office, Synergi has seen year-on-year growth of 30% with annual turnover set to hit £2m within the next 12 months.

Peter Joynson, Synergi Managing Director, said: "We are winning more and more work, both nationally and regionally, through our focused approach to technology solutions that deliver long term efficiencies and tangible benefits. As a Nintex partner, we also continue to go from strength-to-strength, delivering added value solutions to organisations through the automation of many functions that are traditionally undertaken by people."

## SOFTWARE FIRMS SET FOR FURTHER EXPANSION



Sunderland Software Centre is celebrating after two of its tenants have announced plans to relocate to larger premises in the city.

AM3D, which specialises in 3D printing, and Frontier Technical, which has pioneered cutting-edge technology to transform the offshore sector, have benefited from the software hub.

However, after a significant period of growth, Frontier Technical has relocated to the purpose-built £6m Washington Business Centre. AM3D has also grown rapidly, securing contracts with firms from a range of sectors. The company is therefore joining Frontier at Washington Business Centre.



## BIG NEWS FOR SINTONS

Fast-growing business park TusPark Newcastle has partnered with Newcastle-based Sintons, with the law firm being selected as a specialist organisation to support the progress and development of the park's tenants, all of whom are tech businesses with high-growth potential.

Sintons joins a number of global brands in being a partner of TusPark Newcastle. An ultra-modern co-working space on Newcastle's Grainger Street, the facility has already become a highly respected name in the region's tech and wider business community.

Sintons has been chosen as a partner in recognition of its tech specialism and knowledge in the wider commercial field.



## DIGITAL COMPANY GOES FOR A PIZZA THE MARKET

The FoodHouse, a new site designed and built by North East entrepreneurs Roger Byrne and David Duff, is set to stand up against other popular takeaway platforms.

By taking a much smaller percentage-cut of orders placed through its site than many of its closest competitors, The FoodHouse hopes to deliver a similar service to the market's major players but without making it difficult for restaurants that use it to make money.

The FoodHouse also supports businesses to create their own ordering systems with both digital apps and websites.

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**Date:** Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018

**Venue:** St James Park, Newcastle

## Your Professional Panel

Led by our Technical Director and security expert Andy Hunter, the panel will include industry, backup, resilience, legal and insurance experts. As well as taking questions from the audience, they will answer questions submitted in advance from those who cannot attend.

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## ITPS SUPPORT PERCY HEDLEY FOUNDATION AT GNR 2018

After months of training, the big day finally arrived and Team ITPS took part in the world's biggest half marathon. Staff from ITPS called upon colleagues, family and friends to fundraise in support of The Percy Hedley Foundation (they also sponsored running vests for over 100 runners!) and certainly earned their crust running the 13 miles in temperatures of up to 18 degrees. Percy Hedley staff and volunteers were at the finishing tent armed with oils and expert hands to ease the runners muscles and Susan Jopling, Director of Corporate Strategy and Policy at ITPS was there to show her support from dusk till dawn. Funds continue to rise as donations still flood in weeks after the muscles have eased and the memories of the supporting crowds fade for another year.



# MINIMISING RISK IN A DIGITAL WORLD



Media headlines that scream 'Cyber attack cripples NHS' could have you thinking that cyber-attacks happen rarely, or only to large, high profile organisations. But you would be wrong.

Cyber-attacks are not unusual, they happen every day. They happen to organisations just like yours, and the threats change at an alarming rate. You may have heard of ransomware and malware, but how much do you understand about the latest trends in extortion and crypto-mining, and how to defend yourself against them?

As leading IT security experts, a lot of our work sees us help clients in highly sensitive situations deal with cyber attacks that could seriously damage their businesses, or even result in their collapse. The sad fact is that many of these situations could have been prevented, if the right precautions had been put in place.

Take SMEs, for example. They make up 99% of private sector businesses, and over 80% of them think they are too small for cyber criminals to target, yet according to the Federation of Small Businesses, they are actually targeted seven million times a year. Cyber criminals see them as easy targets, mainly because they do so little to protect themselves and are seen as a perfect vehicle for reaching larger organisations, through their supply chain.

Even the smallest of businesses can sign up to the Government-backed Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus Cyber Essentials scheme,

designed to help you guard against the most common cyber threats. Having this certification reassures customers and prospects that you take IT security seriously, and is mandatory for certain government contracts.

If you are one of the increasing number of organisations considering taking out cyber insurance, having Cyber Essentials in place demonstrates your commitment to cyber security, helps you achieve GDPR compliance, and in some cases reduces your premiums too.

There is a lot you can do to prevent and deal with attacks, and to really protect your organisation and your ICT environment, you should start with a top to bottom review.

Your IT partner should have the skills and experience to carry out penetration testing and vulnerability scanning to test the strength and security of your network and systems, and report on potential exposures. These could range from holes in your network set up, through to poor user security practices such as weak or shared passwords that would allow a hacker easy access.

One of the key factors in protecting your business is deciding how much downtime you could live with. Do you want your systems and data back up and running in minutes, hours or days? Check

out the handy online calculator on our website, which will show you what every minute of downtime could cost you. We guarantee you will be surprised at the results.

Deciding how much downtime you can live with will help you to create a business continuity and disaster recovery strategy. This is the document that will keep your business running whatever the circumstances and you are likely to need an IT security partner alongside you, to help you make the right choices.

While we are strategic partners to many of the world's best of breed IT vendors such as Microsoft, Cisco, Virgin and Zerto, we do not believe in dictating what you need. We would rather work alongside you to identify the issues, and then look at the technology options that will solve the problem.

If you would rather not be a sitting duck for criminals, come along to our next security briefing panel event in November and hear UK security experts talk about the latest threats, outline some real live cases that you can learn from, and show you how to manage the risk to your organisation.

Whatever you do, please don't do nothing.

For more information call 0191 442 8300, email [contact@itps.co.uk](mailto:contact@itps.co.uk) or visit [www.itps.co.uk](http://www.itps.co.uk)



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## ROB MATHIESON

Owner & Managing Director of technology firm, ION.

### HOW DID YOU START YOUR CAREER IN THE TECH INDUSTRY?

After graduating university with a degree in Internet Technology I built my career at some of the region's top digital agencies, including TH\_NK. I eventually decided I wanted to create my own digital products working with businesses within the education and engineering sector and from 2007 to 2014 I ran my first tech business. This really let me cut my teeth in the industry.

### TELL US ABOUT THE INCEPTION OF ION

When we set up ION two years ago, we wanted to specialise in and create the best Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems for businesses. After identifying Salesforce as the best product on the market we became an official partner. Because business transformation can be a broad topic, Salesforce gave us a platform to deliver across all areas.

### WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT?

When we started up, we identified an aggressive growth strategy and spent 18 months delivering on that. We have been extremely fortunate that other opportunities have also come up which has enabled us to expand that market and given us significant growth opportunities over the next few years.

### WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

We have an incredibly effective business transformation process that we adopted to develop our own framework which allows us to have a positive

impact on the overall operational capacity of our clients.

### WHAT DO YOU THINK THE FUTURE IS WITH CRM SYSTEMS AND HOW IT WILL HELP BUSINESSES LONG TERM?

CRM systems are ultimately integral to the core functionality of all businesses. They help increase productivity and scale up financially and operationally. To be able to sell their services or products faster and smarter means they have an edge over their competitors who don't have these types of systems in place.

### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE ASPECT OF YOUR JOB?

Meeting the customers. I love working with people and finding out what the problems are and how to fix them so they can grow their business. I also love my team - I know everyone says that but they are genuinely a great group of people.

### HOW DO YOU MEASURE SUCCESS?

I think it's through the growth of the company and customers choosing to use us and our services. We have more than tripled our customer base since launch and much of it is through recommendation and enquiries are continuing to grow rapidly.

### HOW DO YOU REMAIN MOTIVATED?

We have put our goals firmly in place from the start and have always looked at the bigger picture - i.e. where we think we can take the business and the scope of what we can build. We are still in the early stages but are definitely on track.

## IN CONVERSATION WITH...

### IAN GILLESPIE

Managing Director, Activ Technology.

#### WHAT WERE YOUR CAREER AMBITIONS GROWING UP?

I left school with no qualifications and thought that farming may have been a good option. I grew up in Northumberland and a lot of my friends were farmers. However, my ambition was to make money so I started working with my father in the motor trade and began to build up my business knowledge.

#### TELL US ABOUT ACTIV TECHNOLOGY.

I established Activ Telecom in 2010, and rebranded in 2013 to Activ Technology as we diversified our offering to become a managed service provider for IT and telecommunications across the North East and Scotland.

#### WHAT'S YOUR PROUDEST BUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT?

My proudest business achievement was establishing Fone Logistics in 1996 and 14 years later growing it to 150 employees. We grew to in excess of £100 million turnover before selling it. I am also proud to say that I was able to determine when the time was right to sell the business.

#### WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE YOU HAVE ENCOUNTERED?

The biggest challenge is always finding the right people who have the drive and ambition to grow with you. Also, it is never easy to secure funding, but we did and this has helped Activ to grow.



#### HOW HAS THE INDUSTRY CHANGED?

The changes that have taken place in our sectors in recent years have been breath-taking and it is not going to slow down. You have to embrace it and move with it constantly. It can be challenging but that's what makes it so interesting. We have diversified our offering away from just mobile to offer customers an integrated IT and telecommunications service.

#### WHO ARE YOUR HEROES IN AND OUT OF BUSINESS?

Inside of work I have always admired Charles Dunstone, the British co-founder and former chairman of mobile phone retailer, Carphone Warehouse.

Outside of work my family and I are heavily involved in horses, it is a great passion. I have always admired Chris Bartle, he teaches and trains riders at the Yorkshire Riding Centre and travels across Europe. His passion has grown into a successful business.

#### IS THERE A MANTRA YOU ALWAYS ASPIRE TO DO BUSINESS BY?

Yes, it is to be open and honest and I have always liked the phrase 'a fair day's wage for a fair day's work.'

#### HOW DO YOU LIKE TO UNWIND?

I enjoy spending time with my friends and family and with our horses. I am also partial to a very good glass of red wine.

[www.helloactiv.co.uk](http://www.helloactiv.co.uk)



## NURTURING SKILLS IS KEY TO SUSTAINING OUR SECTOR, SAYS TECH CHIEF

Tech trailblazer Saggerza is planning to double the number of staff at its UK headquarters in Sunderland this year. But this growth doesn't come without its challenges, as Martin Williams, Saggerza UK's managing director, explains.

**Saggerza is a global business - with offices in Sunderland and London, as well as the US and India - that works with some of the world's best-known businesses to deliver bespoke tech solutions which generate bottom-line benefits.**

The firm was founded in Chicago in 2006 by serial-software entrepreneurs Socka Suppiah and Arvind Kapur. A year later, the company expanded into India, opening its Bangalore base, then San Jose's Silicon Valley, before the UK was identified as a target.

Martin Williams, Saggerza UK's managing director, was the man tasked with establishing the business in the UK, starting off in London. "I joined the company as its first UK employee back in 2014," he recalls.

"Prior to this, I worked for an aviation business, which at the time, was working with Saggerza to help us make better use of our software. I was the company's first and only UK employee, which was both exciting and daunting.

"There was me, a desk and a chair in an office in Paddington... But, I knew the company's capabilities having worked with them as a client, so I knew we had a valuable proposition."

Martin's hunch proved right and Saggerza was a huge hit in the UK from the off. The company landed a huge contract to work with a global printing firm just weeks after launching and the work soon started to roll in.

"Before we knew it, we were up to a team of 20 employees in London and firing on all cylinders," he added. "The offer worked for the UK market, just as well as it did overseas. In fact, we soon realised that there was even more demand for our services here in the UK."

London proved to be a great starting base for the company, but as a 'small fish in a huge pond', Saggerza found that its growth was being hampered by the ultra-competitive market in the capital. With this in mind, the firm decided to spread its wings.

