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MAY 2019



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issue 47

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FOREWORD

Welcome to the May edition of Northern Insight.

With Summer now upon us we are delighted to bring you a mammoth edition which further cements our position as the region's fastest growing business and leisure publication.

Our cover stars are Newcastle architects Pod who talk about their vision for creating a residential design and legacy on a grand scale at Lambton Park in County Durham.

In our popular Meet the Entrepreneur interview we talk to Bethany Ainsley, Founder of Nouveau Group, who provides an insight into how her early passion for dance quickly developed into a multi award winning company.

In our latest "showcase" feature we look at the booming Wedding industry in the North East. Look out for some great reviews also including the beautiful Wynyard Hall and a first visit to the Ship Inn, Wylam.

This has been a lovely edition to put together and we hope you enjoy reading it.

Thank you for your continued support.
Till next month.

M. J. Grahamslaw

Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher



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SK CLICK BOOMS WITH FURTHER EXPANSION AFTER FOREIGN EXPLORATION

Middlesbrough-based events and entertainment company SK Click Events has set itself up to be a significant player in the UK's multi-billion pound events industry with business further afield and financial investment.

Owner Kirsty Calvert has recently returned from the largest trade show in the industry, the PhotoBooth International Expo held at South Point Casino and Resort in Vegas. She has also had two trade visits to an exotic location in the Caribbean, where the business will now be expanding.

The company specialises in unique photo experiences for corporate and private events. With its further investment of nearly £20,000, making the full investment well over £100,000, SK Click is the proud owner of innovative technology.

The new technology includes an innovative i-pad photo experience, SK Glam Cam, which offers great flexibility, brand opportunity and a wow factor to any event. Another new product is the SK Xceptional, which can be paired with the SK Mosaic to create a branded wall.

Kirsty said: "The PhotoBooth conference in Vegas is the largest trade show for our industry. It was a motivating experience and I am now even more determined to drive the business forward in the newest mirror booth technology."

AWARD WINNING THERAPIST AMONG FOUNDERS OF NEW MINDFULNESS NETWORK

As founding members of the North East Mindfulness Network, not-for-profit company Mindful Therapies has seen a great deal of growth and success in the past few years. From their humble beginnings on a kitchen table, Mindful Therapies now receives funding from some of the UK's most recognisable companies to provide mindfulness training and mental health services throughout the North East.

The NE Mindfulness Network was set up to share good practice amongst mindfulness teachers and ensure that service users have access to good quality mindfulness interventions.

Rachel Jones-Wild, award-winning mental health expert and mindfulness trainer, is one of the directors at Mindful Therapies and is a founding member of the NE Mindfulness Network.

Rachel said: "Mindfulness is becoming increasingly popular and while this is a positive thing, it is difficult for service users to assess the quality of the services they are receiving. Setting up the Network with a number of other highly-skilled mindfulness



trainers in the region will ensure that service users receive quality, accredited therapy to help them develop mindfulness skills of their own. We're working with network co-founders Skills for People who provide people with learning difficulties with mindfulness skills to manage their mental health and wellbeing too."



SMART RESOURCING SOLUTIONS MD ANNOUNCED BEST SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR IN THE NORTH EAST

BE Group has officially launched the UK Social Entrepreneur Index sponsored by UBS, a campaign designed to celebrate entrepreneurs doing things a little differently to make our world a better place.

The inaugural UK Social Entrepreneur Index celebrates the social impact, creativity and innovation of 29 of the UK's most inspiring social entrepreneurs. Smart Resourcing Solutions MD Sophie Milliken is on the list, representing the North East.

The campaign focuses on the entrepreneurs behind the businesses, telling their story and providing inspiration to thousands of others in the process.

Eight UK ambassadors together with the index supporter Social Enterprise Mark CIC have helped to promote social entrepreneurship and worked with BE Group through the process to identify the future role models who are featured in the online index.

Sophie said: "I'm delighted to be representing the North East in the Social Entrepreneur Index. The work we do with students to give them the skills to secure placements and graduate jobs is hugely rewarding and we hope to make a difference to over 6000 students this year with even larger growth plans over the next three years."

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FIRST TIME BUYER MARKET FUELS GROWTH AT NORTH EAST MORTGAGE COMPANY

The buoyant first time buyer market is driving growth at First Mortgage NE which has completed its most successful quarter to date.

At the North East-based mortgage broker, mortgages for first time buyers were up by 16% year-on-year in 2018, increasing to 30% in the first quarter of 2019 compared to this time last year.

2018 was the company's most successful year to date fuelled by first time buyer and new build business. One of the firm's directors Phil McGuire even recently transitioned his role to new build director to further develop relationships with the region's housebuilders.

Phil said: "We're helping more first time buyers than ever before. The market is in a good place and there is clear demand for our service which is completely fee-free to consumers. Our team and footprint across the region have expanded so we can support even more buyers, most recently at our Newcastle City Centre branch."

In a prime location on Mosley Street, the company's Newcastle office has doubled in size after taking an additional floor, now spanning the ground and first floor. This has opened up three additional meeting rooms and created two job opportunities.

NEW SPORTSWEAR BUSINESS VENTURE LAUNCHES IN GOSFORTH

A new business venture centred on premium quality women's sportswear will launch in Gosforth.

Have to Love Active aims to revolutionise women's sportswear by offering premium quality sportswear at a fraction of the price.

Business partners Kate Walton and Paul Monaghan formed Have to Love Active on the belief that the business could not only produce ethically sourced, premium quality sportswear but that in doing so it could also raise money for charities that help combat breast cancer.

Kate is well versed in dealing with women's fashion having already built her brand Have to Love in Gosforth. As well as women's clothing, Kate has also designed handbags that were bought by the likes of Victoria Beckham, Cheryl Cole and many other celebrities.

The ethos of the business is particularly close to the hearts of Kate and Paul, with both being affected by cancer. Kate was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 34 whilst Paul's auntie sadly passed away at the age of 30 from cancer. After realising there were very few companies selling premium quality women's sportswear and after seeing how few of those raised awareness for women with breast cancer, Have to Love Active was formed.



NEW APPOINTMENTS AT BMC RECRUITMENT GROUP BOLSTERS TEAM GROWTH



Nick Elkin



Matt Wragg

BMC Recruitment Group, situated in Newcastle upon Tyne, is pleased to announce several key appointments. Four new team members join the rapidly growing recruitment consultancy. BMC Recruitment Group is a trusted recruitment partner to leading North East, national and international businesses.

Kathryn Lee has joined as Managing Finance Consultant and Nick Elkin as Finance Consultant strengthening the BMC Finance team. Matt Wragg has been appointed Senior Consultant in BMC's Technology division and Sandra Tang has been hired as their new Marketing Manager.

Managing Director of BMC Recruitment Group, Chris Milnes, said "It is an incredibly exciting growth period for BMC and due to our commitment to investing in talent, the team is going from strength to strength. We are proud to be working already with so many of the leading businesses here in the North East and look forward to developing stronger relationships with our clients and candidates alike."

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DELIVERING AN ARCHITECTURAL LEGACY

Lambton Park in County Durham is on the threshold of an exciting new beginning as the place for one of the most prestigious developments in North East England. Northern Insight spoke to Newcastle architect's Pod, about the vision for creating a residential design and legacy on a grand scale.

Building a legacy

Lambton Park, the ancestral seat of the Earl's of Durham, is one of the most significant historical locations in the North of England; its position in an industrialised and urbanised region shaped over time by the buildings, landscape, people and cultural narrative of County Durham. A once in a lifetime opportunity exists to fashion a new stronger future for this grand Park, transforming its fortunes and creating an enduring, thriving and genuinely unique community for generations to come.

Creative aspirations

Pod's successful architectural vision developed

through a competitive design process secured success thanks to its unique and distinctly creative approach. The innovative design is informed by a comprehensive design code including Victorian and arts and crafts styles; fashioned around an ethos of extremely high levels of craftsmanship, materials, proportions and authentic, honest detailing that drives this exceptional and unparalleled development opportunity. Architectural excellence delivered through imaginative and contextual responses, has enabled us to draw on the plethora of unique, individual features and the nuanced language of the existing buildings; interpreting, incorporating and enriching these in the overarching design concept.

Research

Investing a huge amount of time to study the essential proportions of Victorian building and arts and crafts design, together with the ground-breaking work of Ben Pentreath, the visionary architect behind the Prince of Wales's Poundbury model village, will play out in bringing a vision for 21st century classical living to fruition.

Design interpretations

As architects, we are committed to people, places and spaces. Our ambition for Lambton Park, reflects our ability to fashion a sense of time and place, from concept through to final delivery. Extensive research will be translated



Pod will create a sense of time and place, from concept through to final delivery.

into a unique and wonderful development where attention to detail has brought forward exemplar designs which challenge the traditional rules of large-scale residential development. A key driver of the project has been to deliver a vision for the developers, Trustees and the Lambton family that secures a sensitive, considered and viable future for the Park built on sustainable conservation and significant enhancement.

Trust, honesty and friendship

The long-standing partnership between Pod and Miller Homes, who are the perfect choice of developer for such a flagship scheme, is one that's been built on trust, honesty and friendship. It's been critical throughout the design and planning process and will be instrumental in delivering beautiful, distinctive homes, which in the Earl of Durham's words, will be of 'an outstanding architectural quality, sympathetic to that found elsewhere at Lambton Park'.

Delivery

Pod has designed bespoke typologies for the first phase of the scheme, the Eastern Village, which will see a new southern estate gateway that sets the scene for future development. This Victorian character area will feature 69 large four and five bed terraced properties framing a formal boulevard. Work is already underway with the first dwellings ready late 2019.



Pod directors Craig Van Bedaf, Adam Lee and Martin Clay.



Lambton Estate is one of the most prestigious developments in North East England.



More at www.podnewcastle.co.uk



Andrew Silver and Sharon Coull

GOING FOR GROWTH

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work and learning from failure.”

Colin Powell

Building and growing your business is a journey with many different stages. You may have reached the point where you need an injection of funds or capital and are perhaps considering outside investment. This can be a ‘game changer’ but you need to be ready!

Getting ready

There are two aspects to consider; being investment ready, which relates to the practical elements and information surrounding your business, and being investor ready which relates to your mindset in opening up your business to outside scrutiny. The latter can be a daunting prospect for people who have been running their own show for many years.

Investment ready

Potential investors will need to understand your business. This means having the fundamentals in place such as regular management accounts and the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators. Your business plan will need to be translated into a long term financial outlook and demonstrate a track record of performance or, at least tell a compelling story that will make sense to potential investors.

Do you have market research to underpin the assumptions in your business plan? Do you have a clear vision and understanding of what makes you unique? Know your why.

Do you have the right team and infrastructure in place to deliver on this plan effectively? Having an investable management team, or a plan as to how you are going to develop one, is critical to support any significant investment.

Define the opportunity

Truly understanding your business model is essential. Can you clearly and simply articulate the opportunity for business growth? Is it fit for growth?

Be clear on how much capital you need, what exactly you need it for and the impact it will have on your business. What growth will the additional investment drive, and how will you make the necessary returns?

Investor - Ready

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Albert Einstein

Understand the key points that investors might want to know about your business, and how to articulate them simply.

Perhaps your greatest challenge will be a change in mindset. Being open to outside involvement, support and guidance in decision making and future strategy. Talk to others who have been on the same journey and be prepared for lots of twists and turns.

Investor options - what to consider

How much control do you want to retain? A bank loan or grant will allow you to retain more control of your business. Through working with Angel Investors or Private Equity you will pass over an element of control in the business, however you may benefit from their expertise.

How much do you need? Funding opportunities will depend on how much you require and what it is for. Grant funding is available, often with very specific requirements attached which can limit applications. Some investors will have a minimum or maximum that they will invest. Consider crowdfunding platforms which can allow customers and supporters of your brand or company to invest.

People; who do you want to work with and remember you could be co-habiting for years. Fit is vital and works both ways.

'A goal without a plan is just a wish'

Securing investment might enable you to realise your vision but growth without a clear plan and invested team will be limited. Be clear on the outcome you want to achieve but remain flexible in your approach and use your existing network of trusted advisors to help you work up a plan of action. Getting used to listening to the advice of others will be a good test for this particular stage of your growth journey!

Sharon Coull 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 or e-mail start@360growthpartners.co.uk



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**BOOKING NOW FOR
MONDAY 20TH MAY...**



Speaker - NEVIL TYNEMOUTH -
New Results Ltd

Venue - Jesmond Dene House, Newcastle upon Tyne

Date - Monday 20th May, 12 noon

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

Nevil Tynemouth was involved with the launch of two of the UK's most familiar brands, Dyson and Blackberry.

He has worked with major telecoms and IT companies and has written a book – Sales Success on LinkedIn – you will want to know more.

**BOOKING NOW FOR
MONDAY 3RD JUNE...**



Speaker - PAUL DRAKE -
Sapere Software Ltd

Venue - Wynyard Hall, Stockton-on-Tees

Date - Monday 3rd June, 12 noon

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

From scampi tails to software, Paul Drake has done the hard jobs.

Since setting up Sapere software the business has gone from strength to strength and we look forward to hearing what is happening next.

At our lunch events you will enjoy meeting a network of peers, develop and grow your personal contacts, access a talent pool of experts, exchange ideas and information, develop your business through new ideas and build a trusted network of friends – all over a great lunch.