"One of the members of our London team was from the North East and suggested it might be worth exploring an office in the region, and so the

discussion began," says Martin, who works between Sunderland and London.

Then, in 2014, Saggerza began the search for possible bases in the region, and found the perfect location at the Software Centre, in the heart of Sunderland city centre. It not only provided the right infrastructure, but also the right workforce.

"We visited the centre and immediately knew it would be a great fit for us. It was centrally located, enjoyed great links to London with a rail station and direct connection to the city just minutes away, and of course the building was custom-built for businesses just like Saggerza.

"We met with Sunderland City Council's business investment team, and agreed to test the viability of opening an office in the centre. It became clear to us very quickly that this could really work."

Within a year, Saggerza had relocated its UK HQ to Sunderland, and recruited a team of 14 people to service the growing number of clients on its books.

The company has since grown to a team of 45 and Martin and his team have ambitious plans to increase this further over the next 12 months. However, he is aware of the challenges this will bring.

"Companies across the UK are struggling to recruit staff with the required skillsets to fill highly skilled roles, especially when it comes to software, java and GMC developing," he adds. "And the North East is no exception.

"One way we have helped to try and plug this skills gap is through the OGravity coding club, which was set up to teach 8-11 year olds how to code."

The club - which ran weekly groups up until March 26 - worked with young people every Monday evening to teach them the technical skills to expand the popular game Minecraft, by using java and a system and course called Code Kingdoms.

He continued: "It helped inspire the next generation to take an interest in technology, and sparked a desire among many of them to pursue a career in the sector in the future.

"We've also worked with the local universities and

colleges to help give students an insight into what the world of tech can offer them.

"It's fantastic for us to be able to showcase the opportunities available here in the North East to local people.

"It reassures them that they don't necessarily have to move away to fulfil their dreams, there are opportunities aplenty right here.

"But, whilst this has helped spur on the next generation of workers, we still have to address the pressing challenge in front of us of improving the skills of the existing workforce."

The latest research by TechNationUK and EY backs up Martin's claims, highlighting that on average, there are around 1.4 job adverts for every digital tech worker per year across the North of England, and the skills gap is only growing wider.

Looking ahead, Martin is keen to stress that, as more businesses look to relocate to the region, we must continue to develop the skills of our workforce to ensure the sector can compete on a global stage.

He concludes: "More and more technology companies are now looking to relocate to the region and, whilst it's great news for the sector and the regional economy, we must all work together to ensure we continue to nurture the skills of our workforce.

"The North East is a fantastic place to start and grow a business and is fast establishing itself as a breeding ground for high growth tech businesses. But we must make sure the sector is sustainable. Collaboration is key and communication is vital.

"Working together, the private sector must work closely with education providers and the public sector to ensure we're doing all that we can to push the sector forward.

"As we approach post-Brexit Britain, it's up to both employers and educators to cast their nets wider and devise new ways to reach and train raw talent.

"You can't build a business without people and we all have a role to play in ensuring we have the right people here to take our companies forward."

## BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN TALENTED DEVELOPERS AND THE RAPIDLY GROWING £1BN NORTH EAST TECH SECTOR



As the North East tech sector continues to grow - the focus shifts to the demand for highly skilled and experienced developers.

A report by tech Nation states that the community is 'worth almost £1bn and is growing twice as fast as the rest of the economy'. Already home to the likes of Bede Gaming, Ubisoft, Mkodo, Orange Bus, VisualSoft, Tombola and Epic Games, the area now has the addition of award-winning Gamevy.

High-quality producers of real-money games, Gamevy, has existing offices in Berlin, London and Bilbao - and have chosen Newcastle as their new studio location due to the quality of talent in the area.

North East DigiTech talent recruitment specialist Ronald James group was chosen by Gamevy to source and provide skilled developers from their extensive candidate list.

James Blackwell, CEO at Ronald James said: "Helping Gamevy to build a new team in Newcastle is a huge privilege for us. Our city is full of talent and this is a great opportunity for highly skilled developers and designers to work for a forward thinking and innovative organisation. We have already placed five new developers and we are looking forward to helping the team grow."

Dan Rough, chief operating officer at Gamevy said: "We have an exceptional tech team – and it means we're only ever looking for exceptional people to join us. We were really impressed by the people we met in Newcastle and we're convinced that we're going to build a vibrant, entrepreneurial games studio here."



James Blackwell

Interested in a role at Gamevy? Visit [www.ronaldjamesgroup.com](http://www.ronaldjamesgroup.com)

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# MAKING AN IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY WITH CARDINAL HUME CATHOLIC SCHOOL

By David Hicks, Director, Deloitte



This year I've had the opportunity to shake things up a bit by working with students from Cardinal Hume Catholic School as part of our One Million Futures initiative.

It aims to help one million people get to where they want to be; whether it's in the classroom, the workplace or the boardroom. We are working with over 50 of the most inspiring social enterprises, charities and schools across the UK including our Newcastle office school partner, Cardinal Hume Catholic School in Gateshead.

It's hard to say what my expectations were at the start of my mentoring journey, but I've been blown away by the effort and commitment of the students. They have interacted with the mentors, and each other, with great enthusiasm and passion, making my role all the more interesting and rewarding.

Having been at Deloitte for over 25 years, I have developed a set way of walking and talking that isn't likely to elicit a consistent level of engagement from sixth form students! I feel this is one of the biggest challenges for us as mentors, to remove ourselves from the 'corporate speak' and create a connection that strikes the right balance of being informative, relevant and relatable to as many of the students as possible. Ultimately, we want them to see that we're just normal people too, and anybody can succeed in professional services (or indeed any other career) with the right attitude and application.

Over the year we have set the sixth form students



a number of challenges, from our TMT Predictions School Challenge, whereby they pitched an entrepreneurial business idea to a panel of experts and competed with other students from across the country; to a mock recruitment process, where the students experienced each phase of the process from application to interview. Over 50 CVs and cover letters were submitted, the best 20 were assessed by Deloitte with the top 5 students invited to our Newcastle office for a mock interview.

I was again taken aback by the students. They were attentive from the moment they entered the building, keen to impress and most importantly

extremely professional. One of the most impressive things was their willingness to take feedback on board, both positive and developmental. This openness to development in particular is often something that falls away in later life, as people get more closed to what they perceive as criticism, so the attitude of the students is an absolute breath of fresh air.

Overall it has been a pleasure to act as a mentor to the students of Cardinal Hume, and I look forward to seeing them develop on their individual career journeys.

The icing on the cake is the feedback from the school. Martin Errington, Assistant Head Teacher, Cardinal Hume, said: "It can often be difficult to arrange meaningful employer engagement for students. We have been very fortunate in that the partnership with Deloitte has allowed a wide range of opportunities for our students. Deloitte's willingness to offer both time and expertise has helped both the students and teaching staff of the school to focus on developing the skills and attributes required for the next steps in their pathways. A major reason why we want to take part in employer engagement is to raise the aspirations of our students."

If you have the chance to get involved in something similar, I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it.

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# COULD WE EVER BE GENDER FREE?

By Kieran McLaughlin, Headmaster at Durham School



There was a fascinating programme on BBC2 over the summer entitled "No More Boys and Girls: Can Our Kids Go Gender Free." Despite the tabloid-courting headline, the idea behind the programme was a good one, as it set out to explore how much gender differences were ingrained into children from the moment they were born and how much were they a result of how they are brought up.

One experiment conducted was very interesting if not hugely scientific. The programme makers took two very small children, a boy and a girl, though at a sufficiently young age that it was difficult to tell the difference. They dressed the boy in a pink dress and the girl in a blue shirt and trousers and placed the children separately in play areas with a mix of toys such as dolls, robots, Lego and so on.

Adult volunteers, both men and women, were asked to play with the little children using the toys around. Without fail, those adults who were playing with the child in the dress reached for the dolls and the pink fluffy toys; those that were playing with the child in the shirt and trousers encouraged them to play with the robot or the lego. The adults just assumed that a girl would prefer a doll and a boy a building project. Of course, once the results of the experiment were revealed to the adults they were mortified as each considered themselves to be fully woke to gender issues. Some kind of instinct had just kicked in.

As I said, this is not the most scientific controlled experiment in the world, but the results are thought-provoking. Are boys and girls naturally more suited to one type of play than another? Or have they all just grown up in a world where dollies and Wendy houses are girls' toys and toy cars and building bricks are for boys? How can we tell whether there are inbuilt differences between boys and girls in terms of their interests and aptitudes, because the expectations we



Kieran McLaughlin

as a society of adults have of each gender are set almost from birth. If a boy grows up believing that he must be sporty or he must be interested in robots, does that stop him from exploring other interests which are deemed girly and may invite ridicule? Similarly, do girls stop studying physics or design because there is a perception that these subjects are only for boys?

It's a worry. Firstly, because we are placing unnecessary limits on youngsters' ambitions. But, more importantly, we are potentially inhibiting what are very natural feelings for either genders. In a time when mental health issues are on the rise, an attitude that "boys don't cry" is actually quite a dangerous one. Similarly for girls, a pressure to conform to what is often a stereotypical view of femininity: a way to look, a way to behave, things that they must be interested in can become dangerously oppressive.

Is there a problem? Does it matter if boys and girls are hardwired to behave in different ways as long as this plays to their relative strengths? In a society where high status careers are increasingly to be found in the areas of technology, maths and science I believe it is. It is beholden not only on schools but on us as parents and citizens to enable both genders to enjoy that success rather than closing those avenues off to one. Equally, youngsters who are not motivated by those trappings but who want to work for more altruistic should not be dissuaded from doing so by preconceived ideas. Schools are a wonderful breeding ground for opportunity but they operate within a broader society whose prejudices can be difficult to overthrow; it is the responsibility of all of us to do so.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email [admissions@durhamschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@durhamschool.co.uk) or visit [www.durhamschool.co.uk](http://www.durhamschool.co.uk)



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## TEACHING AND LEARNING – THE RGS APPROACH

Every teacher, and every school, has their own approach to teaching and learning, and the Royal Grammar School Newcastle (RGS) is no exception. Here, Director of Studies, Roger Loxley, talks about the RGS approach, focusing on the transition from Junior to Senior School.

"There is a real pleasure in teaching Year 7 students. They are, without exception, curious, excitable, energetic, fearless and relatively small. They ask great questions, they ask silly questions, they ask questions of procedure that simply baffle those of my colleagues who do not teach Junior School; it really doesn't matter whether the date is put in the top left or top right of the page, or whether they write in pencil or in pen. There is so much enjoyment to be had by teaching this year group.

Two months ago they were in Junior School, but now they are in big school and everything seems to want to change. The management of the transition from one to the other is therefore something that requires a bit of careful thought. We don't expect them to behave like Year 8s from the word go, but then we don't expect them to be exactly like Junior School students either. They need to adapt and change and we need to help them do that.

Similarly, it's a difficult transition for parents. They no longer gather at the school gate eagerly awaiting those happy, smiling faces so full of stories about the day. That's quite a difficult change to manage as, perhaps, their relationship with the school becomes that little bit less intimate.

One of the changes we need to manage early in Year 7 is how children learn and how our teaching

supports and promotes that. We need to ignite the curiosity and build on the excitement that they show in such abundance in those early September days. We must encourage that sense of fearlessness in getting things wrong. But we need to recognise that, as children, they grow up in different ways and develop that sense of self that make them unique.

So, what's it like to learn stuff at RGS? What's a typical classroom like in Year 7? The first thing to say is that it's very different from what it was when a lot of us were in Year 7! We have a good intake of intelligent students who we can challenge intellectually. We like to think that we consider each of them as individuals, pay attention to their individual needs and adjust what we do accordingly. We don't like to spoon-feed; we want, above all else, to encourage our students to be strong, independent thinkers, capable of arguing a point and considering all views. We want them to be resilient in their learning, willing to try new things, to make mistakes, to learn from them and to move on. We want them to push themselves, to reflect on their learning and develop robust strategies for solving problems. That means we need to model this behaviour as teachers by taking risks with our teaching and not playing safe. We want to harness the power of different teaching strategies and using technology where it really enhances the learning.

We want learning to be fun and exciting. We want children to challenge us, to ask us difficult questions and make us defend a position. We expect them, in return, to try hard, to read, to pay attention, to be co-operative. We don't want them to ask for help from the teacher the moment they encounter a problem. We want them to be equipped to use different strategies before they ask the teacher. We want them to get things wrong. It's only by making mistakes that we understand how to improve. The classroom should be the safest place to have a go at something. If they didn't get it right, then they simply haven't got it, yet. But it will come.

We don't expect them to get everything right from the start. We don't expect homework to be 10 out of 10 all the time. If they're always getting 100% then are we really teaching them anything new or is it just too easy? There's no challenge in that.

Above all else, homework should be manageable and purposeful. It really shouldn't take students hours to complete nor should it be too hard or, worse still, too easy or pointless.

The best education is only possible through good mutual understanding and support by school, student and parents. We need to keep that dialogue open, trustworthy and honest. This we hope continues throughout their journey at RGS.



# FUTURE LEADER



RGS

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# FROM THE HEADTEACHERS STUDY...

## FIONA COLEMAN

Newcastle Preparatory School.

### DID YOU ALWAYS ENVISAGE A CAREER IN TEACHING?

When I left university, I was unsure of which path to take but I did know for certain that I wanted a career where I could make a tangible difference to the life of others, where personal interaction was key and where I would have the opportunity to be creative and have fun. Teaching has ticked all these boxes and more.

### WHAT WAS YOUR BACKGROUND PRIOR TO JOINING NEWCASTLE PREPARATORY SCHOOL?

My teaching career has been varied and I have always embraced the opportunity for challenge and change. Having gained an English degree from Keele University and later, a PGCE from Leicester University, I taught English at Secondary level in Leicester. This was followed by a year in Barcelona which was a brilliant experience and made me realise what a versatile career, teaching could be. It was here that I discovered a real love of working with younger children and on my return to England I moved to Newcastle and taught in middle schools in both Whitley Bay and Gosforth. My next stop was Newcastle Preparatory School which has provided me with an incredible series of opportunities over the last 16 years, including undertaking the roles of English and Drama Co-ordinator, Special Needs Co-ordinator, Deputy and now, Headteacher.

### WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO ACHIEVE IN YOUR FIRST YEAR AT THE HELM?

I am extremely fortunate to be undertaking the role of a Headteacher in a school which is thriving, has extremely strong foundations and has a secure understanding of what an excellent education is. I am very much looking forward to working with my talented staff, highly motivated pupils, supportive parents and proactive governing body to continue to provide high quality learning experiences for all children both within and outside of the classroom. I am particularly hoping to listen, to collaborate, to consult and take time to work with others so that our school continues to grow and flourish.

### WHAT DOES A TYPICAL DAY ENTAIL?

It's only early days but I've quickly learnt that there's nothing typical about being a Headteacher. The variety of each day, dealing with the unexpected and working with such a wide range of people is what makes the role so rewarding. I like to get to school early so that I have time to collect my thoughts and enjoy the peace and quiet while I can. My main priorities are to be visible, present, positive



and available. This may mean visiting classrooms to observe lessons, meeting parents, holding curriculum development meetings, attending events, showing prospective parents around school, teaching, giving assemblies, listening and encouraging others whilst also celebrating successes or thinking of ways to motivate. The emails, planning and administrative tasks happen after school has finished and the to do list just gets longer and longer but I always remind myself that it's the people in school who are my priority.

### WHAT DO YOU MOST ENJOY ABOUT YOUR ROLE?

I enjoy working with people and building positive relationships. My role allows me to encourage others and to develop shared goals so that all children have a positive experience at school and are given a wealth of opportunities to fulfil their potential.

### WHAT IS YOUR MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF YOUR JOB?

The most challenging aspect of my job is ensuring that I prioritise effectively, delegate when possible and use the talents of my staff to move projects and plans forward. It is a constant challenge to ensure that I am leading rather than managing.

### HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE THE EDUCATION SECTOR EVOLVE IN THE NEXT 5-10 YEARS?

Teaching is renowned for being one of the most rewarding yet demanding careers. Recent research has shown that many young teachers are leaving the profession after 5 years due to low morale and excessive workload. Luckily that isn't true of my present school but it's important not to become complacent. One of the greatest challenges that faces the education sector is recruitment, and retention of teachers entering the profession to ensure that our children have the best possible

start in life. I would like to see schools where flexible and creative approaches to working practices are embraced, effective well-being policies are in place and research forms the basis of educational policy and practice.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU LIKE TO GIVE YOUR 18 YEAR OLD SELF?

If something looks completely impossible, it's probably the very thing you should be doing. So don't say no too quickly.

### WHO ARE YOUR HEROES?

A recent hero for me is Caroline Criado-Perez who has tirelessly campaigned to get a woman's face onto a British bank note and was then unbelievably subjected to a torrent of verbal abuse on social media when Jane Austen was chosen. Undeterred she has continued to campaign since then and has recently been instrumental in campaigning for the statue of Millicent Fawcett to stand alongside the eleven male political figures already represented. Having the strength of your convictions and believing that change is possible is such an important message. She embodies this for me.

### HOW DO YOU LIKE TO UNWIND?

I like to unwind by watching a good box set. I've recently finished watching series 4 of The Bridge which is a brilliant Scandi Noir thriller set in Both Malmö (Sweden) and Denmark and features the brilliant and complicated detective, Saga. It's a stark but gripping series and I'm just disappointed that I've just completed the final episode. I also love to read and, at the moment, I am reading Zadie Smith's 'Feel Free' I've loved all her novels and this series of essays covering pop culture, high culture, social change and political debate is just as thought-provoking as her fiction. I've also just been recommended Sally Rooney's latest novel called 'Normal People' so that is the next one on my list, when I find the time!

[www.newcastleprepschool.org.uk](http://www.newcastleprepschool.org.uk)



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# APPLICATION IS KEY

By David Tickner, Headmaster at Newcastle School for Boys.

Not without a certain amount of trepidation in the run-up, results days are hopefully a highlight of the school year for most Headteachers.

Days in August when the School buildings, which have been quiet for weeks, are suddenly populated by anxious pupils accompanied, where permitted, by parents, who are often even more anxious.

It can be a nerve-wracking time for those pupils, their parents and teachers. Thankfully, as was the case again this year, our boys do very well and go on to pursue their ambitions and access the next stages of their education.

The longer I do this job and the more pupils I see collect public exam results, the more convinced I become that the single biggest determinant in pupils' success is their effort.

Of course, it has to be the right effort applied in the right ways and to the right areas. Painting the ceiling in my study doesn't make me a better Headmaster however hard I might try to recreate the Sistine Chapel.

More often than not, the ways in which pupils' efforts need to be applied can be identified from their teachers' feedback although the most effective learners will

have their own insight into what they need to do next to make further progress.

Crucially, the effort also needs to be sustained. There can be a tendency for some pupils to give up if their efforts don't bring immediate progress and results.

Where does that effort come from? Ideally, it is an intrinsic part of a student's motivation. Where that motivation is not present, it either needs to be inspired or compelled. Naturally, the former is more desirable, effective and less painful for all concerned but can't always be guaranteed.

Ability, talent and flair are not irrelevant factors in achievement, but they are not the overall single biggest determinant of success.

How much effort? I would go as far as to say that the effort thresholds should be set at 20 hours' study per week above lesson time to be successful as a sixth form student and 10 hours per week at GCSE.

It was Winston Churchill who said, 'Success comes from sustained effort rather than from talent or ability'.



Newcastle School for Boys are currently taking applications for September 2019 entry and beyond. For more information and to apply for a place at the school, please visit [www.newcastleschool.co.uk](http://www.newcastleschool.co.uk)

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## AN ARRAY OF FESTIVE CHEER AS SINGER ANNOUNCES CHRISTMAS SHOW

Whickham-born singer Anna Reay will be ringing in the festive season after announcing a one off Christmas show at the Sage Gateshead.

'Anna Reay at Christmas' will take place in Sage Two on 6th Dec 2018 and follows on from the success of her previous Sage Gateshead sell out show One Enchanted Evening last year.

The classically trained songstress was inspired to create the show after receiving requests from her followers to record a Christmas EP which she has completed in time for the event.

Featuring a glittering line-up of special guests including soulful Britain's Got Talent 2017 semi-finalist Jamie Lee Harrison and award-winning king of swing Chris Dakers, the show will be packed with an eclectic mix of Christmas classics and duets including 'Baby it's cold outside', 'All I Want for Christmas' and 'O Holy Night' to bring festive cheer in time for Christmas.

Anna said: "Throughout my career I have been fortunate enough to meet and work with some very talented musicians so I am delighted that our special guests have agreed to join us in helping

get everyone into the spirit of Christmas. Family, friends, music and dancing is a perfect combination to kick-off the celebrations in style."

Since her debut performances over her 12-year career in various venues across the North East, the 36-year old singer has embarked on extensive tours of the UK, Europe and the USA as well as on luxury Caribbean and Mediterranean cruise liners.

There will be collection buckets on the night in aid of Anna's chosen charity Panache Group, the North East awareness charity for Alopecia.

## YOUNG BAND USES FAMILY INSPIRATION TO REVIVE SOUNDS OF THE 60S



Professional 60s tribute band The Moonbeats are made up of four Tyneside based musicians in their late 20s and early 30s. Inspiration from their parents and a love of the music of the time is the band's driving force and the band will be celebrating the swinging sixties during their performances across Tyneside, Yorkshire and Cumbria later this Autumn.

The Moonbeats were first formed in the late 90s by Paul McGuire, Chris Quinn and John Hopkinson while they were at Seaton Burn High School in North Tyneside. Originally called The Moonstones, the lads drew on their shared love of 60's music as the inspiration for their sets.

The band have now expanded to include South Shields musician Daniel Rutter, making a fab four piece with each member being a self-taught musician and having their own story of how and why the music of the 60s became so special to them.

The Moonbeats 60's revival show will feature songs by The Beatles, Gerry and The Pacemakers, The Kinks and many more. They are set to play at The Exchange North Shields, YMCA Theatre Scarborough and Harraby Community Theatre Carlisle this Autumn.

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## YOUNG ONES ADE EDMONDSON AND NIGEL PLANER REUNITE FOR NEW STAGE COMEDY



Stars of cult 80s TV comedy *The Young Ones*, Ade Edmondson and Nigel Planer will reunite on stage next month in a brand-new comedy written by themselves. Audiences can join the comic legends on the Icelandic wastelands of *Vulcan 7* for one week only at Newcastle Theatre Royal from 8-13 Oct 2018.

Ade and Nigel rose to fame playing iconic characters Vyvyan and Neil in the BRIT award-winning TV classic *The Young Ones* and have performed together in *Filthy, Rich and Catflap* and in the spoof band *Bad News*.

In their latest comedy *Vulcan 7*, the long-time off-screen friends will co-star as former drama students

Gary Savage and Hugh Delavois, one a plodding actor, the other a struggling Hollywood star, who are reunited on the set of a fantasy movie.

Ade Edmondson (Gary Savage) is well known for his role in TV sitcom *Bottom* which he wrote and starred in with Rik Mayall. Other television credits include *Jonathan Creek*, *Blackadder* and the BBC adaptation of *War & Peace*.

Nigel Planer (Hugh Delavois) is an actor, comedian, novelist and playwright who has worked extensively in the West End with leading roles in original productions *Chicago*, *We Will Rock You*, *Wicked* and *Hairspray*.