Limited places available - contact Linda Hitman to reserve your space, Linda@exclusivebusiness.net

Diary Dates:

Monday 24th June - Garry Sheriff, ITPS - Jesmond Dene House

Monday 1st July - Simon Bourne, The Hand Dyed Shoe Company - Wynyard Hall



JESMOND DENE HOUSE
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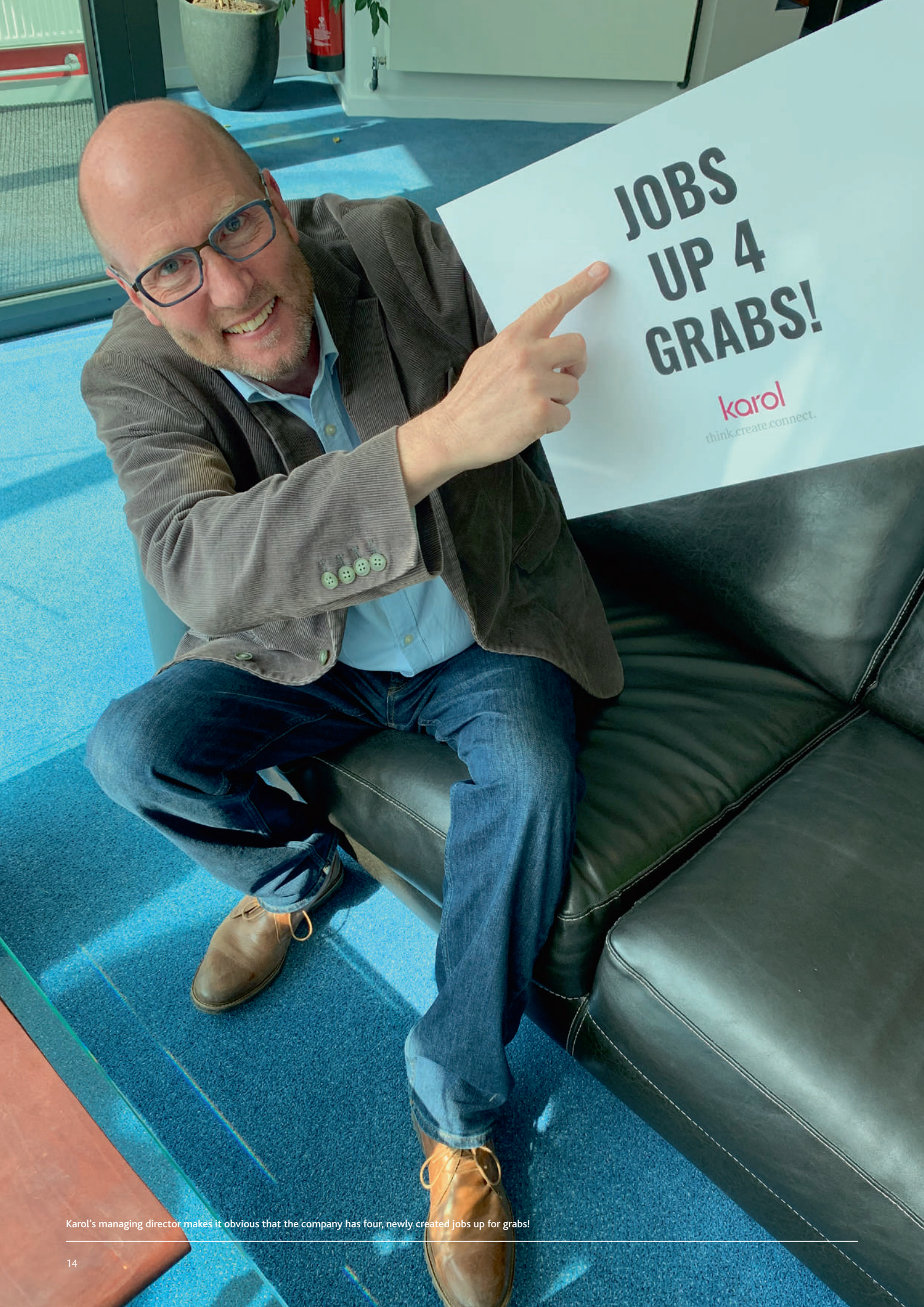
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Karol's managing director makes it obvious that the company has four, newly created jobs up for grabs!

RECRUITMENT SPELLS PR!

OK, this is a brazen attempt to let the world know that owing to numerous client wins, Karol is hiring again!

Once upon a time, when you wanted to hire new talent, you'd probably advertise in your local newspaper or, maybe, you'd approach a specialist recruiter for help.

You probably wouldn't be thinking that it should be used as a blatant opportunity to promote your business. But here it is, I am.

Of course, my primary aim is to find the perfect candidates, the right employees. Business flourishes on talent. We all know that.

But, to get the best, you must attract the best. And, the best want to work for, and with, the best.

So, any recruitment drive needs to stand out from the crowd, to demonstrate success and to show why your business is special. It should break new ground and be a magnet, attracting not just employees, but curiosity from those who might have an interest in your business...those who might be interested in working with you.

Or perhaps, just those who might tell others of your success.

It should not be just an advertisement. Rather, it should be part of your overall communication strategy where your wider comms efforts contribute to making your business the hottest employer in town.

At the time of writing, just a few days after posting "Jobs up 4 Grabs" on LinkedIn, we've had a wave of interest, not just from potential employees, but from influential individuals and companies we'd

love to work with. People I'd never have imagined, have contacted us congratulating Karol on the company's growth and expansion.

That's good PR by anyone's standards.

More importantly, we've already received a surge in applications. Not from candidates who are unsuited job hopefuls, but from skilled, talented and experienced journalists, public relations and marketing specialists who will, I'm sure, add value to our clients. And, we're still looking for more!

Why? Because we have lots of fresh, new ideas for our clients that need clever, creative people to deliver them.

We are the most awarded agency in the North for a jolly good reason. We look at where our clients are today and, where they would like to be in a years' time, and then we put together campaigns that are often anything but ordinary. We get results and have consistently done so for decades. We are team Karol.

If you are still reading this article, and you would love to develop your skills, to push the boundaries of accepted marcomms practice, to help your clients really stand out in a way that wins them more business, then please get in touch.

I can be reached at stefan@karolmarketing.com. Whether you are a prospective employee or client, I'd love to hear from you, and who knows, I might just be writing about our success (yours and ours) in the next issue of Northern Insight.

To discuss how Karol's award-winning insight and creativity can help raise the profile of your businesses, please contact Stefan Lepkowski on 0191 2657765 or Stefan@karolmarketing.com @KarolMarketing



To find out more about BMC Recruitment Group, visit www.bmcrecruitmentgroup.com, call 0191 3039298 or email enquiries@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com

IN CONVERSATION WITH...

CHRIS MILNES

MD, BMC Recruitment Group

Chris Milnes is the MD of BMC Recruitment Group. Based in Newcastle City Centre, they are a strategic and trusted recruitment partner for businesses worldwide.

Chris is a chartered insurance professional with nearly 15 years' experience in managing high performing professional service teams. With his strategic and commercial experience, he is driving the growth of BMC Recruitment Group by ensuring that their clients and candidates receive excellent service.

Tell us about your current role?

I joined BMC Recruitment Group as MD in January 2019 and it's been an interesting time to join the business. We're doing some great work with our clients, and we really punch above our weight when you look at the type of firms and roles that we recruit for.

In a relative short amount of time I've become a massive advocate of us and the work we do, but in particular about the opportunities that there are for candidates in the North East. A large part of my role is being the face of BMC in the business community and I'm out a lot, both within the region, and nationally flying the flag for BMC.

In addition to this, I spend a lot of time out with our clients, understanding more about their business, their strategic aims and ensuring that they are getting the best service that we can offer – it's part of the job that I enjoy the most. There are some fantastic businesses in the region doing some really amazing things, and we, as a region don't 'shout' about it enough.

Internally I've spent a lot of time with the team setting the strategic direction for the business over the next few years to make sure we continue to build on the success that we have already achieved.

How has your industry changed in the last decade?

There's two parts to this - a macro and a micro level. On a macro level, we find ourselves at near record levels of employment with more people working in the UK than there has ever been. A decade ago, we were just entering the Financial Crisis, which led to a massive spike in unemployment. We've moved from a race for jobs to a race for candidates.

On a micro level, along with many other sectors, the biggest change over the past 10 years has been technological advances, meaning that the barriers to entry to the recruitment industry has never been lower. As such, BMC try to stay ahead of the curve in every respect, but the most important thing to not lose sight of, is that we are, quite literally, a people business, and you can't automate your relationships. Due to the way we do business, on a consultative and strategic basis, we have a 98 percent client retention rate, but we're constantly looking for better ways to help our clients and candidates.

What are you currently working on?

The insurtech industry is seeing exponential growth and we have recently partnered with Insurtech UK to be their recruitment partner. We are now supporting various insurance and insurtech companies around the UK and this is only set to increase.

BMC are now members of Digital Union and Dynamo and our IT team have been recently inundated with some tremendous roles. We work with some of the North East's best tech organisations but our client list is

constantly expanding. This May, we are also excited to be official sponsors of Newcastle Startup Week.

Our Finance team is phenomenal and in the North East, we have established ourselves as one of the most trusted consultancies in financial recruitment. BMC Recruitment Group are thrilled to work on a wide range of roles from the big 4 to newly qualified ACA positions. We also partner with several major clients to support the development of their internal finance departments.

Tell us about your team?

Our team is what makes us so successful and for a relatively small team, we have a really diverse background however we all have a shared passion for providing excellent service.

Whilst all have a different journey to how they arrived at BMC, all of them are committed and results driven and we have a great energy in the office. This energy stems from our core values of doing the right thing for our clients and candidates and we get a thrill from helping our clients get the right person for the job.

Being ISO accredited, we have a well-controlled process meaning that our clients and candidates know what they are getting, regardless of which team member they deal with. Our approach is built around pro-active headhunting techniques, working in partnership and building long-term relationships with our clients.

We have recently made two internal promotions and secured several key appointments that will enable us to assist our clients across further specialisms and geographies. Whilst our team is growing rapidly, it's vitally important that we don't lose this commitment to quality, and we're ensuring that everyone who joins is fully committed to the BMC way.

Who are your heroes inside and outside of business?

I work closely with The Princes Trust and I would like to champion all the young entrepreneurs who are currently building their own business with support from the charity. Anyone who works hard to advance their career and life deserves to be recognised, particularly on the back of a difficult start in life.

Outside of business, I would say that my mum drove me to be who I am today. She sadly had a serious accident about 25 years ago, that paralysed her from the chest down which left her as a wheelchair user. However, she persevered and bringing me up on her own never seemed like a struggle, even though she faced many challenges. To say she is an inspiration is an understatement, it gives me a lot of perspective when dealing with professional trials and tribulations.

How do you unwind outside of work?

I still enjoy playing sport, frequently but badly – particularly golf. I'm currently looking into doing the North Korean Marathon in 2020 with a bunch of friends. Hopefully we can do it without causing an international incident! A standard weekend would involve long country walks with my wife and dogs exploring the fantastic countryside and beaches we have here in the North East.



ENTREPRENEURS' FORUM'S 'TOGETHER WE CAN TAKE ON THE WORLD' CONFERENCE TO FEATURE HIGH-PROFILE SPEAKERS

More than 300 entrepreneurs and business leaders from across the North East are set to gather at the region's largest entrepreneurial event in May, when the Entrepreneurs' Forum hosts its spring conference, 'Together We Can Take on the World'.

The event, which will be hosted by BBC presenter and personality, Alfie Joey, on Thursday 9th May 2019, will see several high-profile speakers visit the North East to share their experiences and inspiring stories with the region's business community.

Benjamin Mee, the man who restored the fortunes of Dartmoor Zoo and who was later depicted by Matt Damon in a Hollywood blockbuster, leads the cohort of speakers and personalities addressing the conference over the course of the day, from 8am-5pm at the Hilton Newcastle Gateshead.

Benjamin, together with his family, bought and rescued the dilapidated Dartmoor Zoo in 2006, which was opened a year later in July 2007. The revival was documented in Benjamin's book, 'We Bought A Zoo', and later released as a Hollywood movie in 2011, starring both Matt Damon and Scarlett Johansson. He will talk about the story of how he saved the animals and prepared the site for re-opening, and how it has developed into a leading visitor attraction.

Celebrity businesswoman and personality Heather Mills, who has invested millions in the North East

through her vegan food company VBites with the creation of three factories, will also detail her inspirational journey from homelessness to becoming a model, which came to a halt in 1993 when Heather was involved in a collision with a police motorbike that saw her lose her leg below the knee, and latterly how she has grown VBites into an international company.

Jim Cregan, the man behind household iced coffee brand, Jimmy's Iced Coffee, joins the line-up to share how a trip to Australia sparked the creation of the UK-wide business, which is stocked in major supermarkets, fuel stations and gym chains.

John Hays, the man who started Hays Travel with no travel experience, and has since led the business to surpass £1 billion in sales, will also feature at the event. Hays operates 147 retail branches, alongside several call centres and a homeworking division, employing more than 1,300 people, and John will draw on his experiences and how he has overseen the phenomenal growth of the company.

Jon Smith, founder of sports management company First Artist – which supported the formation of the Premier League – completes the round-up of

inspirational speakers at Together We Can Take on the World. He will talk about the firm's involvement in brokering several high-profile commercial deals across the sporting world, and the management of global superstars from across the world's leading leagues.

Together We Can Take on the World is sponsored by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (NELEP), with Durham City Incubator, Park Commercial, Sullivan Brown Resourcing Partners and Visualsoft as associate sponsors.

Gillian Marshall, chief executive of the Entrepreneurs' Forum, said: "Our spring conference brings a truly exciting event that will be filled with inspirational stories shared by dynamic and diverse personalities and business leaders. It is an ideal opportunity for the region's entrepreneurial community to draw on and learn from the experiences of our high-profile speakers.

"Together We Can Take on the World has grown to become the highlight of the Forum's event calendar, as we continue to support the region's businesses and entrepreneurs through our annual programme of inspirational events."

Tickets for Together We Can Take on the World are available to Entrepreneurs' Forum members and their guests and can be booked on the Entrepreneurs' Forum website, www.entrepreneursforum.net

A woman with curly hair is looking at her phone on a train platform. She is holding a yellow handrail. The background shows a train and tracks.

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Bethany Ainsley

An Entrepreneur Interview with...

BETHANY AINSLEY

Founder of Nouveau Group

With no experience in business when she started out, only a passion and drive for supporting people's health and wellbeing, Bethany Ainsley has achieved a great deal of success over the last decade.

Bethany, Founder of Nouveau Group, provides an insight into how her early passion for dance quickly developed into a multi-award-winning company, which supports a diverse range of people across the North East and beyond, in the latest Entrepreneurs' Forum member interview.