## RECORD OF THE MONTH – ROD STEWART 'BLOOD RED ROSES'

The veteran rocker unveils his 30th studio album this week, his first since 2015's *Another Country*. Co-produced by Kevin Savigar, who has worked with Stewart on-and-off since 1980, the album sees Stewart dabbling in folk, rock and roll and old school motown. The album is deeply personal collection as love, loss, longing and addiction are all examined in Rod's unmistakable everyman manner. Bolstering the album are three covers including 'Grace' the Irish classic written by Frank and Sean O'Meara; a tragic, true life story about the briefest of marriages. Other highlights include 'Farewell' – a poignant tribute to a friend and 'Honey Gold' the string-laden ballad. *Blood Red Roses* is Rod back on top form.



## WHAT'S ON THIS OCTOBER?

**Vulcan 7**

October 8 -13

Newcastle Theatre Royal

T: (0844) 8112 121

[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**Jeff Lynne's ELO**

October 9

Metroradio Arena T: (0844) 493 6666

[www.metroradioarena.co.uk](http://www.metroradioarena.co.uk)

**An Evening With Eric & Ern**

October 14

Newcastle Theatre Royal

T: (0844) 8112 121

[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**Tom Odell**

October 17

City Hall Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121

[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**The Proclaimers**

October 18

City Hall Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121

[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**Michael Bolton**

October 21

City Hall Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121

[www.theatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.theatreroyal.co.uk)

**Miss Saigon**

October 26 – November 17

Sunderland Empire T: (0844) 871 3022

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

**Alt-J**

October 25

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661

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

**Father John Misty**

October 26

Sage Gateshead T: (0181) 443 4661

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

**The Stylistics**

October 27

City Hall Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121

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## NEW BOOK LAUNCH MAKES HAT TRICK FOR LOCAL AUTHOR

A local author, who has just been named as a writer with exceptional talent by Arts Council England, has launched his third book this week at a glittering event at the Lit & Phil in Newcastle.

Tolu A Akinyemi has been growing in reputation since the release of his two previous books *Dead Lions Don't Roar* last year (Tolu's first poetry collection) and *Unravel Your Hidden Gems* earlier this year (a collection of Inspirational and Motivational Essays).

And now the motivational writer has released his second collection of poetry, *Dead Dogs Don't Bark*, to a receptive audience.

Over the last year the generous author, has been using the sales of his book to raise funds for three charities in the region. Age UK Northumberland has already received a fine sum of £1000, whilst Equal

Arts and the Chronicle Sunshine Fund will be the next to receive a donation.

Tolu's latest book *Dead Dogs Don't Bark* is a follow up from *Dead Lions Don't Roar* and is a bursting collection of eclectic poems, that speak from Tolu's own experience and heart.

The poems in *Dead Dogs Don't Bark* cover a range of topics that many in life are aware of and that we all, whatever our age, need support in.

The beautifully written sonnets speak volumes to all age groups as they feature finding your inner talent, celebrating your individuality and distinct voice. The poetry collection also has educational

elements for evaporating the effects of peer pressure and criminality amongst many others.

Also covering mental health, relationships, career focus, and general life issues, the poetry is bitter sweet, amusing and thought provoking in turns. Tolu said: "As my third book is released I am so proud of what I have achieved with the support of my friends and family. It is a delight to support worthwhile causes and I have also been donating my time to support other aspiring authors. It is so important to find your inner talent and pay homage to it. I hope that many people find courage and inspiration from my books, particularly the new title, *Dead Dogs Don't Bark*."

**Dead Dogs Don't Bark and Tolu's other titles come in a choice of covers and are available to buy from Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Waterstones, eBay and direct from Tolu himself at [www.tolutoludo.com](http://www.tolutoludo.com)**

# HAVE A BALL THIS CHRISTMAS WITH CINDERS

Enchanted Entertainment are back at The Tyne Theatre and Opera House this December (7-30) with another all-star cast for what's set to be the best pantomime on Tyneside yet.

Receiving rave reviews for their first North East panto in 2017 with Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, they're bringing you a fantastic line-up and show for 2018 with the classic rags to riches tale, Cinderella.

The star-studded cast must start with the title role, Cinderella, who is played by local lass Lola Saunders, who appeared on the X Factor and was mentored by fellow-Geordie, Cheryl. Since her TV talent show appearance, Lola has performed at events up and down the country as well as appearing in festivals and recently touring the UK in the musical 'Save the Last Dance for Me'.

No stranger to talent shows himself is Prince Charming, who'll be played by another local, Collabro's Jamie Lambert, from Washington. Collabro won Britain's Got Talent four years ago and they've been around the world performing in some of the most iconic venues since. Jamie will be back on home-soil this December and we're sure his vocals will be a highlight of the show.

No performance of Cinderella would be complete without a Fairy Godmother and this year, it'll be none-other than Mauren Nolan; a member of probably one of the most famous girl groups of all time, The Nolans. Maureen has also been touring the UK recently with the hit musicals Blood Brothers and Footloose

Also in the Cinderella cast are Tracy Beaker Returns and The Dumping Ground star Connor Byrne, who will be playing Baron Hardup and back by popular demand is Newcastle's favourite Geordie comic, Charlie Richmond as Buttons whilst there'll also be some funny antics expected from fellow Geordie, Lewis Denny as Dandini.

**Tickets are already available to buy from the Tyne Theatre box office and are selling fast. They can also be purchased by visiting [www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk](http://www.tynetheatreandoperahouse.uk)**



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**Includes:** Festive cocktail, three-course meal, coffee & mince pies, table decoration & Christmas crackers.

### NEW YEAR'S EVE DINING £110 per adult

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## OUT & ABOUT - NORTH BERWICK



North Berwick is a small town in East Lothian, Scotland, not to be confused with Berwick upon Tweed which is in England. The latter is on the East Coast Main Line from London to Edinburgh.

North Berwick is on a spur off the main line, and the local trains serve five stations whilst the main line trains pass through. As a result, to get to North Berwick, passengers from the North East go fast into Edinburgh and come back out on the same route on the local stopping train. I did this journey on 29th August, staying at the Marine Hotel, and visiting the Sea Bird Centre and Tantallon Castle, but missed out on a visit to the NB Distillery making gin fairly close to the Castle, which I only found out about when I was back at the hotel. Shame!

I arrived by train and walked to the hotel along the road, but came back – minus my luggage, of course – along the edge of the golf course towards the beach. I tried some seafood chowder from a little shack on the harbour which was delicious, and they even took my contactless card which saved me from having to find a bank for some cash. The Sea Bird Centre is in the harbour between the two beaches, and the shop and café were open to all, but admission is charged for an interesting exhibition about the life of the gannets and puffins and other sea birds which inhabit this stretch of coast. There were also boat trips available to go out to the Bass Rock, covered in guano, a polite word for birds\*\*t, and the other islands in the Firth of Forth, and I considered the trip later in the afternoon. But, as the forecast was fine for my trip, I had not brought any wet weather gear. I thought the boat trip was a bit risky, and plumped instead for the bus trip three miles along the coast to the mystically named Tantallon Castle.

Tantallon, built in the mid 14th Century is in the care of Historic Scotland, so my English Heritage life membership purchased in 1988 proved its worth again. The bus service 120 to Dunbar operated by a local firm called Eve's runs every two hours, but the 1 ¼ hours the bus takes to go to Dunbar and back is ideal timing to see the Castle, built by the 1st Earl of Douglas to consolidate his power base in the area. It stood proud and strong until 1651 when an attack by Oliver Cromwell during his invasion of Scotland reduced it to a ruin. It was never repaired or inhabited again. This highly romantic coastal ruin is one where you can climb up two staircases right to the top and walk around, whilst underneath there are proper dungeons too.

Eve's bus brought me back to town and I found out more about the famous Witch Trials of 1590-2, visited the shops, and noted how the fortunes of the town were revived when the railway arrived in 1850. Since that time there have been many regular commuters going into Edinburgh every day. The journey time now is 33 minutes. Traditionally there has been a ferry north to Anstruther

in Fife, and a passenger boat still makes the trip infrequently. But I took myself to the spa in the Marine Hotel. I expected to head into town for dinner with my Tastecard which offers 50% off for single diners, but found my hotel offered the best Tastecard deal so headed back there for an excellent meal, and breakfast next morning.

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## OKTOBERFEST COMING TO THE BROAD CHARE PUB

The Broad Chare is a proper pub with proper beer so it comes as no surprise that Oktoberfest is their favourite time of the year. From 29 Sep – 6 Oct, chef and owner Terry Laybourne invites people to join his team to celebrate the world's biggest beer festival.

All is set to go Bavarian at The Broad Chare with hearty Oktoberfest Specials on the menu as well as samples of this year's Oktoberfest ales from the Bavarian festival. The Broad Chare has even added themed snacks to the bar snack menu, allowing you to have a delicious bratwurst in one hand and a beer in the other.



## PIZZA PUNKS GRABS A SLICE OF THE ACTION IN NEWCASTLE

Pizza Punks is bringing its own unique style to Newcastle's booming food and dining scene.

Renowned for its vast array of unusual toppings, Pizza Punks first two restaurants in Glasgow and Belfast have taken the cities by storm, largely thanks to an increasing desire from customers to be able to customise dishes.

Set in the heart of Newcastle city centre on Grey Street, Pizza Punk allows diners to select as many toppings as they like to add to Pizza Punk's signature handmade sourdough pizza base, all for one set price. With toppings as varied as Newcastle Brown Ale pulled beef and a Full English Breakfast, the new offering is guaranteed to deliver anarchy in the oven.

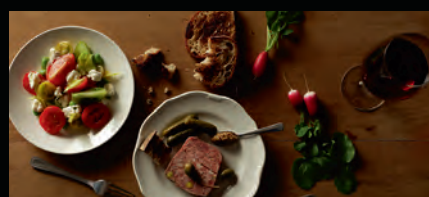


## COOKING UP A CHRISTMAS FEAST FOR SIR BOBBY

Christmas has arrived early as tickets have been put on sale for the seventh annual Yuletide extravaganza that is Christmas at the Cathedral.

This year the Christmas at the Cathedral concert will take place on 13th Dec at St Nicholas Cathedral in Newcastle and, for the third year running, funds will be raised for the Sir Bobby Robson Foundation to help find more effective ways to detect and treat cancer.

Jonathan Wallis from Barnard Castle is organising the event which will see a host of celebrity stars perform songs, readings and comedy sketches with a Christmas theme.



## ST VINCENT COMING SOON TO NEWCASTLE

The development of Terry Laybourne's new European wine bar St Vincent is well underway on Newcastle's historic Quayside.

The space has been completely gutted for a major refit that will see the introduction of softer furnishings, intimate booths, high bench tables and an enlarged bar area.

St Vincent will offer an ambitious, very personal wine list. There will be some classic favourites along with an extensive range of wines from small, independent winemakers, mainly from France and Italy. There will also be an array of cocktail classics and craft beers.

Served alongside the wine will be a menu of 'small plates'. Terry has designed the food to respond to the wine. Dishes are simple, produce driven, delicious and nutritious.



## FORMER GIRL BAND MEMBER LAUNCHES UNIQUE CLOTHING LABEL

Karina Chambers, the founding member of Newcastle girl band Sirens, has launched her own clothing brand inspired by her love of dogs.

Dog Clothing aims to produce super cool casual clothing whilst also fulfilling Karina's aspirations of helping dogs in desperate need around the world.

With a passion for animals and fashion, Karina's dream for dog clothing has come to life with a selection of t-shirts, polo shirts, hoodies, baseball caps and beanies on offer.

Karina said: "To combine my love of fashion and my passion for animals is truly a dream come true. I will also be looking at setting up 'The DC Trust' where a percentage of my profits will go to improving the lives of dogs around the world."



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  - and much more

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# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## OLIVIA LOCKEY

Owner of luxury Northumberland wedding venue and glamping site, Northside Farm.

### TELL US ABOUT NORTHSIDE FARM'S INCEPTION

It developed quite organically. Whilst in my second year at university, my (now) husband and I decided to invest in six luxury wooden wigwams to launch a small, access for all glamping site on our farm to help generate some income. With the business slowly taking off and my third child on the way, I concentrated on graduating then growing the business. In 2013 we were able to invest in four more wigwams and shortly after, had increasing requests for marquee weddings and use of the site for guests as an exclusive 'wedding weekend' and that's when the business took a new direction. We started the three-year-long project of converting a derelict barn on the land into a rustic, luxury wedding venue. It was important that we started small and built it up. I spent a lot of time developing the brand and testing the waters, which is why we got married in the barn first.

### WHAT SETS YOU APART FROM YOUR COMPETITORS?

We put our heart and soul into everything we do. We started converting the barn and courtyard by hand which was time consuming but at the time, there were no other barn wedding venues around this area. The year before we launched, three other nearby venues with barns opened however it just showed that the demand was there. We knew to just follow our ethos and stick to what we knew worked and what our couples wanted which was whole wedding weekends, exclusive use of the entire site and three day packages including use of the wigwams. We don't worry about the competition, we just concentrate on what we are doing. I always follow my instincts and do what we know works for us.

### WHAT'S NEXT FOR NORTHSIDE FARM?

We have lots of exciting plans that are being put in place at present such as the derelict gin-gang which is being converted into a dedicated ceremony room. We plan to complete it by next spring and it will be the only circular licensed ceremony room in Northumberland so that is something a little unique. We have lots more ideas to develop and expand the business so watch this space! We have always wanted to grow at our own pace and ensure that every aspect is self-sufficient and working before moving on to the next stage.

### WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST MOMENT WITH THE BUSINESS?

Probably when we completed the barn against all odds. It also made us very proud when Northside Farm was recognised as a wedding venue and shortlisted for awards. The feedback we receive from the couples is lovely and makes you appreciate why you are doing it. Each wedding is so unique and the venue transforms each time to reflect the couple's personalities. It isn't just a job for us, it becomes very personal. We have a great team of people and we all do it because we want to make our guests happy and that gives us pleasure.

### HOW DO YOU KEEP UP WITH THE TRENDS?

Thankfully, the rate of marriages is increasing and today couples have more flexibility and freedom than years ago. They can make their wedding a true reflection of themselves and the barn is a timeless but versatile space. We hold a no restrictions policy so couples can each have a wedding that is truly unique to them so we keep up with trends simply by listening to what they want for their special day and delivering it.

## MEET THE CHEF...

### CIARAN RAITT

Holiday Inn Washington

#### GROWING UP, DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE A CHEF?

I always did. I was talking to my cousin about getting the apprenticeship and she can always remember from being the age of 5 being in my Nana's kitchen playing chefs. My mam always made home cooked meals for the family and she inspired my love of cooking. One day I hope to be able to cook better than her!

#### HOW DID YOU START WORKING AT HOLIDAY INN WASHINGTON?

I found about the apprenticeship on the government website and was really interested in the programme and applied for the Kew Green Hotel Apprenticeship programme. I am really excited to be part of the refreshed Kew Green Hotel Chef School that is happening all across the UK. I've already been down on Stoke-on-trent for the welcome day and got to meet lots of new apprentices in the starting with me.

#### HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR APPROACH TO COOKING?

I have a calm approach to cooking as I enjoy it so much and it gives me great pleasure to create new dishes. I think I handle stress in the kitchen well and enjoy the busy atmosphere.

#### WHAT INSPIRES YOUR DISHES?

I have travelled to Dubai and Turkey and always found the fascinating food and cooking styles really inspiring as their use of herbs, spices and simplicity of cooking is something to be admired.

#### WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE DISH TO PREPARE?

One of the dishes I have recently learned to do is a Slow Cooked Lamb Shank. I am sure as my career progresses and blossoms I will be able to laugh at the simplicity of the dish.

#### HOW OFTEN DOES THE MENU CHANGE?

Our menu changes with the seasons for the A La Carte and the specials weekly menu is as it says, weekly, but we also have daily specials which I am allowed to create. So there is always something to get stuck into.

#### WHAT'S THE BEST MEAL YOU'VE EVER HAD?

It was a steak I had in Dubai. It was cooked perfectly

a beautiful pink colour but still warm and delicious. The dish came with spiced rice the overall flavour of the dish was something I will never forget. I hope to be able to create these memorable moments for guests with my own food.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON CURRENT TRENDS IN THE INDUSTRY?

Current trends that I like are cooking with low salt, healthy meals but still big flavours. Though I do think the trend Vegan eating is going to continue.

#### WHO ARE YOUR CULINARY HEROES?

Gordon Ramsey. He is so passionate about what he does and the food he serves. His standards are

extremely high which I hope to follow by setting the bar high. His temper however is something I don't wish to follow...unless I am on TV with my own show!

#### I'M EATING AT HOLIDAY INN WASHINGTON, WHAT SHOULD I ORDER FROM THE MENU? (Starter/Main Course/Dessert)

For a starter I would defiantly go for the Hoisin Duck Wings, Asian style slaw with a BBQ dipping sauce. Followed by a delicious 10oz Rib Eye Steak, sourced from UK farms and aged for 21 days cooked medium rare at the most! To finish I would suggest the Vanilla Panna Cotta to round off your dining experience.



[www.hiwashingthonhotel.co.uk](http://www.hiwashingthonhotel.co.uk)



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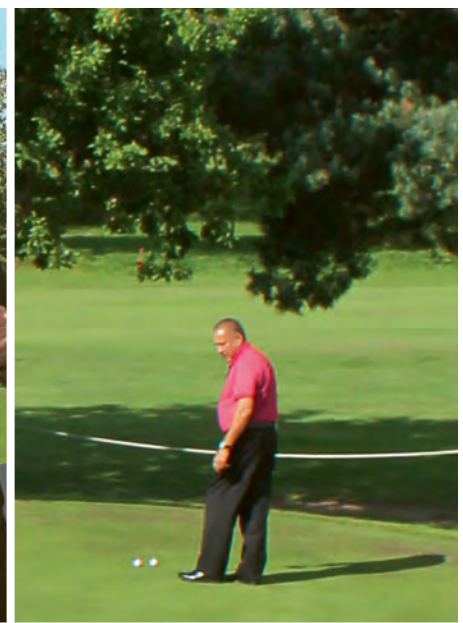


## HOLIDAY INN WASHINGTON GREENFINGERS GOLF DAY

We had a great day trying to hit a ball around Ravensworth Golf Course, however, the best feeling of all was having raised £1,200 on the day for Greenfingers.

A national charity working closely with Grace House Sunderland, creating memorable gardens. Date for next year is the 5th September 2019, so why not join us next year!







## ALL ROADS LEAD TO ANTLER

By Michael Grahamslaw

Opened to acclaim from both casual visitors and the Newcastle business community, Antler brings a slice of Alpine life to the heart of the city.

Complete with wide screen TVs, live sport and a pool table and serving premium cocktails, the venue is primarily a bar, although it also does a fine food offering which makes it the perfect spot for an express lunch.

Inspired by the lodges of Austria and Switzerland, the décor looks really impressive. Wood panelled walls, roaring fires and leather booth seating areas create an atmosphere that is cosy and atmospheric whilst – not one – but three tanks of fresh Krusovice lager lend an edge of industrial chic.

Admittedly then, Antler really looks the part, but what of the food?

Its menu offers a unique taste of the great outdoors with authentic dishes from the regions of Switzerland, Austria, Germany and the Czech Republic. It's mainly centred around Loaded Fries, stonebaked Alpine-style pizzas, house burgers and sharing platters alongside authentic specialities like Bratwurst, Viennese chicken schnitzel and Bavarian Beef Goulash.

We arrived on a very windy afternoon when fittingly, the weather wasn't too removed from typical Alpine life and were warmly welcomed by Nick, who explained a little more about the fresh



tank lager on offer. The beer is kept in stainless steel cylinders at sub-zero temperatures which ensures for almost "Brewery Freshness." When served in a chilled, Krusovice glass this offers the ultimate taste of refreshment and was the perfect way to begin.

Our food followed shortly thereafter with our starters consisting of Homemade Meatballs for me, and BBQ Sticky Chicken Wings for my dining companion. The meatballs were served with a choice of season peppercorn or spicy arrabiata sauce with crispy bacon rashers and side salad trimmings which looked very European. The chicken wings were right-side of crispy and tossed in a sticky BBQ glaze.

Our mains arrived shortly after alongside another tankload of Krusovice right on time. Jack chose the Antler Kebab; a mix of diced chicken and lamb presented stylishly on an open flatbread with red onion, tomato, chilli sauce and some lightly-pickled peppers.

Naturally, I couldn't resist the Spicy Chilli Beef pizza; a large flat bread base stonebaked and topped with devilish jalapenos and mozzarella cheese.

Totally replete, we couldn't stomach a dessert especially of a lunchtime but we did file a mental note to try the Apfelmuchen (German apple cake) and the Kasekuchen (German Gourmet Cheesecake) on a return visit.

In addition, Antler also offers a packed weekly programme of live entertainment; a quirky mix of live music, karaoke and cocktail classes. It's also the perfect venue for an event, catering up to 640 people with an array of options including a huge, heated outdoor garden.

Now entering the colder months, I can really see this venue coming into its own – especially given its entirely new concept. The slopes of Swan House roundabout never looked so good!

For more information, visit [antlernewcastle.co.uk](http://antlernewcastle.co.uk)



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# THE PRINCE OF WALES VISITS THE SILL: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE DISCOVERY CENTRE ON HADRIAN'S WALL

Photo credit: Simon Williams, Crest Photography.



The Prince of Wales unveiling the Northumberland National Park Authority's commemorative stone on The Sill roof, accompanied by the Duchess of Northumberland and Tony Gates, Chief Executive, Northumberland National Park Authority.

Northumberland National Park Authority has welcomed The Prince of Wales on a special visit to commemorate the official opening of The Sill: National Landscape Discovery Centre on Hadrian's Wall.

His Royal Highness was given a guided tour of the award-winning building on 12 September, which includes an 86-bed Youth Hostel operated by YHA (England and Wales). The Sill is the UK's first dedicated National Landscape Discovery Centre and the result of a pioneering partnership between Northumberland National Park Authority, YHA (England and Wales), and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) through a £7.8 million grant made possible by National Lottery players.

Named after the nearby Great Whin Sill, one of the UK's most significant geological features, the Centre provides a gateway to inspire and enable people of all ages to understand and explore the iconic landscapes, history, culture and heritage of Northumberland.

To mark his visit, The Prince of Wales unveiled a special commemorative stone on the Centre's Whin Sill grassland roof, and took time to enjoy the iconic view of the Hadrian's Wall UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Glen Sanderson, Northumberland National Park Authority Chairman, said: "We are honoured to welcome His Royal Highness here today to join us in celebrating The Sill and its purpose of connecting people with our wonderful countryside.

"The Sill provides an important opportunity for people to explore, understand and nurture our landscapes and the people, heritage and wildlife that shape them.

"Today's celebration is testament to years of hard work and the firm belief that our nation's exceptional landscapes should be enjoyed by as many people as possible. We want Northumberland National Park to be a sustainable cultural asset that benefits the region for many years to come."

Since opening to the public in July 2017, the Centre has rapidly become one of the region's leading visitor attractions, welcoming over 170,000 visitors and well ahead of the National Park Authority's original projections in just 12 months.

During the tour, His Royal Highness met with local school children from St Agnes School in Ryton and Henshaw Primary School in Bardon Mill, along with several Sill project partners and local stakeholders.

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: "With Hadrian's Wall, International Dark Skies, stunning landscapes and many other parts of our incredible heritage on its doorstep, The Sill is the perfect starting point from which to explore Northumberland National Park. Thanks to National Lottery players, this state-of-the-art discovery centre has already attracted thousands of visitors and its year-round programme of exhibitions and activities for all ages is sharing this area's incredible stories and unquestionable beauty with more people than ever before."