Tell me about your background in business.

I don't come from a business background in the traditional sense; I studied towards a degree in contemporary dance and I suppose my first business experiences were when I became a self-employed dance teacher during my university days.

How was Nouveau Group formed?

I'd always had an interest in health and wellbeing, which is at the heart of Nouveau Group. Nouveau Group represents a collection of companies, in which the Group is the overarching brand.

I drew upon this interest and passion for dance to form my first company, Nouveau Wellbeing, after spotting a gap in the market just over 10 years ago, in November 2008. Looking at regional and local health statistics, I discovered that life expectancies in the area were below average, and the risk of heart disease, stroke and obesity were all higher. With my knowledge of the local communities and experience in teaching, I established Nouveau Wellbeing as a social enterprise to reduce health and social inequalities across the North East through the delivery of dance and fitness programmes to people of all ages and abilities.

Within six months, I had secured grants from the Department of Health and Social Care to pilot two programmes, which were commissioned by local authorities, and from there we've taken on other projects.

10 years later, I established ActivCare Coaching, which provides training and is developing a digital platform to support carers and volunteers in helping the older population remain active into later life. The company offers accredited Seated Exercise Leader training to organisations working with older adults, in addition to the digital

platform which includes virtual classes, effective reporting tools and a rewards system for clients.

Another company 'Bethany Ainsley' followed as I wanted to share my passion for supporting entrepreneurs and leaders with their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their teams. As a result, I launched 'Bethany Ainsley' to do just that. We offer a range of wellbeing services from online courses to Workplace Health & Wellbeing programmes.

In your own words, what is it that the Group does?

Nouveau Group promotes and helps to deliver solutions and programmes to support health and wellbeing. Whether through training methods or digital classes, our group of companies work with a range of people – regardless of age and backgrounds – to deliver on that common goal.

What is your proudest moment with the company?

Celebrating our 10-year anniversary was really fun! Clients, service users and everyone we work with all came together and it was just a very proud celebration that was a culmination of all the hard work from the last decade. It was a surreal moment and one that I'll treasure.

I am also incredibly proud to have won so many awards, especially as I have come from a non-business background.

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

It is a continuous learning curve – as most entrepreneurs would testify to! I'm always making decisions and learning from those around me. Thankfully, there hasn't been any significant disasters to date!

What is your USP?

I think it is our broad range of knowledge and the fact that we work with so many different sectors, whether it is the care industry or corporate world.

I have learned, while in business, that you must switch your mind and diversify.

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

Nouveau Group is constantly evolving and the heart of all our practices and work is ensuring that it can be supported by evidence. This is a key indicator and metric, which allows us to pick up on and present, for example, return on investment and the impact we're having.

This allows us to continue to learn, develop and enter new markets to facilitate our growth.

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

Treat everyone how you want to be treated, from clients and colleagues to funders and stakeholders, it's an ethos shared across Nouveau Group.

What are the future plans of Nouveau Group?

ActivCare Coaching is moving into the National Centre for Ageing (The Biosphere, Newcastle), which is an exciting time for the company's growth.

We have also just launched three short online wellbeing courses that are available via the Bethany Ainsley shop for busy individuals including Managing Stress, Creating Balance and Finding your Tribe.

Having successfully delivered Workplace Health & Wellbeing services in a number of sizeable businesses, we are now consulting with smaller businesses to understand their requirements further. Any small business keen to support us in this process, get in touch by emailing bethany@bethanyainsley.com

Bethany Ainsley 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



CAR REPAIR FIRM'S APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME HITS THE ROAD

One of the country's best-known vehicle servicing and repair firms has teamed up with Gateshead College to launch an apprenticeship programme in the North East.

Halfords Autocentres is rolling out a national apprenticeship programme with eight colleges around the country to train the next generation of motor vehicle service and maintenance technicians and has chosen Gateshead College to deliver the training in the North East.

The two-year apprenticeship – recognised by the Institute of the Motor Industry – will allow students to progress onto a level 3 qualification that equips them with a varied range of skills and knowledge of vehicle maintenance and diagnostics, customer service and hybrid technology.

Around 70 apprentices have enrolled onto the scheme, including eight in the North East where Gateshead College is delivering the training.



DEVINE CHEMICALS CELEBRATES 10 YEARS AS AFCONA ADDITIVES' SOLE UK DISTRIBUTOR

Speciality chemicals company, Devine Chemicals is celebrating 10 years as the sole UK distributor for AFCONA Additives.

North East-based Devine Chemicals is a leading supplier to the UK coatings industry and the partnership with speciality additives manufacturer AFCONA Additives has helped to strengthen the company's product portfolio and cements its position in the coatings market.

AFCONA Additives produces a wide range of high molecular weight dispersing agents which are suitable for all solvent-based coatings and industrial water-based systems. It is a global manufacturer of speciality additives to a variety of industries including coatings, inks and plastics.

With over 30 years of experience in supplying to the manufacturing industry, Devine Chemicals delivers an extensive range of high-quality specialist chemicals suitable across many sectors.



DOUBLE SUCCESS FOR WHP AT BVCA ANNUAL AWARDS

Gateshead-based engineering specialist WHP is celebrating double success in this year's BVCA Yorkshire & North East Management Team Awards.

WHP's successful growth and improved performance earned the company the top award in both the Business Transformation Management Team and Growth Management Team categories.

The company's focus on the delivery of precision engineered solutions for the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and other clean process and manufacturing industries has seen sales grow by 135% over the last two years, achieving significant growth in overseas markets and delivering export sales of £5.5m in 2018.

Several multi-million-pounds of business has already been secured for 2019 with further opportunities in the final stages of negotiation as the company targets further growth in existing and new market sectors.



PERMATT PURRS WITH SUCCESS AFTER REACHING NEW MILESTONE

Award-winning North East fork lift truck specialist Permatt has reached a new milestone in its ongoing growth.

The Tyneside business has just delivered four Cat fork lift trucks to JR Holland, making a total of 103 machines supplied to regional companies in the past 12 months, since changing from the Toyota brand.

Permatt, the largest independent fork lift truck supplier in the North East, is now well on the way to building 500 vehicles in its long- and short-term fleet of materials handling equipment.

Mark Percy, managing director said: "Our shift to becoming a Cat fork lift truck dealer has given us a real boost. We are delighted that JR Holland stayed with us during our change, recognising the benefits of the new range of vehicles and the ongoing support we offer."



FIRST YEAR SUCCESS

Specialists in Electrical Engineering, Control and Instrumentation, Covol combine their impressive industry experience with next-generation technologies and big ambitions.

Having only launched in March 2018, the company has quickly developed from a start-up in Billingham to an established business with 14 employees, acquiring contracts from major international companies operating in the Manufacturing, Oil and Gas, Petrochemical, Pharmaceutical, Process and Utilities industries.

Managing Director, Jeremy Gadd said: "During Covol's first year, we had ambitious plans to grow both at home and in the global market.

Following on from securing an investment package of £300,000 from UK Steel Enterprise and NPIFFW Capital Debt Finance, we've generated over £1m worth of business from a variety of clients large and small."

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Colin Simpson

STAYING POWER...

As Tomlinson Hall – a multi-award-winning North-East company - celebrates 100 years in business, we take a look into how it has been successful in sustaining longevity as a local firm operating on a global scale.

This month we chat to...

COLIN SIMPSON

Business Development Director at Tomlinson Hall

What does Tomlinson Hall do?

Tomlinson Hall is an approved global distributor of a wide range of leading pump brands. We have built incredibly strong relationships to be honoured as sole distributor in the UK for leading pumps including DEPA, ELRO and Richter.

We are also in a unique position as a pump manufacturer and we are proud to be one of the few companies to wholly manufacture a British Pump in the Liquivac® - a very innovative and niche pump that is exported across the globe.

How do you think the business has achieved such longevity?

Over recent years, Tomlinson Hall has really catapulted to position itself as the brand to be challenged in the multiple sectors that we operate in. Our commitment to growth has been combined with the company's absolute ambition to continuously be at the forefront of the pump distribution industry and, as such, manufacturers want to work with Tomlinson Hall. We are in a fortunate position to select our preferred partners meaning we have built a great blend suitable for varying applications across our portfolio.

We have solid strategic partnerships and work with the very best manufacturers across the globe to have an impressive pump portfolio. The strength of these relationships, coupled with our high customer retention rates helps to keep us at the very forefront.

Leading the way in the UK, it is great that other companies look to Tomlinson Hall as the benchmark and we very much take this as a compliment as we continue to strive to improve.

What do you think is the driving force behind the business?

Our staff absolutely drive the business forward. Our strong business performance is coupled with an inherent culture with almost 60% of our staff – currently standing at 27 - having been with Tomlinson Hall for over 10 years. From this, two team members have been with the business for over 40 years and a further four employees possess over 25 years of long service.

This is true testament to the culture that we have adopted in the business and, as such, together we are a strong unit working as one. The longevity and constant growth of the business – which includes the company recently posting a record financial year – is really down to the commitment of our long serving team.

What is Tomlinson Hall doing to mark 100 years in business?

This is a really special year for the business and as our CSR activities are so important to Tomlinson Hall, we wanted to celebrate the occasion through giving back to the community. As such, we have launched our '100 for 100' campaign and have chosen a combination of 12 good causes that include giving back to local community projects and national

and local charities, including the likes of the Changing Lives and CEO Sleepout, Billingham South Community Primary School, and The James Cook University Hospital. Each month we will donate 100 sought after items. Over the course of the year we will be contributing gifts suitable for each chosen charity from 100 sleeping bags through to 100 trauma teddies and 100 Easter Eggs.

What is the company's most successful achievement so far this year?

We have been named as one of the Department of International Trades (DIT) North East's 2019 Northern Powerhouse Export Champions for the second consecutive year and we are delighted to once again be flying the flag for North East businesses. We are pleased to be in a position where we can engage with other companies in the region and offer advice and support to help boost their exporting activities.

In the last 12 months, since first being awarded the title, we have continued to forge our excellent relationship with the DIT and have enjoyed an increase of over 40% in all exporting activities strengthening our sales in USA, Middle East and South East Asia.

At the beginning of the year Tomlinson Hall was awarded SME of the Year at the North East Automotive Alliance awards and we have since been shortlisted for two awards at the UK Pump Industry Awards – Manufacturer and Distributor of the Year. In our 100th year we have also been shortlisted for an Export and Innovation Award at the North East Business Awards.

What does the future hold for Tomlinson Hall?

Tomlinson Hall is unashamedly ambitious to grow our business presence across the UK and globe, but importantly, to increase the number of jobs available in Teesside.

As a global brand leader, we are looking to further grow international markets in the USA, Canada, South America and South East Asia and to corner these markets with the company's own product, Liquivac®, and with its strong distributor network.

Investment in research and development on Liquivac® will continue with an aggressive commercialisation strategy to roll out industry first upgrades across this product range. We are very much looking forward to continuing to work with Teesside University engineering department – with one of their PhD students joining Tomlinson Hall in the near future – supporting in the next phase of the development. As part of this, the business is committed to strengthening its relationships with the Department of Trade and the Chamber to expand our international foothold and further reinforce our brand leadership in the domestic market.

Understanding the importance of our team at Tomlinson Hall, we will continue to provide ongoing training and professional development for all members of staff to ensure that they are all empowered and equipped to be the very best they can be.

AKZONOBEL BRINGS NORTH EAST HERITAGE TO LIFE FOR DUTCH EMBASSY

Officials from The Embassy of the Netherlands in London have received a unique insight into the heritage of the North East during a recent visit to AkzoNobel Ashington.

Home to AkzoNobel's iconic Dulux brand, the £100 million site in Ashington is the single largest investment ever made by the Dutch-headquartered paints and coatings business.

In addition to showcasing its manufacturing prowess, AkzoNobel was keen to impress upon its international visitors the unique culture that the site was founded on, which takes into close consideration the industrial background of the area.

To help illustrate this culture for its guests, AkzoNobel Ashington teamed up with the nearby Woodhorn Museum to loan two original works of art by the Ashington Group.

Commonly known as the 'Pitmen Painters', The Ashington Group was an amateur art group which rose to fame for its canvas depictions of life above and below ground for mining communities in Northumberland.

Starting life as an art appreciation class in the early 1930s, the Group's tutor wanted them to learn about art through 'doing', so the group started to paint. This mentality has been a source of inspiration for AkzoNobel Ashington.



(L to R) Lieke Conijn, Nanja Piek and Martijn Verwegen from The Embassy of the Netherlands in London with the artworks by the Ashington Group, 'Pitmen Painters'.

"We were delighted to welcome representatives from the Dutch Embassy to our manufacturing unit in Ashington," said Jeff Hope, head of manufacturing unit at AkzoNobel Ashington.

"Ashington is immensely proud of its coal mining heritage and the facility is actually built next to the site of the old North Seaton colliery which closed in 1961. The closure of the pits had a huge effect on the town and the surrounding areas, with many

people losing their jobs. This is something we have been mindful of from the earliest commissioning stages of the plant, especially when it comes to recruitment.

"Because the Ashington facility was 90 per cent prototype in its construction, bringing together pioneering technologies from all over the world, it has allowed us the flexibility to employ staff based on cultural fit instead of knowledgeability, with the theory that skills can be learnt, but having the right heart cannot.

"Since the site first started recruiting in 2013, we have delivered over 33,000 individual lines of training in more than 1,200 different competencies through our 'Kilbourn Academy', named after one of the founding members of the Ashington Group, which has created a highly-skilled and sustainable workforce through both knowledge and culture.

"We were overwhelmed to be able to have some of the Pitmen Painters' original works on site at Ashington and we would like to extend our immense gratitude to the curators at Woodhorn Museum for helping us to make our visit from the Dutch Embassy so memorable."

For more information about AkzoNobel, visit www.akzonobel.com

A TOP OF THE TABLE SOLUTION FOR MIDDLESBROUGH F.C.

Advantex Network Solutions, the award-winning North East technology firm, has just partnered with Middlesbrough F.C. to improve the communication and ticketing systems at the Teesside-based football club.