Built at a cost of £8.7 million, The Sill represents the single largest investment ever made in a UK national park. In May this year, the building received a RIBA North East Award from the Royal Institute of British Architects for architectural excellence. It has also been nominated in the Construction Industry Research and Information Association's (CIRIA) Biodiversity Awards.

The Centre offers exhibition, learning and event spaces, a café, rural business hub, YHA accommodation and a shop packed with local produce, arts and crafts.

Peter Gaines, Chairman of YHA (England and Wales), said: "YHA The Sill is one of our flagship youth hostels, helping us reach more young people and

their families and introducing them to the fabulous Northumberland landscape. Since opening we have welcomed more than 8,000 young people staying with their families and schools.

"As a leading youth charity it is so important to us that we inspire and support many more young people both locally and nationally and help them on their personal journey of travel, adventure and discovery and our accommodation at The Sill is helping us with that mission."

The building's fully accessible Whin Sill grassland roof is a world first and planted with a unique community of native plants including slow growing grasses and wildflowers. Its walkway and viewing platforms provide sweeping views of the iconic Northumbrian landscape and Steel Rigg on Hadrian's Wall.

The design and the structural materials used to create the building are inspired by The Great Whin Sill and it is positioned to mimic this dramatic geological outcrop with natural undulations and flowing lines.

It was designed by Ponteland-based architects JDDK and built by Sir Robert McAlpine. Local materials were used in its construction, including local sandstone, whinstone and larch cladding. A south facing timber canopy supports photovoltaic cells to provide a renewable energy source as well as shade from the sun.

Through The Sill and a pledge to deliver 30,000 activity days, Northumberland National Park Authority is working with schools, community organisations and businesses to provide educational workshops, activities and other experiential opportunities connected to the landscape, which are designed to suit all ages and abilities throughout the Park.

To find out more about The Sill go to [www.thesill.org.uk](http://www.thesill.org.uk) or to book an event or activity, go to [www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk)

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Wild Mushroom Crostini,  
Rocket, Pecorino

### TORTINO DI PATATE E PECORINO

Layers of Sardinian Crisp Bread,  
Potato, Cheese

## Mains

### BRASATO AL CANNONAU

Braised Beef in Cannonau Wine,  
Mashed Polenta,  
Roasted Root Veg

### MAIALETTO ARROSTO SARDA

Sardinian Suckling Pig, Roast  
Potatoes, Salad

### TRIO DI PESCE

Salmon, Seabass, King Prawns,  
Lemon, Olive Oil

### RAVIOLI AL PESTO

Ricotta and Spinach Ravioli,  
Pesto, Pine Nuts

## Desserts

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Main Course £20

2 Courses £25

3 Courses £30

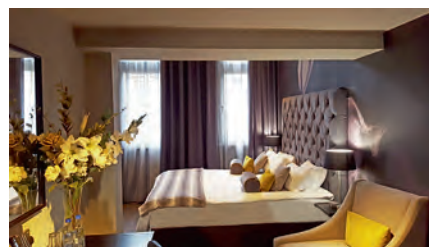
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# AN ELEGANT BOUTIQUE VENUE

By Michael Grahamslaw



In this old publisher's humble opinion, Newcastle's Grey Street is one of the finest streets in the North East – if not the country.

Richard Grainger's sweeping, neoclassical architecture possesses a magisterial beauty which can often prompt a moment of pause and reflection in even the most frenetic of working days. Its myriad bars & restaurants contribute to the vibrant buzz of the city, but it's only home to one hotel – which has neatly adopted the name of the street itself.

The Grey Street Hotel is an elegant, boutique venue which boasts 49 original guest rooms. Each is individually-decorated and retain a Georgian charm, effortlessly combined with modern finishing touches.

With a free weekend unfolding before us (it was international break) my Wife Lisa and I checked in to review the experience.

Following a very cheery check in, we were soon checking out our abode for the evening. Rooms at The Grey Street Hotel are split into three tiers; standard, deluxe and unique suites. Ours was a lovely, deluxe room in the maisonette layout with the bathroom by the front door and a flight of stairs leading up to the bedroom.

Characterised by a chic colour palette – lime green, black, white and grey – our room was a sumptuous

affair and we were even impressed by the range of extra touches present. These included a Flat Screen TV, bespoke air conditioning, iron & ironing board, complimentary WiFi and tea & coffee making facilities.

Original features are also in place. Many boast high ceilings, ornate corning and large, triple-glazed sash windows.

Some rooms are even adorned with influential North East figures with the aforementioned local hero, Richard Grainger, providing a nod to the area's heritage.

For couples seeking a romantic experience, you can upgrade to the romantic package, which includes a bottle of prosecco, rose petals and a box of chocolates. Sadly, for Lisa and I, two cans of Tizer and a packet of Sports Mixtures would have to suffice.

Corporate clients are also very well catered for as the hotel aims to provide a home from home experience. This is very much in the mould of a "specialist business hotel" with a number of packages to choose from for those with regular accommodation requirements. These include room only, BB and DBB rates and provide corporate

and conference deals, guaranteed best rates and laundry/concierge services.

The Grey Street Hotel doesn't have its own dining room, however what might be perceived as a relative shortcoming is actually a blessing in disguise. Due to its enviable city centre location, there's no shortage of local eateries and a parade of different cuisines to choose from. For those new to the area, the hotel's reception staff are also happy to make recommendations.

Lisa and I took full advantage, heading out for a slap-up meal before returning to the hotel for a restful night's sleep.

Also worth mentioning is the beauty retreat spa found in the basement. 'All About You' is a recently-opened salon where guests can unwind and get pampered with a range of facials, massages, body treatments, manicures and pedicures. Treatments are personalised to your own skin preferences and use renowned brands such as Elemis, Delilah and Lycon.

The newly-refurbished Grey Street Hotel has an awful lot going for it. The following morning, we left in high spirits, pausing for a second to admire the city's very special street.

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

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# sachins



## Aunty Ajeet's Lamb Curry – Serves 4

An old family recipe originating in North India, Aunty Ajeet's Lamb Curry can be served at any family get-together as it will be loved by all, old, young or in between! Aunty Ajeet's recipe uses lamb, but if you'd prefer, you can swap this out with a protein of your choice – chicken is a firm favourite of the family, and Sachins' customers!

### ingredients:

4 lamb leg steaks, chopped  
3 medium red onions, diced  
2 very ripe soft tomatoes, coarsely chopped  
1 tin chopped tomatoes  
3 fresh green chillies  
2 teaspoons turmeric powder  
2 teaspoons garam masala  
2 teaspoons chilli powder  
2 ½ teaspoons fennel seeds  
2 ½ teaspoons cumin seeds  
1 teaspoon dry fenugreek  
2 ½ teaspoons mustard seeds  
2 tablespoons Greek yoghurt  
Equal amounts garlic and ginger, to taste  
Salt, to taste  
Fresh coriander, chopped – to garnish

### method:

In a dry frying pan, warm the mustard, cumin and fennel seeds until they start to pop, then take off the heat and allow them to cool.  
In the same pan, add some oil and once warm, add the red onions and stir.  
Once the onions have started to caramelise, add the equal parts of ginger and garlic.  
Keep stirring, and once the garlic and ginger are cooked, add the green chillies, tin of tomatoes and the ripe tomatoes.  
Cook until the tomatoes break down and you have a masala.  
Once the masala is of a thick consistency, add the turmeric, chilli powder, salt and garam masala (you may need to add some water to avoid the masala becoming too thick)  
Add the lamb to the masala.  
Once the lamb is cooked, get the spices you dry roasted earlier and grind them into a powder.  
Add the dry roasted spices and the dry fenugreek to the pan.  
Remove the pan from the heat and add the Greek yoghurt, stir in and then garnish with the fresh coriander.



**[www.sachins.co.uk](http://www.sachins.co.uk) | 0191 232 46 60**

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## INDIAN FOOD WITH ATTITUDE

By Jack Grahamslaw

Following a shock arson attack in 2014, the revamped (New) New Bengal has risen from the ashes both figuratively and literally. Boasting a fresh new look and an emphasis on street food, this is a restaurant going from strength to strength.

The restaurant is managed very capably by Shah who is always on hand for a warm welcome. We visited on a late September's evening and the restaurant was near full – clearly this is a venue back at the heart of Gosforth's after-hours scene.

The New (New) Bengal has swerved traditional Indian décor in favour of a fresh approach. Walls are bathed in a rich, duck egg blue whilst polished tabletops, chic leather seating and a chrome-laden corner staircase further contribute to a stylish new makeover.

Much has changed on the menu too. There's been a real clamour for Indian street food in recent times and the New Bengal have duly noted this. A savoury snack, Bhel Puri consists of puffed rice, mixed vegetables and tangy tamarind whilst mini 'Bengal Bites' featured rounded puris with a chick pea and chutney filling. Both really put us in the mood for some authentic Indian cooking.

We then moved on to a selection of traditional starters. I chose Chicken Chatt, an old favourite of mine executed superbly well here. Diced chicken morsels sat alongside a light, buttery chappati with the presentation looking both artful and impressive.



My girlfriend Lily's starter, bhuna prawn on puree took on a similar bent. Shimmering with freshly-tempered spices, this demonstrated the standard of cooking the New Bengal are really capable of.

There was much to enthuse over in our main courses too. In addition to traditional anglo-

indian favourites – dupiaza, rogan josh, dansak, vindaloo etc – the new Bengal offers a host of meat, poultry and seafood specialities which offer much choice.

The new menu has been described as "Indian food with attitude." For mains, I chose the chicken sholay, a very spicy dish made with onions, peppers, garlic and fresh chillies which really lived up to that mantle.

Lily opted for the Chicken Tikka Balti, another speciality made with onions, tomatoes and a raft of strong spices. Both were mopped up with a 'quilted duvet' of a peshwari naan alongside a side of vegetable pilau which was fluffy and aromatic.

To wash all of this down, the New Bengal have refined their drinks selection with a range of good wines, Indian lagers and Wylam beers. Waiters are very clued up and are happy to recommend a tipple to partner a chosen dish, intensify the flavours and elevate the whole experience.

In addition, the restaurant remains a popular drop-in destination for takeaways whilst a spacious upstairs dining area can cater for private parties and function.

From our visit, it's clear that this iconic suburban curry house has a new lease of life.

For more information, visit [www.newnewbengal.com](http://www.newnewbengal.com)



## LORD'S TAVERNERS GOLF DAY

The Northumberland and Durham region of the Lord's Taverners, the youth cricket and disability sports charity, held its annual charity golf day on the 19th September.

The day was hosted at Close House with a shotgun start on the Filly, unfortunately after 3 holes due to the gusting 80mph winds and falling trees and branches, the course was quite rightly closed for safety reasons.

Guests still were able to enjoy the hospitality on offer with the buffet meal and raffle. On the day around £4000 was raised, this money will enable the charity to give disadvantaged and disabled young people in the region the opportunity to participate more widely in the sport.

Regional Chairman Jamie Graham commented: "Whilst the golf was quite rightly called off, the day was a great success for the charity and we were as always brilliantly hosted by Close House"  
For more information on the Lords Taverners and any future events please contact Jamie Graham at [jamiengraham@surgo.co.uk](mailto:jamiengraham@surgo.co.uk)



## MEET THE CHEF...



## PAUL AMER

Hotel Indigo Newcastle

### **GROWING UP, DID YOU ALWAYS WANT TO BE A CHEF?**

I never really thought about being a chef until later on in school, when it was time to start thinking about a career, but I always enjoyed cooking.

### **HOW DID YOU START WORKING AT HOTEL INDIGO?**

By chance really, a chef who worked with me moved onto Hotel Indigo Newcastle. He rang me and said the position of Head Chef was available and the Manager would like to speak to me. The rest is history.