Advantex recently installed a state-of-the-art call management system which has been deployed across the retail, ticketing and main reception numbers in order to manage calls via an intelligent cloud-based telephony system, allowing the club to reactively and efficiently manage their phone lines – especially during periods of high volume and demand.

Head of Operations at Middlesbrough F.C., Shauna Robb said: "As our managed service provider, Advantex give us the peace of mind that we're not only in the right hands should something go wrong, but they allow us to focus on our day-to-day roles - ultimately improving the overall efficiency of the business.

On the occasions when we need additional resource or support, they never fail to step up to our requirements. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend."

The partnership has already seen both brands go from strength-to-strength, with Advantex Sales & Marketing Director adding: "The partnership with Middlesbrough Football Club is one I'm particularly proud of.

Being from the area myself, I grew up supporting the club, so to be working with them decades later is a bit of a dream come true.

We've worked extremely hard to secure significant growth over the past 12 months, achieving over £2 million in sales – and to add such a prestigious name and local brand like Middlesbrough Football Club as a partner, is just brilliant.

Not only does it give us the chance to showcase some of the most innovative technology on the market, we get a great sense of achievement knowing we enable the club to work seamlessly and efficiently, allowing them to focus on what really matters - what happens on the pitch."



Dave Cooling, Advantex Network Solutions with Shauna Robb, Middlesbrough Football Club.

You can read more about the partnership and download the case study at advantex.uk.com/casestudies/mfc/

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Ivan Jepson

AGILE SUPPORT FOR REGION'S SMALL FIRMS

Juggling priorities as a small business can be a challenge. Where do you find the time to develop your talent? And yet recruitment and skills development are recognised as vital to the success of any company. This is where Gateshead College is establishing itself in a lead role as business development director Ivan Jepson explains how they work differently.

Over the years we've learned that a one-size-fits-all approach to helping businesses develop the skills they need to succeed just doesn't work.

All companies are different, made up of people with different strengths, with different issues to resolve and opportunities to grab. They're also busy on their day-to-day operation so recruitment and training are often areas where an experienced, helping hand is needed.

We know we can help take some pressure off by making time to listen and understand what's going to make them work better; how we can help them grow and make their business a success. We try to take the grief and hassle away from employers.

A big challenge facing any small business owner is how to juggle the demands of running a business with hiring and developing talent and

incentivising the workforce. I've come across many companies that are reluctant to invest in staff training because they don't have the time or resources – and that's where we come in.

Take Norseal, a provider of door seals, grilles and vent covers in Prudhoe. They were looking to make their warehousing operation more efficient, so we spent time with the team on the shop floor chatting with them to understand their challenges and what training would improve things. It was the team, rather than the management, which drove the whole project and we were there to design a training course tailored exactly to their requirements.

The results speak for themselves: the warehousing operation is more efficient; the jobs of the warehousing staff have been made much easier and the team has been brought closer together by having a shared goal to work towards. The

training has also given them the confidence to share and try out new ideas, an approach which allows them to find novel ways of improving the business.

At Gateshead College we work with hundreds of small businesses, from quirky furniture manufacturers to an events company that organises party nights for people across the country. What's so striking about all the businesses we work with is their uniqueness.

That's why we make it a priority to get to grips with each individual company and get under the skin of their business.

We aim to be a critical friend as well as a trusted partner; we're not afraid to ask questions and challenge them. This enables us to develop a training programme that's totally geared to helping their business grow.

For more information, please visit www.gateshead.ac.uk/employer

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In a new series of features, we explore the dynamics of family life in business.

...Keep it in the family...

Ian Gillespie, managing director at Activ Technology, has been working alongside his daughter, account manager, Emma Gillespie since 2013. Formed in 2010, the company has 30 staff and is a managed service provider for IT and telecommunications across the North of England and Scotland. At the end of 2018, the company opened its first office outside of the North East, in Dumfries.

We explore the dynamics of a father/daughter relationship within the workplace.

Ian Gillespie, managing director

I grew up in Northumberland and a lot of my friends went into farming and I wanted to also go down that route. However, we were not from farming stock, so my father said it would be unrealistic. I did want to make money, so I started working with him in the motor trade learning how to build customer loyalty and develop business acumen.

I worked with my father for ten years before I set up Fone Logistics in 1996. I grew the company to 150 employees and sold it 14 years later.

I always knew that Emma had a good business head but it was important for her to pursue her own career and after building up good business knowledge at The Entrepreneurs' Forum she joined the team at Activ.

I enjoy running a family business and Emma has brought with her a very strong work ethic. Naturally, work issues can rear their head at home but we always look to spend time together as a family and annually book a holiday where we purposefully leave work at home.

Working with Emma has taught me how important family time is and, very pleasingly, business has allowed an interesting outlet for us. We sponsor Newcastle Falcons and, in particular, star player Sinoti Sinoti. I love Rugby and I am delighted to say that as a result of our links with the club, Emma has also become a big fan and we frequently enjoy watching the game together. We are so engrossed in the game and the social side of the day that work very rarely gets mentioned.

As for Emma's future, she can achieve anything that she puts her mind to. My advice to her is to keep learning and to surround yourself with positive, motivated people.

Emma Gillespie, account manager

After leaving school in 2011, I completed a business admin level 2 qualification at the Entrepreneurs' Forum. This was something I really enjoyed, as I have always

had a business head and was interested to learn about the drive and motivation that characterised successful people.

I would classify dad in that bracket, as he built the phenomenally successful Fone Logistics and is now at the helm of Activ Technology.

In 2013 I joined the client support team at Activ Technology. This allowed me to build my product knowledge and to forge a solid relationship with our customers.

Having progressed to account manager, I work closely with dad. We have the same work ethic and drive and make a good team. Dad has always emphasised that you must put the customer first and that is now central to everything I do.

Working within a family business can have its challenges. Sometimes I feel like a stepping stone between my colleagues and the management team, especially if they don't want to approach them directly. That said, we are a very happy ship and we encourage all staff to speak out and voice their opinions, as their views really do matter.

It is also important to ensure that there is a lot of family time as opposed to business time. Now that I report to my dad, there can sometimes be a fine line between him being my manager and my dad, which can be difficult.

As with all close knit family businesses, work topics can flow into time at home. Sometimes in a busy work environment it can be difficult to discuss or get everything across that you need to, so the meeting happens at home. It is important that it is kept to a minimum, as we all need down time and relaxation.

Where do I see myself in the future?

It is not something that I have really thought about. I love my role as account manager as I enjoy building relationships with customers, looking after them throughout their contracts and renewals of their mobile contracts, so I am very happy being in the here and now.



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Ian and Emma Gillespie



Delegates from Hong Kong and Wales visit Studio West School with the North East LEP.

SHARING NORTH EAST SKILLS PRACTICE INTERNATIONALLY

Visitors from across the UK and as far afield as Hong Kong have been in the North East to learn how the region is leading the way in improving careers education for young people.

Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership, explains how developing closer links between schools and employers is having a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.

This month the North East LEP skills team has hosted visitors from the UK and Hong Kong, with the aim of sharing what we've learnt about embedding engagement with employers into the classroom and improving careers guidance for young people.

A delegation of representatives from Hong Kong's education sector joined education specialists from Rhondda Cynon Taf Education, Employment and Training team in Wales on a two-day visit to the North East. The aim of the visit was to share what we've learnt about working with schools, colleges and local employers to deliver outstanding careers education to each and every young person in our region.

We also hosted a visit from colleagues from across the country as part of our role as Cornerstone Hub partnering with the Careers & Enterprise Company. Our hubs not only support North East schools and

colleges to achieve the Gatsby Career Benchmarks but we also have a role to play nationally, learning from and supporting Careers Hubs in other regions in implementing the benchmarks in their own regions.

The North East is leading the way in careers education and employer engagement. In 2015 we were the first region to pilot the Gatsby Career Benchmarks in schools and as a result we demonstrated the huge impact these benchmarks can have in schools and on outcomes for young people, really helping pupils to understand how what they learn in the classroom applies to their future careers.

The benchmarks have now become part of Government's national careers strategy, meaning that schools and colleges elsewhere in the country are keen to learn from the North East LEP about how we have engaged schools and colleges with the benchmarks and how we continue to support their delivery.

We have also established a successful Enterprise Adviser programme, partnering North East schools with business leaders who volunteer their expertise

to help shape careers education and strengthen the relationship between our education and business sectors.

Our visitors from Hong Kong and Wales visited Studio West school in Newcastle and Harton Academy in South Shields to meet staff and students and hear first-hand about the difference this employer engagement and the Gatsby Career Benchmarks have made to them.

I'm extremely proud the North East is recognised nationally and internationally as an example of best practice in delivering careers guidance. It's testament to the impact the Gatsby Career Benchmarks have that so many countries across the world want to match our success.

This success is down to the hard work by our schools and colleges but also the time and expertise that has been given by North East businesses, who have been instrumental in helping us to drive forward our skills, employability and inclusion programmes which are vital to improving life for people in the North East.

Visit www.nelep.co.uk to find out more about the North East LEP's work with schools, colleges and employers in the region.

RDA CREATE NEW VIP BAR EXPERIENCE AT THE O2'S AMERICAN EXPRESS INVITES LOUNGE



RDA, an award-winning design and installation company was recently appointed by Levy UK and AEG at The O2 to refurbish the mezzanine VIP bar area in the American Express Invites Lounge.



The key aim of the project was to enhance the experience of a new VIP package through a premiumisation of the bar and an addition of a new food counter to supplement the existing F&B offer, with born-again tapas style dishes presented with a contemporary twist.

As the upgrades were largely operational, the brief around the aesthetic was to tie in with the existing look and feel. However, through some interesting

finishes, RDA's team of designers were able to bring added touches of luxury to the interior. This included using a blackened metallic bar cladding and new back fittings adorned with an antique mirror. To create a more social vibe on the mezzanine, two booth seats were removed in favour of high-top poseur tables with new stools in black and gold.

Nick Bradley, Director at RDA said: "This is the second project we have completed for The O2 as

part of our ongoing relationship with Levy UK and AEG. We were delighted to have the opportunity to transform the VIP bar in one of the most prestigious hospitality spaces at The O2."

The O2 is the world's most popular music and entertainment venue. Since opening in 2007, it has been visited by more than 70 million people and in 2017 was named Pollstar 'International Venue of the Year' for the tenth time.

For further information on RDA visit www.rdalimited.co.uk or call 08448734993.

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU STRESS TESTED YOUR SALES ENGINE?

So, the Brexit debate rumbles on and parliament remains paralysed. Meanwhile, we shall keep calm and carry on while the politicians continue to battle it out and hopefully offer up some clarity on what the future will look like post 31st October sooner rather than later.

As business owners we're used to focusing on controlling the controllables and letting go of everything else, but how many of us can ever recall such politically and economically turbulent times?

As standard we should already be de-risking our businesses and focusing on growth, but in times of uncertainty it will always come down to the survival of the fittest. Sadly, many businesses maybe in for a deep sharp shock if they do not act now, ensuring they are prepared for any possible Brexit fallout.

As someone who survived (only just) the last recession in 2008, there are some business lessons I've personally learnt and now apply to ensure my own business is sufficiently stress-tested and de-risked.

Below are four test points you can use in your own business.

1. Lead times and cashflow

What is the average lead time in your pipeline and how much positive runway do you have in your cashflow? Your runway on cash should always exceed the length of time it takes for you to win new business. A standard business principle that sadly many businesses fail to understand or implement.

I recently read some sector specific data on marketing agencies. More than 50% have less than six weeks' worth of cashflow, (less than 3% had more than 12 month's worth of positive cashflow). I know of some businesses that are scraping along month to month, permanently living hand to mouth with less than a month's positive cashflow.

Cash is your business oxygen and it's your job to ensure you have sufficient in the tank before you get out of your depth. If you were to cut off your cash source today, how long could you trade? Long enough to replace any lost income with new business? If not, then act now and focus on building up your cash reserves or put in place other options for working capital should it ever be needed. The



Nicola Cook, CEO of Company Shortcuts.

best times to raise working capital, is when you don't need it. Once your back is against the wall, your options are limited.

Lead times are always impacted by reduced confidence in an economy and this puts pressure on cash. What would happen if your lead times doubled, could your business survive? Act now as if this is already the case. Longer lead times are the one certainty amidst all the Brexit uncertainty.

2. De-risk your client base

Who is your largest client and what percentage of business does that represent? If the answer is more than 30%, you've got a big problem. If you lost that one client would it plunge you from profit into loss?

Similarly does all your business come from one route to market? What would happen if there was a change in legislation or that sales channel was disrupted? That's what happened to me in 2008 and I soon discovered that we burnt through all our cash in the race to replace income with new business.

3. Get lean

It's very easy when times are good to carry additional unnecessary cost, allow inefficiencies to remain unaddressed and to allow people to

perform below their maximum productivity. Where does your profit come from – really? What products or services, which sectors, which customers, which team members? Focus on these assets and cut the rest. Trim the fat NOW before you're in a situation when you have to.

4. Go Global

The best way to protect yourself against uncertainty in one market is to balance your revenue from income from additional sectors, markets or geographies. Now is THE perfect time to think about spreading your horizons.

How could you reach a global market? Many businesses are leveraging the internet as a way to reach a worldwide audience using their existing infrastructure. How could you reach a new geographical market? Through distribution perhaps? Or digital? Or partnership? Or could you repackage your existing offer and repurpose it for a different client type or a different sector? Offset a downturn in one market, geography or sector with growth in another.

Take time to stress test your business now and be confident that whatever happens, you and your business will be sufficiently de-risked to ride out any storm.

To watch a video on how to improve the sales focus of your business follow this link; companyshortcuts.com/neinsight

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CHRYSLER





Gary Powell

YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

GARY POWELL

Managing Director, Admired Properties

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

I was one of three siblings, with an older brother and sister born and raised in Kenton. My parents still live in the same house which has been in the family for over 60 years.

I was academic as a child but preferred to channel my energy into sport and have many happy memories playing football, rugby, athletics and basketball. I also had trials for England school boys at football and rugby. I played semi-pro football for Tow Law, Durham and Spennymoor, finishing my career at the age of 30 at Morpeth Town, where I now live.

What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?

I am extremely proud of the North East's business community. The region still retains its old traditional values of loyalty, trust and respect, which are instilled in us at a young age. The family unit is important, which probably explains why we have so many family-run firms operating across the region.

From a work perspective, Admired Properties is currently assisting The High Street Group on Hadrians Tower, Newcastle, where we have made substantial investments on behalf of our wealth management contacts in Asia. We are also currently in talks with North East construction companies regarding potential joint ventures and we want to become a developer in our own right in the very near future.

I see massive opportunities for the region in both residential and commercial property sectors.

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

It is without a doubt one of the best places to bring up a family. My son, Connor now married to Bethany and daughter, Grace, are grown up and we are looking forward to welcoming our first grandchild this year.

In terms of location, there aren't many other places where you can go from the coast to the countryside in less than half an hour. I love to be active so in my spare time you will find me Gyhill scrambling, playing golf and watching Newcastle United and the Falcons.

The best thing I have ever done is setting up Admired Properties. Working in the North East, where my family is based, means life couldn't be any better right now! My

son, Connor, is business development manager, so we are now officially one of the army of family firms operating in the region.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

I frequent Italian restaurant, Lolla Rosso, in Morpeth, on a regular basis and you can't go wrong with an evening at Babucho on Dean Street in Newcastle.

I travel to the Middle East and Far East every six weeks for business and I live off street food when I'm there – it's delicious and a true representation of what the locals eat.

Are the people really friendlier?

Without a shadow of a doubt. I've lived in Hong Kong and Singapore and conducted business internationally and I can tell you that you cannot beat a Geordie. When it comes to the good times and the bad times, no one will help you out like someone from the North East.

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

It's hard to choose just one but at a push I would say the view from the Quayside looking out over the bridges when they are lit up and the Sage alongside.

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

If we take just Newcastle alone, we are seeing mid to high-rise developments popping up throughout the city, providing real quality for residents.

We can most certainly challenge larger cities such as Manchester and Leeds for quality of life both in and outside work. We have an internationally renowned red-brick University, a pioneering Science Park, a thriving restaurant and bar scene and, if you venture a little further out, spectacular countryside and coastline.

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

I worked in Singapore 1999-2004, in wealth management and banking before coming back to the UK in 2004-2009 as senior manager for a wealth management company. I returned to Asia in 2010, where I spent four years in Hong Kong as senior director for a property investment firm.

2017 was the year I settled back home in the North East, establishing Admired Properties. There truly is no place like home and I have no plans to leave!

A GLOBAL BUSINESS WITH LOCAL ROOTS



L-R: Steven Musham, Head of L&D, Darren Williams, Business Development Manager, Steve Rawlingson, CEO, George Wallis, Business Development and Sandra Kennedy, Operations & Compliance Manager

Samuel Knight International is a global recruitment and project man-power specialist, providing skills and project solutions to the energy and rail sectors on a permanent, contract and project basis.

Established in 2014, in Newcastle upon Tyne, by CEO and Founder, Steven Rawlingson - the business now boasts three UK offices, including premises in London and Bristol. International expansion is also on the horizon, with a recent office opening in the Middle East and USA site developments.

As a fast-rising star in the recruitment world, Samuel Knight's impressive growth is testimony to the unrivalled services, people and project solutions the company has provided to clients.

Demonstrating phenomenal growth since its formation, the business was awarded significant investment in early 2019, from Gresham House Ventures, using funds from the Baronsmead Venture Capital Trusts which will fund Samuel Knight's near-term growth plans.

Plans include increasing headcount at the offices in Bristol and London and adding local talent to the Newcastle team, from entry level graduates to experienced consultants.

The recruitment drive is geared up to support expansion across the energy and rail space given increasing demand from clients and candidates. Samuel Knight are focusing on achieving greater market share and boosting awareness of the brand through targeted marketing and business

development. The investment will also allow Samuel Knight to further invest in technology to continue innovation within the business.

Last year, Samuel Knight achieved £13m turnover and took home 'Team of the Year' at the Great British Entrepreneur awards. 2018 also saw Samuel Knight securing major new client contracts in more than 30 countries, boosting headcount and expanding the business to accommodate business growth.

Following a period of significant expansion, global energy and rail recruitment specialist, Samuel Knight International, has additionally welcomed four new hires in the last month to meet the firm's ambitious global plans.

The recent round of senior hires signifies Samuel Knight's exciting era of expansion, each new recruit will support the company in achieving growth and recognition for its expertise and international edge.

Sandra Kennedy, who joins the team as the operations and compliance manager brings a wealth of experience in leading managerial positions to the company; George Zeitoun-Wallis, the new business development manager has a rich, entrepreneurial background including experience working in the African oil and gas industry; Steven Musham, the new L&D manager will help

strengthen the company from within thanks to his extensive knowledge attained from many years of working in the industry; and Darren Williams, who has over 20 years of experience working in recruitment, 12 of which were in the energy sector, will take on the role of business development manager, with a focus on renewables.

Commenting on the recent hires, Steven Rawlingson, CEO at Samuel Knight said: "Samuel Knight is going through an exciting stage of business expansion - we are on track with our international vision, as we enter the Middle Eastern market. We have been constantly growing our headcount this year, and plan to continue developing our team. Bringing on board the very best talent is an essential part of our aggressive five-year growth plan, and will certainly help us keep our spot as the leading global energy and rail specialists."

"I am extremely proud to welcome Sandra, George, Steven and Darren to the Samuel Knight team. Like our existing workforce, they are all hard-working, skilled and passionate about what they do, with their experience showing how dedicated they are. We have a lot planned here at Samuel Knight, and I am excited to see what we can achieve together as a team."

For more information, visit: www.samuel-knight.com



ALL ABOUT THE HX!

When brainstorming CXY in the early days and getting to the core of our purpose and essence it became very apparent that CXY is a whole lot more than helping organisations deliver amazing Customer Experiences and that actually, we are leaps and bounds ahead of CX, we are actually all about HX. Human Experiences!

One of our advisors flippantly said you're talking about changing the world, well maybe we can't quite do that, but we can certainly help. Through our charity HOT (Help Others Thrive) we are honoured and privileged to be a trusted partner of Genesis Protection Services.

Genesis are specialists in providing, educating and delivering all aspects of Protection within the Armed Forces. With a company strapline of "Do Good" and the offering of some free services to their customers and families within the military, they too are all about delivering HX. They partner with local businesses to help those leaving the military (often for reasons beyond their control,

health both physical and mental) transition into the business world, rather than as we see too often find themselves struggling to make ends meet which sadly results in them on the streets.

Their founder, Sara Arthur is a pretty powerful force herself and has taken on the physical and mental challenge of trekking up Mount Kilimanjaro alone, without family and friends to support her, a very familiar situation for those in the military who protect us every day. But it's not all been a bed of roses for this formidable lady who is swapping her heels for trekking boots, as she is all too familiar with being pushed to her limits. Only two years ago she found herself in

a refuge with her young children and struggling with her own mental health. This experience has driven her quest to ensure that no one should be homeless and especially veterans who give us so much.

As for the future, she wants to enhance Genesis ability to do good, and work alongside local businesses across the UK providing them with the same fantastic and personal service, to every member of their teams.

Whilst not tackling Mount Kilimanjaro, well not this year anyway, team CXY will be supporting Sara at the Durham CEO sleepout doing all we can to help create better HX.

If you would like to support Sara or the CXY team, you can donate through Just Giving. All donations will receive a HOT & CXY mug!
www.justgiving.com/fundraising/sara-arthur www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rachel-jones179



Ammar Mirza CBE

DON'T STOP ME NOW

Eager, enthusiastic and excited are very accurate descriptions of me. When I set a goal, I do everything I can to achieve that goal, and at times, at all costs.

Having decided last year that I was the ideal candidate for the newly created position of the North of Tyne Mayor and being the first person in the North East to publicly announce my decision in October 2018, I hadn't realised what I would have to sacrifice in doing so. Deciding not to stand was probably one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made, especially given the incredible amount of support from so many people, many whom I had never met. But it was the right decision.

Reflecting on my 'power of three' methodologies, I have written and spoken numerous times about the importance of Desire, Direction and Discipline. Desire is having a goal, Direction is developing a plan and Discipline is being single-minded, laser focused on achieving that goal. So having realised a goal, and developed a plan, it was highly unusual, even unheard of, for me to change my mind. But one of the greatest things I have learned over the past few years is the importance of being agile,

and pivoting so realising when something isn't quite right and changing course or direction. More importantly being patient and making sure timing is right.

The key reason for deciding not to stand was primarily family orientated, having a six year old son, six month old daughter and an eight month old granddaughter – interesting dynamic - whom selfishly, I want to spend as much time as possible before they all grow up and become interested in other things or other people.

Other major factors affecting my decision being the amount of things I would have to give up or positions that I would need to resign from, due to potential conflicts of interest. These include the not for profit social enterprise Asian Business Connexions that is celebrating ten successful years of connecting, supporting and promoting the Asian and wider community, the Primary Inspiration through Enterprise Charity that I

established which brings real enterprise activities into schools teaching young people about business and preparing them for the world of work, the North East LEP board and the Progression Forum. All of the other charities and trusts that I could not continue actively support either, including the Cadet Apprenticeship Pathway, TWAM or Tyneview Primary School where I am Chair of Governors.

The key dilemma I have was that I really enjoy what I am doing working with likeminded people to make a significant and sustained impact for the whole community across our North East. And I don't want to stop, especially as some of the organisations that have been established and are making a difference, I have grown from inception. So whilst it was a tough call, it was the right decision for now. I am ever so grateful for the tremendous show of support and a heartfelt thank you from the bottom of my heart. But don't stop me now as I'm having such a good time.

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



ABC 10th Annual Dinner and Awards Ceremony

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WHAT SHOULD YOU BE EARNING?



Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, discusses the different variables, factors and trends that play a role in determining your salary.

Ever wondered if you're being paid fairly? The Office for National Statistics (ONS) released figures showing the average full-time salary in the UK is currently £35,423.

By analysing over 400 jobs, unsurprisingly, it was senior managers and directors who take home the highest pay packets.

Amongst the lowest rewarded are the care and leisure industries. Others, like healthcare, show huge discrepancies between roles, which goes to show that your salary expectations need to differ significantly depending upon the industry you work in and the job you do; but there's so much more to it than that.

Education: The better qualified you are, whether that's a university degree or a work-based qualification from a trusted institution, the more positively your salary will be affected.

Experience: As your professional experience grows, the value you bring to your employer increases, so it goes without saying that your salary should follow in line.

Employer: Whether it's big, mid-tier, small, corporate or entrepreneurial, the type of

organisation you're part of - and its culture and focus on investing in people - will determine how much you receive for your endeavours and loyalty.

Location: Where you live impacts your potential to earn. Whether it's the area of the country you call home or commuting to a workplace that's in a rural or city location; it all has an impact on your salary.

Gender: The gender pay gap fell to 8.6% in 2018, in favour of men. For full-time workers the figure is close to zero when aged between 18 and 39 but, upon closer inspection, the figures show women's salary growth peaks earlier than their counterparts. It is when women are over 40 that they can expect to start earning less than their male peers.

Age: As you grow older there's an expectation your salary will increase alongside your years. Starting out in your late teens or early twenties, earnings can grow quite quickly while you build up experience. Your thirties are when you can begin to outstrip the national average and the forties are where what you have done with your time will begin to pay off.

No matter how old you are, or what level of education and experience you have, there's always

room to grow and increase your earnings. Keep improving, learning and developing your skills with a focus on your own big picture.

We all want to be paid well, but sometimes the best move isn't the one that brings you the most money right now. It's important to consider all of the factors mentioned and remain realistic about your salary expectations in relation to your long-term goals; especially if you're looking for a new job.

Salaries are predicted to increase in the majority of sectors during the next twelve months. As employers compete to recruit and retain the best staff, not only will this apply to basic wages, but also the wider remuneration packages, bonuses and the benefits people receive.

If you're searching for a new challenge, want to know if you're being paid fairly or think you're overdue a pay rise, the first thing you need to understand is the state of your industry.

There's a lot of research available to help but, if you'd like a free copy of Bryony Gibson Consulting's annual North East Tax & Accountancy Salary Survey (2019), then please get in touch at bryony@bryonygibson.com.

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



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THE WORLD OF WORK IS CHANGING



"There is no such thing as standing still. You either move forward or regress." *Herber. J. Grant*

The world of work is changing. Retailers are hiring Data Analysts, construction firms need Negotiators and investment banks need more coders than economists. Behind the brands are roles that didn't exist five years ago: big data architect, UX designer, cloud services specialist and those that often don't reflect the perceptions of sectors that we all grew up with ourselves. Caring people work in HR or nursing, economists work in banks. To be a lawyer or a teacher, you have to go to university. All that has changed.

Hiring patterns and new talent entry points are also changing. Organisations that hire school leavers can't rely on summer internships and degree preferences to whittle down their preferred candidates and the presumptive educational progression ladder of 3 A stars, a 2:1 in anything and the well regarded graduate programmes to specialise, is less prevalent.

What hasn't changed is organisations wanting the best people who have actively chosen to join their organisations and want to succeed and specialise to help them all achieve their strategic goals.

Playing the long game

Attraction needs to change. It needs to become a longer, more strategic process.

Employers can't just wait for engagement with talent once they have become applicants or even later when they're candidates. Expecting people to jump through your applications hoops with little support or specifics of what lies at the end of the process will not necessarily attract the 'best' candidates and certainly won't feed into any diversity aspirations or

broadening of the talent pools.

In order to attract a wide range of suitable and capable people, employers will need to take time and energy to educate and engage a wide range of people and their influencers in order to help them realise that what you have as a range of opportunities is exciting, relevant and probably something they had never thought they would be interested in.

Gone are the days where employers can sit passively rejecting the majority of thousands of applications to whittle down to those that look and perform like the current employee population.