### **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR APPROACH TO COOKING?**

My approach to cooking has never really changed over the years, I always make each dish the best it can be, working with quality ingredients and executing them well.

### **WHAT INSPIRES YOUR DISHES?**

Various things inspire my dishes, the season's first

of all, then what is in season. I am also inspired by other chefs; if you have passion, the inspiration is always there

### **WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE DISH TO PREPARE?**

I don't have a favourite dish as such, over time I'm always looking to improve. I do like doing fish and shellfish and also cooking cheaper cuts of meat. It takes a bit more skill and technique to produce something special.

### **HOW OFTEN DOES THE MENU CHANGE?**

Our main a la carte menu for Marco Pierre White Newcastle tends to change twice a year, however my special menus and Table d'Hôte menus change regularly each week.

### **WHAT'S THE BEST MEAL YOU'VE EVER HAD?**

The best meal or more memorable meal would be The Square in London or Gordon Ramsay's three Michelin starred restaurant. I was blown away! I also spent some time there working also – Amazing.

### **WHO ARE YOUR CULINARY HEROES?**

There are many, but Gordon Ramsey is brilliant. Such an intelligent man. Also Marco Pierre White – three Michelin stars at the age of 27. Unbelievable!

### **WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON CURRENT TRENDS IN THE INDUSTRY?**

Trends in the industry are like any other. Things come into fashion and change over the years. Chefs are always pushing new boundaries.

### **I'M EATING AT HOTEL INDIGO, WHAT SHOULD I ORDER FROM THE MENU? (Starter/Main Course/Dessert)**

At the moment on my special menu, I have a Ham Hock with Poached Egg, pea and truffle mousse; it's a lovely combination.

I like my fish and at the moment we have a Sea Trout, Ecrasées Potatoes and Asparagus on my specials menu.

For dessert, I love chocolate so would go for the Chocolate Fondant, Maple and Walnut Ice Cream.

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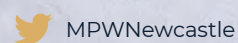
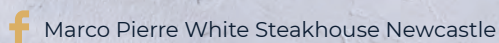
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# LUXURY SPA RESORT STOBO CASTLE MARKS 40 YEARS OF PAMPERING



Remarkable four decade journey from derelict castle to Scotland's 'must visit' spa destination

Scotland's only residential destination spa, the renowned Stobo Castle in Peeblesshire, is celebrating 40 years of pampering the nation this month.

Reborn from a derelict castle in the heart of the Borders, the luxurious five-star spa resort began as a health farm in 1978. It went on to host celebrity guests – including Dames Shirley Bassey and Joan Collins – introduce innovative therapies and treatments and constantly upgrade and evolve to offer guests ever-increasing standards of luxury, comfort and relaxation.

Now, to mark its 'ruby' anniversary, the family-run resort has launched its Celebration Spa Day. The limited edition experience includes a relaxing Top to Toe Face and Body Glow treatment (40 minutes), a sit down three course lunch, full use of spa facilities and optional use of fitness and aqua classes – as well as Stobo Castle's ubiquitous complimentary slippers and use of bathrobes – all for just £99 per person. A celebratory tartan has also been created resulting in limited edition wraps for sale.

The 40th anniversary is a landmark point in 200 years of history at Stobo Castle. Commissioned in 1805 by Sir James Montgomery, 2nd Baronet, whose father was a Lord Advocate and Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer, it was a family residence for over 100 years before falling into disrepair.

Former RAF pilot instructor Robert Winyard and his wife Gaynor, a beauty therapist, took it over in the early 1970s, along with their son, Stephen. They

oversaw a visionary refurbishment to open Stobo Castle Health Spa in 1978, one of the first health farms of its kind.

At the height of Seventies' fashion, it featured just 16 bedrooms with shared avocado bathroom suites, medical checks for guests and calorie-controlled meals. Since then, significant investment has taken place and a £5million state-of-the-art spa extension in 2003 led to the creation of 36 treatment rooms, a fully-equipped gym, saunas, steam rooms, a stunning 25-metre ozone-treated infinity pool and outdoor hot tubs. Guests are often found sipping bubbly between rejuvenating spa and beauty treatments, exploring the outdoor Japanese water garden or dining in the wood-panelled dining room.

The addition of the stunning Cashmere Suite complete with cashmere lined walls and original works of Scottish art, cashmere-covered hand-made Italian beds and an opulent bathroom with its famed £10,000 hand-carved bath for a single piece of limestone, has proved another lure. It is widely acknowledged as the most opulent guest suite in the land.

More recently, the new Ladies Restroom made the headlines as Scotland's most luxurious loos!

Stephen Winyard said of the anniversary: "Stobo Castle's evolution from what was basically a derelict property, has been remarkable. My mother was chairman of the Society of Health and Beauty Therapists at the time. She had a vision that it

could become a health farm, at a time when such places were virtually unheard of.

"Today Stobo Castle is Scotland's only destination spa and one of many people's 'must visit' places to relax and rejuvenate. Sadly, my parents are no longer alive to see it, however its success is testimony to their incredible vision and hard work. Stobo Castle's staff have also contributed immensely to its success, many of whom have been here almost since the beginning. In fact, we're well on course to attain the highly coveted Investors in People Platinum Award in November"

He added: "I'm enormously proud of its evolution to date and excited for the future. Our success to date demonstrates the popularity of escaping everyday life for a spa retreat and our drive to continue to innovate.

This success has enabled us to foster a deep sense of social responsibility, supporting in the region of 360 charities in the last couple of years, as well as many local community projects."

In March 2018 Stobo Castle's profits broke through the £1m barrier for the first time, reflecting a record year for the business. It represented a pre-tax profit rise of 33 per cent and came as the company grew revenue by eight per cent to £7.8m. Recent six figures investment has seen a range of luxury upgrades to guestrooms, the creation of a new cocktail lounge and the launch of a stunning range of own label beauty products & gifts.

For bookings and prices please visit [www.stobocastle.co.uk](http://www.stobocastle.co.uk)



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## A LITTLE HAVEN OF JOY, AT THE HOTEL ON THE BEACH

Few hotels are positioned as favourably as the Little Haven Hotel in South Shields.

**Situated right on the Mouth of the Tyne, the custom-built, three-star property offers breathtaking panoramic views across the North Sea and over the bay to North Shields and Tynemouth Priory.**

The hotel takes full advantage offering 62 bedrooms, conservatory dining and lounge/meeting facilities to guests. It's also easily accessible for business travellers, with both the city centres of Newcastle and Sunderland just a 20-minute drive away whilst Newcastle Airport is also only 35 minutes North.

The area is rich in local history and character. Arbeia Roman Fort is within walking distance whilst South Shields' distinctive red lighthouse is at the end of the bay. There's no shortage of things to see and do with Beamish Museum and Bedes World just a couple of nearby attractions.

For when sight-seeing demands a break, The Little Haven offers neatly-appointed accommodation which is furnished to a very high-standard. Rooms cater well for the modern business executive with writing desks, direct-dial telephones, ironing boards and complimentary Wi-Fi all as standard. Other mod cons include Flat-Screen Freeview TVs, DVD players and hairdryers.

The Hotel's Award-Winning breakfast is included in all room rates which makes this independently-

owned venue a cost-effective alternative to your usual stay.

For such a dramatic stretch of coastline, it is unsurprising that rooms with a view are a speciality. Making it a fantastic Wedding Venue, the hotel's individually-themed Penthouse suites – 'Emperor Hadrian', 'Admiral Collingwood' and 'Marco Polo' – even include their own dual aspect private balconies. Perfect for a glass of fizz.

The perfect location for a Wedding or to Re-tie the Knot, with a romantic backdrop second to none and you can walk directly onto the sand. Catering from intimate cosy celebrations to lavish parties for over 100 guests encouraging bespoke wedding suggestions or offering packages to meet with most budgets. As The Little Haven Hotel is privately owned and prides itself on a particularly friendly approach, with an exceptional, dedicated team and a product to be proud of. All Function Rooms offer natural daylight, and all have breath-taking views of either the estuary, sea or both. Alternatively, you may like to choose a Marque to cater for a larger guest list or to simply make the most of the location and bring the outside in. The Little Haven – Celebrating Love.

Eating and drinking at the Little Haven is another key consideration. The hotel's Boardwalk restaurant

serves up a mix of freshly-caught local seafood, Mediterranean staples and British classics. The eatery is fashionably set against the backdrop of the lively waterfront and again, affords great views.

Food is served from morning til moon, making the restaurant a great choice for a walk-in full English, lunchtime soup & a sandwich or a larger evening meal.

South Shields is renowned for its seafood and the Boardwalk restaurant acknowledges this. A glance at its menu reveals an adventurous fresh market selection including Plaiçe à la Meunière, Wolf Fish Tandoori and Shad "Bonne Femme".

A sense of Britishness pervades the venue and its seaside location which also makes it a prime spot for Afternoon Tea and Sunday Lunch, both reasonably priced at £17.40 (for two people) and from £8.00 respectively.

Other facilities have the business visitor in mind. The hotel's comfortable lounge bar is perfect for a coffee/light snack whilst there's also various dedicated meetings/conference spaces – the largest of which can accommodate a maximum of 175 delegates. For those travelling on business, leisure or simply looking for a change of scene – the Little Haven must be on your radar.

For more information on their latest offers, visit their website [www.littlehavenhotel.com](http://www.littlehavenhotel.com)

## TIME TO RELAX AT THE ALL NEW HOLIDAY INN

The Holiday Inn Gosforth Park has undergone a £3.5 million refurbishment including the introduction of a new innovative venture, The Open Lobby.

The refurbishment intends to better suit the needs of the hotel's business and leisure guests by focussing on the five things that they like to do most, Eat and Drink, Have Fun, Relax and Connect – sounds good right?

It gets better, the space will make it easier to transition between all of those things. The Open Lobby will provide free Wi-Fi, charging ports, computers and a wireless printer in their new E-Bar as well as a Media Lounge which will house seating, games, magazines and a TV. Designed to look like a laid-back living room, it's the perfect home away from home.

Within the Open Lobby, there will be a range of seating areas including high and low tables, soft seating and booths and a number of food options will be available, including the favourite buffet breakfast, featuring a new addition of delicious pancakes.

Norrie Oswald, the General Manager of hotel for the past seven years, gave us a little more insight into the upgrade: "There are sofas to relax in whether catching up with friends over a coffee or taking time out with your loved ones. All of the menus have also been refreshed and we now have an All-Day Dining Menu to choose from or snacks and treats from the To Go Café, where we proudly serve Starbucks."

As well as the contemporary Open Lobby venture, the £3.5 million refurbishment has taken effect on all 151 rooms in the hotel updating every bathroom and seeing three quarters of the rooms completed with new fixtures and fittings including air conditioning. Book us in!



If a stay in the Holiday Inn Gosforth Park sounds appealing to you, give the hotel a call on 0191 201 9988 or visit the website at [www.hinewcastleghosforthpark.co.uk](http://www.hinewcastleghosforthpark.co.uk)

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## IN CONVERSATION WITH...

### MICHELLE JONES

Owner, MJ Wedding Planner

#### WHAT WERE YOUR CAREER AMBITIONS GROWING UP?

I designed wedding dresses, bouquets and dreamt weddings as a little girl, I still have pile of them, I didn't know the wedding industry was a career prospect at the time. I remember vividly being a Bridesmaid aged five with my love for weddings being strengthened by watching the Royal wedding of Fergie and Andrew; then the film Father of the Bride was released and my fate was sealed. I also loved performing and due to my love of black and white musicals, wished to grace the stage as a musical theatre star but my journey pursuing this career path lead me right back to weddings.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR CAREER PATH SO FAR?