Early careers redefined

Education and engagement are key. Meeting school children at 13, when they are still making decisions and are more open to a range of opportunities will be a key part of any employers recruitment strategy over the next five years. Particularly in regards to STEM subjects and whether they can or can't 'do' maths or digital roles, which as luck would have it, will be the foundation for the majority of roles in the digital world of work. Employers simply can't wait for schools to catch up with the need for digital skills within the curriculum. They will have to start to fill in the skills gap themselves.

Having information to share and spending quality time with parents and career professionals will have an impact on the broader population that you can't immediately capture, however this will be more about creating a long-term talent pipeline for the future rather than hires for today.

Inside-out

There is also a need to educate internally, to open the minds of hiring managers and decision makers to realise that hiring for skills and experience will only support the immediate landscape, there has to be a willingness to train on the job and develop both new and existing employees to succeed in the expanding landscape of the future of work.

The costs of early engagement can be easily managed by having a technology-enabled marketing strategy to give wider reach and with many engagement tools available, it is possible to support and educate potential candidates without having to go to each and every individual school or college.

The future embraces the niche

Another option is to partner with a specialist. Across the UK, there are many specialists who will deliver your messages to schools and colleges, while working willingly with you to engage the more junior population. Companies that already have the relationships with this target audience can disseminate your message which will save you time and money, as well as help to create the outreach strategy with you.

There are so many schools and colleges and simply not enough budget or resources. It is an investment in the future of work and has the opportunity and financial costs attached to it. However, what is the cost of not having the skills you need in your workforce to respond to the future of work?

There is already a talent shortage in key skills, such as data; e-commerce; and information security. How will you find that talent if you don't grow your own?

CLOUSTON GROUP APPOINTS INTERSTATE TO BUILD ON CROWNE PLAZA SUCCESS

Hotel owner, Clouston Group, has appointed world-leading management company, Interstate Hotels & Resorts, to drive forward the Crowne Plaza Newcastle, build on current success rates and 'future-proof' its position as one of the North's most successful landmark hotels.

Clouston Group, in agreement with stakeholders Newcastle City Council and RBS, has appointed the global operator to boost sales, maximise occupancy rates and drive forward growth to meet increasing demand from business users and city visitors.

Interstate will take over the day-to-day running from InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) as part of a franchise agreement, bringing the number of establishments worldwide under their management to over 500.

Richard Clouston CEO of Clouston Group, said, "The Crowne Plaza continues to thrive as Newcastle's preminent business and tourism hotel, offering exceptional conferencing and event facilities.

"We're proud of the excellent work that our 200 strong staff are doing in delivering a superb service and reinforcing our position as one of the best hotels in the market. This has enabled us to fast-track the move to franchise and we're delighted to appoint a world-leading hotel management company following a stringent selection process agreed with our colleagues at Newcastle City Council.

"The team allocated by Interstate is first-rate and as owners, we're working closely with them to ensure the business is optimised, providing the very best for our valued customers and guests from the region and around the globe. We endeavour to deliver the highest professional standards and continue to be an exemplar of the hospitality which Newcastle upon Tyne is famous for.

"The Crowne Plaza at Stephenson Quarter is the cornerstone of the



(L to R) CEO of Clouston Group (owners of Crowne Plaza Newcastle), Richard Clouston, with Devin Grosse, Interstate's Regional Vice President of Operations.

development and a catalyst for future phases, creating many more jobs and opportunities in the hospitality sector."

More than 3000 business and leisure guests use the hotel's facilities each week. As well as 251 bedrooms, it includes nine function rooms with the largest, the Stephenson Suite, holding up to 500 people, a Gin Bar, a restaurant – Hawthorns Brassiere, an indoor pool as well as a spa and leisure club.

Nicholas Northam, Executive Vice President - International at Interstate Hotels & Resorts, added, "The hotel exudes luxury and is well placed to cater for the growing conference and events market in the city as well as the corporate and leisure traveller visiting the north east."

www.cpnewcastlehotel.co.uk

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR HOME THIS SUMMER

Summer is nearly upon us and it's about now that many homeowners begin to wonder how they can boost their enjoyment of the season both in, and outdoors; as we know how unpredictable the good-old-British weather is.



Having been in the industry 15 years, we at Conservatory Roof Supplies have the perfect solution for you; bi-folding doors.

Our bi-folding doors add a new dimension to any room, they fold away effortlessly, creating space to relax and enjoy the beauty of your garden in summer. With our bi-fold doors you will have a seamless integration between the indoors and outdoors,

creating a lovely tranquil atmosphere in your home.

If you often entertain friends and family at home, then bi-fold doors are a must have this season; they slide wide open creating a functional open space for entertaining. Bi-fold doors also give guests the freedom to roam between the inside of your home into the garden. Then once it starts to cool of an evening, they easily slide back shut giving you

security and the peace of mind you require in your home. And, as your house begins to warm up during the summer, bi-folding doors play a huge advantage in lowering your energy bills. They allow fresh air and a breeze throughout the home which means that energy costs to cool your home are kept down. You also needn't worry as winter arrives and the cost of heating your home continues to increase. Bi-folding doors are also designed to keep heat in your home for longer.

Don't have the space for bi-folds or fancy something different? How about a glass roof lantern to replace your current conservatory plastic roof? Allow natural light to flood into your new flat roof extension with a glass roof lantern in a choice of uPVC or aluminium capped roof systems.

Our bespoke made aluminium lantern roofs are thermally broken for maximum thermal efficiency and the slim glazing bars offer sleek, contemporary lines when compared to traditional roof systems. They are specifically designed to offer 'more sky and less roof' allowing natural light to flood into your new home extension whilst also providing a modern contemporary roof structure that doesn't spoil your view.

If you're looking for some summer solutions for your home, visit our website www.conservatoryroofsoutheast.com or call us today on 0191 427 0222.

“WILL BREXIT AFFECT YOUR RECRUITMENT STRATEGY?”

Turn on the news today and chances are, there will be a headline story with Brexit at its core.



Whilst nobody can be certain of how Brexit will impact different industries and the economy, we can at least attempt to Brexit-proof our recruitment strategies. And as the saga rumbles on, recruiters have an ever more important role to play in assisting both clients and candidates.

Once the UK leaves the EU, free movement of people will be over. It is not a total veto on recruiting EU nationals, and the immigration laws are looking likely to be revised to make this easier in the wake of Brexit, however, it does mean a business may need to review their recruitment strategies to keep pace. It will require UK businesses to adopt a longer-term talent attraction strategy and push the focus onto either existing UK-based talent pools or expect to invest the required time and resources to bring EU nationals to work in the UK for the first time.

This is where working with recruitment experts such as HowieWhite comes in. A recent survey of UK graduates revealed that 67% work in a role completely unrelated to their degree. Whilst an agency may look at university degree subject or current job title to make a snap decision about whether that person is suitable for your vacancy. At HowieWhite, we interview and assess each candidate as an individual, looking not just at their current job title, but at their transferrable skills

and what else they can bring to the table. We work closely with our clients HR teams to combine the requirements of the business with our extensive knowledge of the market.

When working with a smaller talent pool due to restrictions on EU nationals, it could be a reasonable suggestion for businesses to become a little more flexible and look at the bigger picture. For a recruitment strategy to be successful within the uncertain time of Brexit there needs to be a focus on making the most out of the available skills of all candidates as well as looking at succession planning within their business. If a candidate isn't suitable for the particular vacancy, an assessment at whether their skills could be useful for the business in a different capacity is imperative to getting best out of the market.

At HowieWhite, we can assist with and adapt to, any recruitment strategy to ensure that for both client and candidate, it runs as smoothly, seamlessly and efficiently as possible. With businesses becoming more and more cautious when planning and allocating budgets, streamlining the time spent on recruitment is vital. Brexit may see the beginning of new roles within businesses and exploiting these changes early may be the difference between success and failure of a recruitment strategy in the face of uncertainty.

www.howiewhite.co.uk

IT'S ALL ABOUT FAMILY FOR CARELINE'S NEW FINANCIAL MANAGER

Careline Lifestyles, one of the UK's leading providers of nursing and residential care, has welcomed a new team member into the fold. Jeanette Hennessey is Careline's new finance manager and was attracted to work for the company because of its family-centred ethos.

The company, which has nine care homes throughout the North East, specialises in quality care for people with acquired brain injuries, learning and physical disabilities, and neurological challenges as well as providing residential and social care for the elderly.

Jeanette joins the family-run business to assist with the company's finances in a time of growth for Careline.

"I need to be surrounded by like-minded people who challenge me on a daily basis. I thrive in a fast-paced environment and work best when surrounded by a team that shares my devotion and desire to grow. A family business does just that. It grows with you.

"My own family means the world to me and previously I've predominantly worked for family-run businesses. At Careline it's so obvious that people care about each other as well as about our residents. Careline is one of the 50 fastest growing companies in the North East and I love working in such a dynamic yet caring industry."

Jeanette is based at the head office in Newcastle and will work with the finance team there. She's currently studying towards her qualification with the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Chief Executive Officer of Careline Lifestyles, Rahul Sharma, said "Jeanette was brought into the team because of her experience and to bring the financial aspect of the company into the modern digital age. She'll also be a fresh pair of eyes to help streamline procedures and enable us to take on more acquisitions. Jeanette is a very welcome addition to the Careline family."



www.carelinelifestyles.co.uk

NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY TO HOST PEOPLE POWER 2019

The unique business skills, HR, training and productivity conference

Businesses and employers across the North East are being invited to attend a unique event dedicated to skills, training, HR, employment and workplace productivity.

"People Power" takes place on 12 June at Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School. This lively and interactive one day event enables employers to create workplaces where people thrive and organisations can achieve maximum success.

At the conference, regional and national experts will address a range of key employer issues such as health and wellbeing, internal communications, use of technology, staff recruitment and retention, absenteeism, training and skills development, apprenticeships, work/life balance, effective management, resilience and agile working.

An exhibition will give employers access to the latest HR, employment, recruitment, training and skills advice – as well as information on latest funding available.

Guest speakers at the conference include:

Emma Rosen – Author of "The Radical Sabbatical" after experiencing 25 jobs before her 25th birthday.

Paul Ferris - CEO Speedflex. Award winning author of "The Boy on the Shed". Newcastle United's youngest ever player on his debut at 16.

Emily Pearson – A visionary and thought leader in corporate mental health.

Other partners, exhibitors, supporters and contributors include: Scale Up North East, North East LEP, NESMA, Amacus, Our Minds Work, Cintra, Pro Training, Skills Forward, Square One Law, Peak Performance Partnership, Type and Test, Magma Effect and Six Seconds

Vince Robson, Northumbria University's Business Development Manager, is looking forward to the event: 'Enhancing workforce skills and capabilities is key to business growth and provides the platform for the region to compete economically in a challenging global climate. Northumbria University is delighted to host and contribute to People Power.'

Tickets cost just £65+VAT and include all conference sessions, lunch and refreshments. Charities, public sector and not-for-profit organisations can attend at the reduced rate of £35+VAT.



Featuring Emma Rosen – Award Winning Author of "25before25 - The Radical Sabbatical"

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OUTSTANDING RATING FROM REGULATOR RECEIVED FOR THE SECOND TIME

New Prospects, a local provider of support to people with a learning disability, are celebrating receiving their second "Outstanding" rating from the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

New Prospects were first rated "Outstanding" in June 2016. Their commitment to continue to provide the best possible support has led to a second "Outstanding" rating in February 2019.

The news was met with delight from people receiving support, family members and of course, staff at all levels of the organisation.

Ellen Vick, Chief Executive, said "New Prospects provides support of different kinds to over 200 people with a learning disability and has a staff team of over 300 people. Everyone has contributed to this rating – and I know they will continue to give their all to ensure that people who receive our support have the best possible experience as well as the best possible support."



MALHOTRA GROUP JOINS FORCES WITH THE PRINCE'S TRUST

Leading North East care, leisure and property business, Malhotra Group plc, has chosen The Prince's Trust as its nominated charity for 2019.

The Trust, founded by HRH The Prince of Wales, helps young people to transform their lives for the better, by providing access into jobs, education and training. Last year alone it supported more than 58,000 young people to live, learn and earn.

Malhotra Group plc will support it by offering work experience, in different areas of its operation, to the young people with whom the charity is currently working in the region.

Atul Malhotra, operations director at family-owned Malhotra Group plc, said: "The Prince's Trust does a superb job in giving young people the skills and confidence they need to join the workplace and we will do everything we can to assist them."

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE HELPS CREATE ARTISTIC RESIDENTS



Residents of Careline Lifestyles Group care homes, with acquired brain injuries, learning and physical disabilities and neurological challenges are displaying their artistic skills at a major art exhibition in Newcastle.

Careline Lifestyles residents will have their paintings, drawings and sculptures on show at the Holy Biscuit in Clarence Street Newcastle from 5 April to 11 April.

The exhibition organised by Careline Lifestyles, Therapeutic Services Team aims to celebrate the diversity of talent from individuals with a range

of differing abilities and challenges, as well as highlighting the positive impact of the therapeutic art process.

Indeed, the care home company have invested in the skills of talented resident artist, Fettlework Tesfaye, who has been carrying out a range of different art projects with residents in their homes.

The art project has not only helped residents physically and emotionally but has seen individuals become involved and engaged with the local community through the exhibition.

BIKERS GIVE EXACTLY WHAT THE KIDS NEEDED THIS EASTER

The roar of motorcycles was drowned out by the delighted cheers of children from a number of special schools in the north east as a kind-hearted delivery of Easter eggs arrived on two wheels.


Thanks to generous donations from North East supermarkets, businesses and freemasons from Northumberland, almost 1000 chocolate eggs were presented to special schools, food banks, a children's centre and a care home.

Riders and members of the Northumberland Chapter of the Widows Son's Masonic Bikers

Association visited Southlands School in Tynemouth, Northern Counties School at Percy Hedley in Jesmond, Collingwood School in Morpeth, The Dales School in Blyth and The Grove School in Berwick.


Widows Sons Secretary Tom Stewart said, "The looks on the children's faces were priceless. They enjoyed sitting on the bikes, revving up the engines and chatting with our members. It was a fantastic experience for us all and I'd like to thank everyone who donated to make this possible."








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THE HIGHLIGHT OF MY WORK



Dav Kumar

Here we meet one of Highlights PR's clients and find out about their work and what motivates them. This month, we hear from Dav Kumar of Imperial Claims Consultants Ltd.

"As professional Loss Assessors regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority, we help you with your property insurance claims. If you need to make a property based insurance claim, we assess the damage, review the costs involved and discuss your claim with the insurers or loss adjusters on your behalf right the way through to settlement. We aim to provide you with a one stop shop solution, making it as easy as we possibly can for you. If you use our contractors to do the repair work, there is no charge to you.

"The best thing about my job is that I genuinely enjoy helping my clients. You have to remember that I help people who are going through severe trauma from house fires, storm damage or floods and I appreciate what they must be experiencing. It's a great feeling when we can hand over the keys to let our client return home. I also like the variety of different projects we get to deal with.

"Although my business is about interacting with and helping people, I think that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is truly going to change how claims are managed. In 10 years, I think we will manage claims in a different way. Indeed, everything from buying an insurance policy through to making a claim, will be automated. Accessing information about people and properties is likely to become more connected and will speed up the claims process."

Contact Dav Kumar at The Pinetree Business Centre, Durham Road, Birtley, County Durham, DH3 2TD.
0191 303 7506, 07943 862190 (Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week). contact@imperialclaims.uk

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Robert Thompson

WARD HADAWAY DEFIES BREXIT-RELATED UNCERTAINTY

Leading commercial law firm Ward Hadaway has the second busiest team of all Corporate legal dealmakers in the country, according to the latest Q1 Experian MarketIQ legal volume rankings which tracks M&A deals valued at more than £500,000 at regional and national level.

The firm's Corporate team, across its offices in Newcastle, Leeds and Manchester, advised on 20 deals in total .

Earlier this year, Ward Hadaway's Corporate team was recognised as last year's busiest Corporate dealmaker in the North East in the 2018 Experian MarketIQ league tables.

The first quarter of the current year has seen the team forging ahead and advising on a whole range of different projects to maintain their leading position.

Robert Thompson, who heads up the 30-strong

Corporate team, said: "We are extremely pleased to see that we are defying Brexit-related uncertainty as one of the busiest law firms in the UK when it comes to buying, selling and fund raising for businesses during Q1.

"We work with businesses of all sizes and across many different sectors and so we are really grateful to our clients for continuing to trust us with their transactions, and to our fellow professional advisers who continue to recommend us to their clients."

SANLAM UK ACQUIRES BLACKETT WALKER LIMITED

Sanlam UK, part of international financial services group Sanlam Ltd, have announced the acquisition of independent financial planning and employee benefits firm Blackett Walker Limited.

Based in Newcastle, Blackett Walker specialises in providing holistic financial advice services across the North of England. The company was founded in 1994 by current Directors Richard Blackett and Kevin Walker. The business has since grown to a team of five financial advisers servicing a client base of more than 1,000. All support staff will also be retained as part of the acquisition.

The company is also a leader in providing specialist long-term financial planning for medical professionals.

Commenting on the acquisition, John White, CEO of Sanlam UK's Wealth division said: "Blackett Walker is a high-quality business with a strong ethos. Over the past two decades, Richard and Kevin have built a hugely successful business with the client at its heart. Providing high quality service and delivering on clients' long-term financial ambitions, it very much reflects our approach at Sanlam UK.

"In line with our commitment to expand our regional footprint, this deal will further strengthen our wealth management presence in the North of England."

TOC PROPERTY BACKED LENDING TRUST GROWS PORTFOLIO

The TOC Property Backed Lending Trust PLC has grown its portfolio of property backed loans as part of its strategy to support developments in the region and deliver returns to its investors.

Announcing its latest set of annual results for the year ending 30 November 2018, the London listed investment company, managed by Newcastle based wealth management firm Tier One Capital Ltd, has grown its portfolio to £27.5m, representing 15 projects.

The company achieved income of £2.148m, an increase on £1.347m from the previous year. It also agreed four new loan facilities to support a group of commercial and residential property developments.

These included £4.525m to Thursby Homes (Springs) Ltd to finance the development of 22 luxury flats in Low Fell, Gateshead, and £3.1m to Northumberland Ltd for the development of 13 luxury apartments and four bungalows in Morpeth.

Ian McElroy, Chief Executive of Tier One Capital Ltd, the investment adviser to the TOC Property Backed Lending Trust PLC said: "The company continues to provide high quality, experienced property developers in the regions with an altern2 ative and robust source of funding, which is delivering positive returns to its investors.



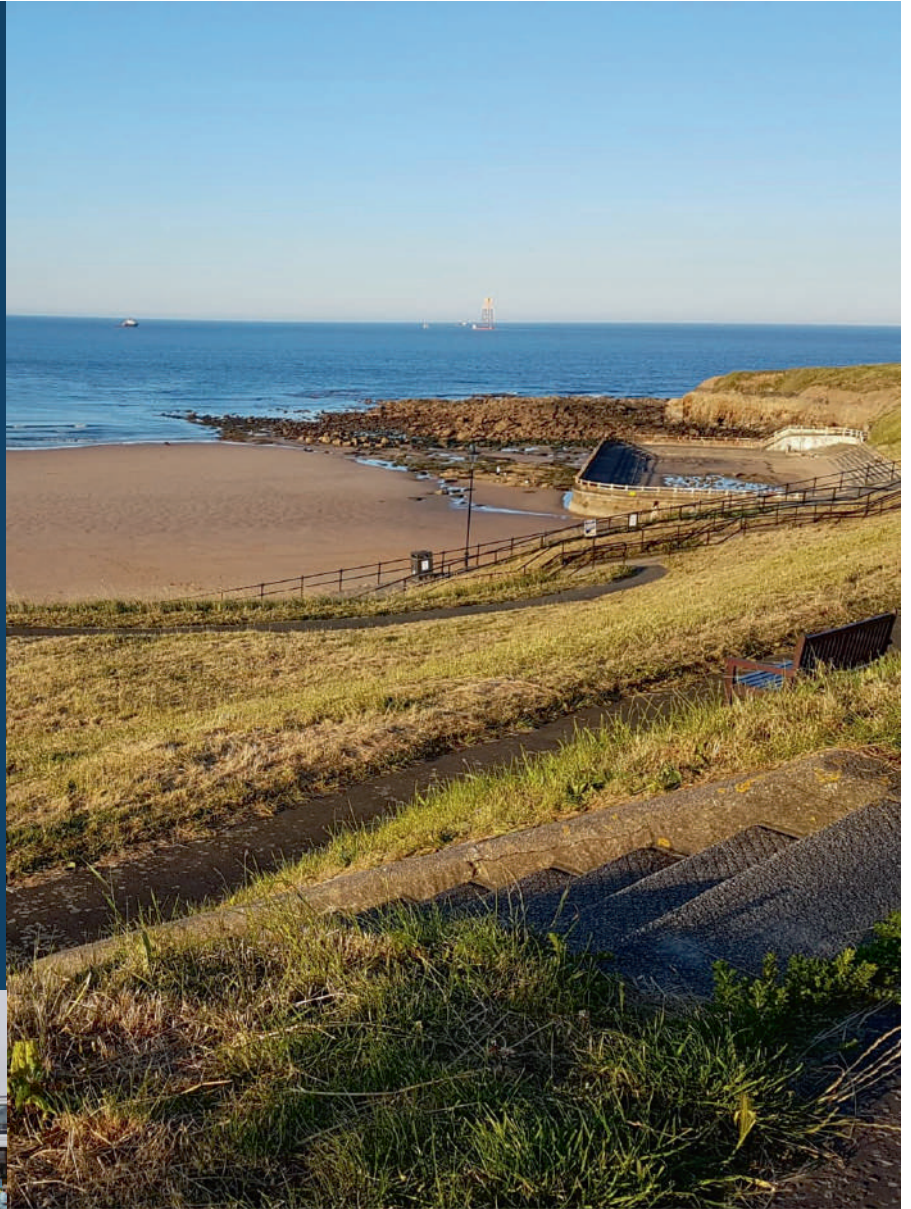
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Dr Emma Black

PROACTIVE EFFORTS TO ENSURE CYBER SECURITY AFTER DATA BREACHES AND CYBER-ATTACKS INCREASE

It seems like every time you pick up a newspaper these days there is another article reporting a data breach or cyber-attack affecting millions of consumers.

In the year to date, Marriott reported that the personal data of circa 500 million guests had been compromised from their reservation database. British Airways confirmed that 565,000 people had been targeted by hackers that had stolen their credit card details. HSBC announced a serious breach in its US retail business as fraudsters gained access to customers' account details, statement histories and other personal information. Equifax, Tesco Bank, Facebook, Yahoo, Cathay Pacific and TSB are also among many other names that have experienced data breaches in recent times. Huge data losses are becoming all too familiar and it is now recognised that the sophistication of cyber-attacks is increasing such that companies must ensure that their cyber security practices are robust.

New data privacy rules became enforced in 2018 under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). These new rules require firms to report certain personal data breaches within 72 hours once known. Should firms not do so, then fines could

be the higher of either €20m or 4% of annual global turnover. This is a significant change to prior legislation which capped the maximum fine at £500,000 – a fine levied to Facebook following the abuse of its data for political purposes.

These new regulations have increased the awareness of the public for data security, but many still feel the UK is not resilient enough to cyber-attacks. A joint committee on the UK's national security strategy criticised the government for failing to act with enough urgency to the growing cyber threat that could impact critical infrastructure such as hospitals, transport networks and energy plants.

Often some simple steps can be followed to enhance your security online, particularly for banking purposes too. Here Dr Emma Black, managing director of Cascade Cash Management shares her tips for cyber cash safety:

"First, we recommend that you regularly change your password. Passwords should be a minimum of eight characters, feature lower case and upper case letters, include at least one number and for

best practice, include a symbol (e.g. \$, £, !, %, etc).

"Second, make sure you stay safe to spoof emails that encourage you to click a link to a fake website where fraudsters steal your details. Instead, only open accounts from email addresses that you recognise and do not click on links sent for your banking via email. Should you have any queries, contact your bank directly or load their website independent to the email.

"Finally, avoid using public Wi-Fi networks for accessing your banking through mobile or internet-based banking. Connect instead through private internet connections that are password protected.

"Should you at any point feel that your passwords or secure information has been compromised, we recommend you call your bank immediately. You should change your password immediately should you feel it has been accessed and make sure to keep a regular check of the transactions on your accounts, flagging any that you do not recognise."

More information on Cascade Cash Management and the secure savings portal is available on www.cascade.co.uk

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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.

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COMMERCE HOUSE SHORTLISTED FOR TWO AWARDS



Commerce House, a Grade II listed building in the heart of the historic quarter of Middlesbrough that has been successfully redeveloped into a thriving business community, has been shortlisted for two awards.

The renovation project was completed in 2018 by the owners of Commerce House, Commerce Chambers Ltd, and is now nearly at full capacity. Next stages of the project should be underway later this year, including a coffee shop, an apartment for business rental and more office space.

Rare Earth Holdings Ltd and Space ID were appointed by Commerce Chambers Ltd, to oversee the works. And now, the building is shortlisted in two categories at the Northern LABC Building Excellence Awards 2019. The categories Commerce House could win are Best Small Commercial Project and Best Change of Use of an Existing Building or Conversion.

David Redhead, director of Commerce Chambers Ltd, said: "It is very satisfying to be nominated and shortlisted for such an award – Commerce House is a stunning building and we are proud of what we have achieved in a very short time.

"The investment totaled £1.2million and you can see the quality in every room, on every floor. I shall be delighted if the shortlisting turns into a win, as it is very much deserved for all the team who worked so hard on the entire project."

The awards are being held on Friday 5th July at the Gateshead Hilton by the LABC and will be a night of celebrating the best building initiatives in the North.

Christine Huntington, facilities manager at Commerce House, said: "This is such good news and very deserved – as soon as anyone walks in to Commerce House they comment on the quality, the style and the natural way it has lent itself to becoming a business community. The real reward is seeing the tenants thriving here every day, but to get further recognition is the icing on the cake."

As well as quality furnished and serviced office space, Commerce House offers a stunning boardroom ideal for meetings booked by both tenants and visitors. There is also a business lounge, event space for rent and other services include virtual tenancy, hot desking and co-working space.

More information on the awards is available at www.labc.co.uk/awards and Commerce House at www.commerce-house.co.uk

RMT ACCOUNTANTS' CORPORATE FINANCE TEAM EXPANDS ON BACK OF SUCCESSFUL 2018



Ayden De Beer (front, centre) with the rest of the RMT corporate finance team (from left) Maxine Pott, Adam Ballantyne, Michael Cantwell and Matthew Flinders

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors' specialist corporate finance team is expanding after building on its 2018 successes.

The Gosforth-based firm has recruited experienced finance professional Ayden De Beer to its corporate finance team to assist in the delivery of its strong pipeline and facilitate future growth.

RMT's five-strong corporate finance team works with entrepreneurs to structure and deliver growth strategies, whilst also helping business owners formulate and execute exit strategies through management buy-outs, private equity investments and trade sales.

Recent projects the team has successfully completed include the acquisition of the Langley House Care Home in Durham by Resolve Care, assisting MJF Facilities Management raise finance to fund growth, including MJF's acquisition of Swift Facilities Management, and the off market acquisition of a dental practice by an expanding North East dental group.

The team has also worked on a number of trade sales, including the sale of Newcastle Print

Solutions to well-known regional entrepreneurs Richard and Julie Bennett, and has also undertaken financial due diligence on behalf of London-based private equity funds and North East-based lenders.

Born in South Africa, Ayden began his career working in financial compliance before subsequently moving into a client advisory role. His specialism is advising entrepreneurial SMEs and owner/managers on their growth strategies.