I had a great experience taking an Arts and Event Management degree at De Montfort University where I also worked on student radio. This gave me a great insight into managing a variety of arts and events. I also produced and presented a local arts, culture and leisure show on cable television whilst living in the Midlands. This all gave me a grounding in the business and I moved to London with dreams of fulfilling my aspiration to be a wedding planner. I quickly realised I wasn't experienced enough and needed to mature to deliver so I took my time to learn my trade, gain experience and most importantly learn how to manage people; weddings are highly emotional therefore people management is an essential skill.

Following a move to Newcastle and the arrival of my first child, I felt like a grown up, I had developed a strong skills in the industry and developed a good understanding of people allowing me to successfully manage expectations within the practicalities and meet the needs of others enabling me to gain the trust of potential clients; after all a wedding is the first day of your married life.

Due to significant health problems the Princes Trust mentorship programme compounded my belief that I could run my own business and encouraged my dream to be a luxury wedding planner. My networking at the time was at mother and baby groups, where over sing and sign sessions a good connection lead to the company flourishing.

#### WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

In the early days of the business I connected with the owners of a beautiful Belsay property where together we created the most exclusive venue in the region, it was an amazing episode in my career and I planned and managed some absolutely phenomenal weddings at the venue.



At a time of indecision regarding the growth of my business verses the growth of another, the unforeseen occurred. This incident shifted my direction at that time unfortunately for the negative and although that year was very successful it was incredibly stressful and was of complete detriment to myself and my business; I reached the point I considered quitting the industry. However, I got a call from a national charity with a request for me to gift my services to plan weddings for terminally ill couples. This crystallised everything for me and gave the impetus to make the business work. 2017 was challenging whilst learning, listening and understanding my needs and aspirations I rebranded the company and established my direction. This year has been incredibly exciting and stimulating as I have gone back to basics in order to move forward and my passion for my work has grown further.

#### WHAT ARE YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENTS?

Really just doing it! I manage number of chronic long-term health problems including Agoraphobia which present a number of significant barriers; some might say making that first step to learn to cope with illness is a big achievement and whilst I agree for me the achievement is in the living, doing the school run, making a million mistakes, working a 20 hour day on a wedding; creating a bespoke wedding completely unique to the couple gives me an immense feeling of pride, it's incredibly rewarding.

#### WHAT ARE YOU CURRENTLY WORKING ON?

My bread and butter is planning luxury weddings, I love to make people happy. I also provide business

development to potential and existing venues and provide in-house wedding planning to exclusive venues such as the restored heritage properties Newcastle Castle and St.Hilda's Pit Head. I am currently working on an exciting project with two partners which will launch this winter in the digital market.

#### WHO ARE YOUR HEROES?

I admire anyone who lives life to the fullest and overcomes challenges, a well-known and obvious example of this was Professor Steven Hawking but through my voluntary work I support individuals facing devastating circumstances and I am always blown away by their resilience and attitude to life. My children are mini heroes they have a thirst for what the day is going to bring which is so inspiring.

#### WHAT WOULD YOU TELL YOUR 18 YEAR OLD SELF?

Don't fear fear! Life is not a dress rehearsal it's the main show.

#### HOW DO YOU LIKE TO UNWIND?

The bedtime routine with my children is wonderful, getting lost in the pages of a children's fiction book all cosied up. I also love a bit of singing and dancing.

**FAVOURITE BOOK:** Warhorse by Michael Murpurgo, I cry every chapter.

**FAVOURITE FILM:** It's a Wonderful Life, I watch it every Christmas Eve, it gets me every time.

**FAVOURITE CD:** Take That and Party by Take That, I have been a fan since that jelly video, haha.

For more information visit [www.mjweddingplanner.co.uk](http://www.mjweddingplanner.co.uk)

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# WHO'S LOOKING AFTER YOU?

By Claire Hawes, Co-Director, Osteopath



Stress, pain and poor lifestyle can directly impact on your performance at work – so making sure you are in optimal health makes business sense.

Have you ever wondered how you come across to your clients during interactions such as phone calls, face to face meetings, presentations or social events? Does it cross your mind that that stress levels affect your ability to focus on the person you're are speaking to, to appear fully engaged, reflective on the conversation and showing an interest on the subject in hand? When you experience pain does it affect your decision to meet with a client face to face, rather than get in a car to meet them in a venue where the seating may or may not be optimal for your condition?

Everyone from sales personnel through to directors and line managers in between will express their inherent stress levels – whether that's through targets, work-life balance, poor sleep or not enough hours in the day. Our discussion today comes from myself and Nicky's recent experiences with healthcare providers who are working on extremely tight schedules, working much more than their contracted hours and feeling the loss and breakdown of their organisation which has been depleted over the more recent years. We are talking about the bedside manner, the personable practitioner, the

'feeling listened to' – the side of what they do which can directly impact on the outcome of the care which will follow.

This translates to all business, not just the NHS. How can you deliver expertise to your clients when you are feeling sub-optimal either physical or mentally? Perhaps this feeds into the cycle of poorer performance which then leads to higher stress levels or increasing physical health problems. When do you decide to seek professional help to get your life back in balance and put a stop to the negative impact that stress and pain has on you? We can certainly tell you – it is never too early to seek help. Your chances of improving your wellbeing are always better by preventing it rather than treating it once it has become a problem. By then you may have lost the contract or client which may then have other consequences.

Obtaining balance in your work and home life is so important, but we do as a nation tend to fight on stoically almost in denial of the impact of the pressures we put ourselves under. Imagine spending an hour a week dedicated to creating calm in your mind, where your brain can rest and

recharge – meaning afterwards you are more creative, less frustrated and more engaging to your clients. Mindfulness is definitely a buzz word at the moment, and we can offer this at Back to Balance. Imagine having a course of treatment for your back which would mean you are no longer worried about attending meetings or jumping in the car – osteopathy and massage therapy can certainly help get you back on to track, with a course of Pilates to help you along in no time. Imagine sorting out your diet so that you no longer felt guilty about those mid-afternoon brownies which were messing with your diabetes – how about breaking that cycle with an innovative approach looking at the mind-body link to eating problems. And as for emotional and mental health – with more traditional psychological therapies as well as our spiritual and energetic wellness therapies, our message to you is clear – it makes sense to your business for you to look after yourself, and if you need a hand, then we can certainly help. Our corporate packages offer a variety of ways to help you and your team either onsite or in-house.

**Back to Balance is located on the Newcastle Business Park. Claire and Nicky would love to discuss your corporate wellness needs.**  
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## SUMMER BODIES ARE MADE IN THE WINTER!

Now the nights are cutting it doesn't mean you can eat what you want, then kid yourself by hiding under bigger and thicker outfits.

The attitude of, I will wait until next year and really go for it isn't the way forward. If you are looking to target some weight loss, you have to make some lifestyle changes which are more than a part time effort.

This country, especially the North East has the highest number of obese and morbidly obese people ever. One in three children leave primary school overweight, these statistics are horrendous. Unfortunately, decades of bad habits have now been handed on to the next generation and things are not getting any better.

Personal responsibility comes high on the list of starting points in order to help yourself and your children. For most people this does not involve drastic adjustments in lifestyle, it usually means a few everyday changes that will soon form new habits:

Here are a few tips to help you rethink and get started:

- **Simple but effective** - where possible use the stairs not the lift.
- **Ditch white bread, pasta and rice** as they contain no nutritional value. Aim to replace them with brown bread, whole wheat pasta or brown rice instead.
- **Rather than** adding extra carbohydrate to dishes, add extra protein instead. This will fill you up, keep you fuller for longer and of course contain less calories
- **Eat fruits rather than drink them.** This smoothie craze can work in reverse unless you are careful. Adding a number of punnets



David Fairlamb

of fruit to a drink when you wouldn't be able to manage them as raw food, is adding unnecessary calories.

- **Remove that treat** that may accompany your coffee or tea. Be aware especially if it has become a daily occurrence, the calories will soon add up.
- **Make your own lunch.** Many supposedly healthy meals are often laden with fat or sugary sauces. Take your own healthy alternative therefore you know exactly what you are consuming. This daily change over a few weeks/months can make a huge difference to your calorie intake and therefore your waistline.
- **Drink more water** especially before a meal,

this will keep you hydrated and feeling fuller, therefore helping you to avoid over eating.

- **Use a smaller plate** - Seeing a full plate, even if it's small, helps trick your brain into thinking you have eaten a substantial meal.
- **4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon.** With 28grams (7 teaspoons) an adults recommended daily allowance. Try checking labels and in many cases you will realise how much excess sugar you are consuming everyday.

These are just a few options you can look at within your daily routine, the more habits you implement, the more calories you will be saving. Continuing this over weeks, months and years could be life changing!

### DAVID'S SUMMING UP

*Make changes now, you will thank yourself when you feel and look good next summer.*

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# COMMENT WITH... Barry Speker

barry.speker@sintons.co.uk



“  
**Time to ask  
for a dram  
of English...**  
”

The saying ‘There is no such thing as bad publicity’ is often attributed to the 19th century showman, circus owner and self-publicist Phineas T Barnum. ‘The only thing worse than being talked about is not being talked about’ said Oscar Wilde. It may be a sign of lowering moral standards but in recent times bad publicity seems to enhance popularity and standing.

Opponents of Donald Trump thought publicising his sexual misdemeanours and misogyny would harm his election campaign but his ratings increased. Boris Johnson’s outbursts and the recent announcement of details of his impending divorce have not halted his leadership aspiration. Jeremy Corbyn’s close association with Hamas, Hezbollah, the IRA and other terrorist groups seems not to have weakened the devotion of the Corbynistas.

The singer Lily Allen now admits sleeping with female prostitutes while on tour away from her husband and children. Admissions of adultery, escort girls and a porn habit seem to have sent pre-sales of her upcoming autobiography soaring. Maybe she should consider a career in politics.

It is some time since asking for a scotch or a whisky and ginger became so passé. Any self respecting whisky drinker will ask for a malt or name the preference - Lagavulin, Laphroaig, Glenlivet or Bunnahabhain and know Speyside from Lowland. Respect also for award winning Japanese malts.

There is now a credible English malt to discourage the insistence upon the Scottish varieties. Lakes Distillery was formed in 2011 near Bassenthwaite but with an office in Gosforth. They hold the world record record for the most expensive bottle from a new distillery, which raised nearly £8000 at auction.

The company is now planning to raise £15 million through a stock market flotation. It is intended to build a global luxury whisky brand.

Time to ask for a dram of English?

The fox hunting ban in the UK resulted in scavenging urban foxes being a regular sight in our suburbs. In Australia it is the worsening drought which has led to mass migration of wild animals into towns and cities. Mobs of camels and kangaroos have converged, creating havoc on the roads.

The reaction of a local was in contrast to what happens here. One farmer said “I rang the boys and we got some guns to go and sort them out”. No mamby pamby calls to the RSPCA.

As usual, millions are wild with excitement at the new series of Strictly Come Dancing. I had to ask who were all of these ‘celebrities’. Yes I know Graeme Swann, Kate Silverton and Katie Piper, but then the TV audience is far better informed than I. Are they taking in the ‘wholly unrehearsed’ matching of the pairings and waiting to enjoy what is described as family fare? Or is the interest in seeing who has left who for whom, under the renowned Strictly curse?

Theresa May had made it clear she would not be participating and did not need to reinforce this with her dancing exhibition while on her African tour. She said she could watch only the first 40 mins of the Bodyguard as it is unrealistic because the politicians were not going on about Brexit (no mention of the sexy Home Secretary).

The value of the TV audience was highlighted by BBC football pundit Mark Lawrenson. An anonymous viewer emailed to say that he had noted a mark on the left side of the former footballer’s face and he should seek treatment. Lawrenson is delighted the viewer has now been traced and thanked.

And finally, there was an excellent concert at the Royal Albert Hall during the Proms. The Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra with pianist Yuja Wang playing Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No.3 in C Major. Only 50 years almost to the day when I attended my graduation at the Royal Albert Hall.



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