Michael Cantwell, head of corporate finance at RMT, says: "Our team had a very busy end to 2018 and that momentum has been carried through into the new year, with activity levels high and a wide range of different acquisition, fund-raising and sale transactions projects already in the pipeline.

"Adding Ayden to the team has broadened our skill-base and increased the resources we have available to deliver on our existing pipeline and future instructions. His sound commercial knowledge gives him robust foundations on which to grow into the new role."

Ayden De Beer adds: "I'm delighted to be joining the corporate finance team at a time when there are so many transactions approaching completion. Alongside the existing contact base of the experienced corporate finance team, we're linking into my established network to originate further M&A transactions.

Taking on this role allows me to get directly involved in assisting entrepreneurs realise their personal and commercial ambitions. With my financial and advisory background, I'm able to sit with business owners, listen to their aspirations and then formulate and deliver strategies that deliver their goals."

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

For further information, please visit www.r-m-t.co.uk

NON-RESIDENT? DON'T BE CAUGHT OUT BY CGT

Historically, UK capital gains tax (CGT) has been a tax that only applies to UK residents. However, changes have been taking place since 2015 which now mean that non-UK residents can be taxed on the disposal of UK real estate.

Real estate owners need to be aware of their new CGT obligations as HMRC is already charging penalties for unpaid tax and late returns.

The Government has just updated its guidance on what non-residents need to do when they dispose of UK property. This is timely as there are now a number of different rules that apply depending on particular circumstances.

Non-residents disposing of UK residential property have been required to file a non-resident CGT return within 30 days of completion of sale of the property since 6 April 2015. Tax is also payable at the end of the 30-day period unless the non-resident owner already files self-assessment tax returns. Failure to file the relevant CGT return within the time limit will lead to a late filing penalty. In addition, interest and penalties can also be charged on the late payment of tax.

From 6 April 2019, these 30-day rules are extended to disposals of commercial property by non-resident individuals and companies. The rules also apply to the disposal of shares in 'UK property-rich entities' - ie companies where at least 75 per cent of their value comes from UK land or real estate investment trusts (REITs), and where the vendor has a 25 per cent or more interest in the company. In a further change, non-resident companies will be charged to corporation tax rather than CGT on the profits of real estate disposal. This in itself may seem to be a fairly innocent change, but it brings the foreign company into all the UK corporate tax



Stuart McKinnon

rules which can, in certain circumstances, make a significant difference in how profit is measured resulting in an increase in the tax charge.

In contrast, there are no changes for UK-resident individuals or companies this year. The sale of a UK property by an individual will continue to be disclosed in the taxpayer's self-assessment tax return. The tax is due by the 31 January following the end of the year of assessment. The sale of your principal private residence which attracts no tax does not have to be reported. UK companies will continue to report sales of property within their corporation tax return and pay their tax on the usual date.

However, it will be all change for UK residents next year. For disposals on or after 6 April 2020, the 30-day rules will also apply to UK residents selling residential property. So returns will need to be made and tax paid within 30 days of completion of the sale of the property. For now, the existing rules will continue to apply to disposals of commercial property but it is almost certain to be on the Government's agenda to bring this into the 30 days rules.

As the 30-day rule will apply to disposals of residential property by UK residents and all disposals of UK real estate by non-UK residents from 6 April 2020, non-residents will lose the option to defer payment of the tax due until the following 31 January and will need to settle their liability within the 30-day period.

This is part of a concerted effort by the Government to ensure CGT is paid at the time the sale proceeds are received. We should expect to see further moves in this direction in a range of other taxes over the next few years.



For further information on CGT or other taxation issues, please contact Stuart McKinnon on 0191 255 7000 or stuart.mckinnon@rsmuk.com or your usual RSM contact.

A HISTORIC DAY FOR STATE PENSIONS

The 6th of March was a historic day in the state pension calendar. For the first time since the state pension was introduced in 1940, people are now receiving their state pension after age 65.

Whilst there is a gradual transition to the later retirement age, this will undoubtedly be painful for some people if it means they must consider working longer or living off less money in retirement. A delay of state pension for three months amounts to approximately £2,000 and a full year £8,546.20 in today's money, so you can see the impact that this has on both the retiring individual and the government funding it.

Increases to the state pension age were always going to be unpopular with Labour voicing its opposition to rises beyond age 66. However, the government argument is that they are deemed necessary to stop the spiralling cost of social security payments. The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates the spending on state pension topped £96 billion in 2018/19.

These spiralling costs have a lot to do with the past increase in life expectancy. Male life expectancy has risen from 71 in 1980 to 79.2 today, whilst life expectancy at age 65 has increased from 13 years to 18.5 years now. Females are expected to live for 21 years in retirement.

Anyone looking to retire at age 65, will need to consider how they will fund their lifestyle as the state pension is paid later in life, whether they can afford to retire and when they can afford to retire.



Graham Laverick

If you are considering or planning for your retirement, we have a range of services that can assist you on your journey, to discuss your options contact us on 01642 661600 enquiries@prismaticwealth.co.uk



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26 Falcon Court,
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www.prismaticwealth.co.uk

MS CHARITY CELEBRATES FUNDRAISING MILESTONE WITH UNW



UNW colleagues are joined by family and friends alongside MSRRF, in celebration of their fundraising efforts.

A Northumberland-based charity is celebrating after a hugely successful corporate partnership was extended for a second year.

For the past 12 months, Newcastle-based accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has been the charity's corporate partner, raising £10,000 in the process.

Founded in 1964, MSRRF initially launched with the goal of raising money to fund research into Multiple Sclerosis but has expanded to offer therapies that complement the use of conventional medicine. The charity is based in Morpeth, and uses funds raised to offer free massage sessions, fitness programmes, and reflexology to service users, in order to help alleviate symptoms of MS.

Multiple Sclerosis is a long-term condition that affects the Central Nervous System. With MS, the body's immune system damages nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Symptoms differ from person-to-person, but the condition commonly causes life-altering issues with vision, mobility, and speech, as well as control over other basic body functions. While it is incurable, symptoms can be managed with medication and therapies.

In order to celebrate raising £10,000 for MSRRF, UNW recently organised a charity activity day for colleagues and their families to recognise their commitment to fundraising. Activities throughout the day included massage taster sessions, crafting areas, and face-painting. The day also involved a presentation from the charity about MS, which featured an eye-opening symptoms simulator that helped to educate attendees on the effects that disability can have.

Anne Hallowell, charity and not-for-profit partner at UNW, praised the efforts of MSRRF and UNW colleagues: "The partnership between MSRRF and UNW has been extremely successful, and we are delighted that it has been extended for another year. The work that the charity does in not only supporting those with MS and their families, but raising awareness of the disability, is incredible. At UNW, we have a strong commitment to supporting local charitable organisations and are proud to see our colleagues continue to dedicate their time and efforts into fundraising."

As their chosen Charity of the Year, UNW

colleagues have undertaken several fundraising activities to help MSRRF support those with MS. The most challenging was their annual charity challenge, when 29 determined and dedicated team-members battled Storm Callum to complete a 27.5 mile walk from Warkworth Castle through to Bamburgh Castle in October 2018.

Hayley Lynn, Fundraising Officer at MSRRF, said: "It has been an absolute pleasure partnering with UNW, who have truly thrown themselves into their fundraising efforts to help improve the lives of people affected by MS. The money raised will fund free of charge complementary therapies, fitness and exercise sessions provided in our main centre in Morpeth and nine outreach provisions across the North East, as well as grants for aids and adaptations nationally.

"We are overwhelmed at the total of over £10,000 raised by the firm. MSRRF is delighted to be UNW's chosen charity for a second year running, and we can't wait to see what this year brings!"

UNW is an independent firm of chartered accountants that provides a range of accountancy and business advisory services to its clients. For more information, please visit www.unw.co.uk

MTD – IT'S HERE AND IT'S HERE TO STAY

As of April 1st 2019, VAT-registered businesses with a turnover above the VAT threshold (currently £85,000) are now required to use the Making Tax Digital service to keep records digitally and use software to submit VAT returns. We're sure you've heard it over and over again, but did you prepare? Or are you now wondering what to do about your tax affairs?

HMRC's ambition is to become one of the most digitally advanced tax administrations in the world. Making Tax Digital is making fundamental changes to the way the tax system works – transforming tax administration so that it is more effective, more efficient and easier for taxpayers to get their tax right.

At KP Simpson Certified Public Accountants, we work with a variety of companies offering system solutions and we have implemented plans and systems for our clients ahead of the deadline. It's a change that, now in place, will make life a lot easier for businesses.

There are a variety of software

options available to keep and preserve your records in a digital form and make the necessary submissions to HMRC for your business. Depending on your company requirements, we can advise you on what's best for your business, so contact us today for more information, the time has now passed and you need to get organised before they catch up with you.

HMRC has advised that during the first year of the changes they will take a softer approach to digital record keeping and filing penalties, especially if businesses are doing their best to comply with the law. However, this does not mean a 'no penalties promise' from them, nor does it mean you cannot act until they realise! That is bound to land you in trouble and isn't worth the hassle from them.

If you are VAT registered, with turnover above £85,000, and you have not yet converted to the use of accounts software that will link with HMRC's systems, get in touch as we can help you deal with the updates and changes required.



Andrew Potts

www.kpsimpson.co.uk

TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

Cavu Corporate Finance (Cavu CF) has recently advised Infinity Works on securing a multi-million pound investment from private equity firm Growth Capital Partners (GCP).



Infinity Works is a Leeds based IT consultancy business and works with a client list of blue-chip firms such as health care providers, supermarket groups, banks, delivery companies and online gaming giants.

The firm, started just five years ago in a co-working space in the Leeds Digital Hub, now employs close to 300 people, has offices in London, Manchester and Edinburgh and its turnover is close to £30m.

The investment sees GCP take a minority stake in Infinity Works and will be used to support significant additional scale and reach and help increase its share of the multi-billion-pound

market for IT services. The founders and directors, Matt Gaffney, Paul Henshaw, Dan Rathbone and Tom Walton, will retain majority ownership and control of the business.

The investment from GCP will enable Infinity Works to scale up its sales and marketing, other operational functions, the finance function, consider acquisitions of talent and technology, explore cutting-edge tech developments and expand into new sectors and territories.

The transaction was led by Stephen Moore, who heads up Cavu CF in Leeds with support from Thomas Brunsnes and Sahil Nayyar from the

Newcastle office. Commenting on the deal, Stephen Moore said "Infinity Works is a great business with an attractive employee culture, significant growth potential and the proven ability to help large organisations achieve digital transformation. It is a great success story for the Leeds technology sector, starting life at the co-working Leeds Digital Hub in 2014 and growing into one of the UK's strongest software consultancies while retaining a friendly and approachable style."

The transaction demonstrates the continued strong interest from the private equity market in IT service companies. The sector has received significant investment in recent years, and investors remain on the look-out for companies leading and maintaining the UK's digital transformation.

Shawn Bone of Cavu CF said "Cavu was established to support high growth, entrepreneurial and ambitious businesses. This is our third private equity deal completed in the last month and we look forward to assisting other ambitious businesses with their funding strategies. The North East, with leading companies across IT services, software development, fintech and gaming, is of particular interest to investors as the region continues to lead the digital field."

www.cavucf.com

MAVEN LEADS £7 MILLION INVESTMENT IN ELECTRIC VEHICLE SPECIALIST AVID TECHNOLOGY



A business at the forefront of developing components and systems for hybrid & electric vehicles receives significant backing.

Maven Capital Partners has led a £7 million investment in Northumberland based AVID Technology Group, a leader in the manufacture and design of components for electric and hybrid vehicles for an impressive blue-chip customer base.

The transaction was led by Maven's Venture Capital Trusts (VCTs) together with the North East Development Capital Fund, supported by the European Regional Development Fund and managed by Maven, and from AVID's existing shareholders NVM Private Equity and Downing Ventures. The funding will enable AVID to increase production volumes of its current component product range and enable the firm to invest in further development of class leading electric motors, power electronics and battery systems.

AVID specialises in the manufacture and development of powertrain components and propulsion systems for heavy-duty and high-performance electric and hybrid vehicles. Its product range includes constituent parts for battery systems, power electronics, thermal management systems and traction motors.

The electric and hybrid vehicle industry is undergoing significant growth as car, bus, truck and off-highway machinery manufacturers radically diversify their business models away from a single focus on internal combustion engines and shift to electrified powertrains in order to meet CO2 and air quality challenges. A number of Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) have announced



ambitious plans for fully electrifying their product ranges with major announcements and product launches from BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, Mercedes, Porsche and Volvo Construction Equipment in the last few weeks alone.

Alongside newly launched initiatives, such as the Government's 'Road to Zero' strategy, increased legislation which has been expanded to include heavy-duty vehicles, tougher exhaust emissions

testing standards following the 'dieselgate' scandal, and the general changing in attitudes amongst the public towards electrification to reduce carbon emissions, have all contributed to the current strong market dynamics.

Jamie Fraser, Investment Manager at Maven, said: "Maven is delighted to lead the fundraising in AVID, one of the leaders in its field, developing a global reputation in electrification solutions for heavy-duty and high-performance vehicles. With an increasing demand for automotive electronics and powertrain technology we are pleased to support the business as it extends its range of services and expands its research and manufacturing capabilities. AVID is addressing very real issues around energy consumption and exhaust emissions and we look forward to working with Ryan and the team to help deliver its sustainable transport strategy to provide cleaner air."

Ryan Maughan, Managing Director at AVID Technology, added: "We are very pleased to welcome Maven as part of this latest investment round. AVID is experiencing unprecedented demand for its products and services and we are looking forward to delivering on this growth potential with the support of our new and existing investors."

The North East is home to some of the UK's fastest growing, innovative private companies with impressive growth potential. Maven's local team is actively seeking exciting businesses, based in the region, looking for funding to help achieve their growth plans.

Please contact Maven's North East team to discuss your business and its plans, or visit www.mavencp.com to find out more.

CREATING VALUE

Maven offers flexible debt and equity funding options to support dynamic SMEs across the UK, investing up to £15 million in a single transaction.

Maven funding can support a business at any stage of its growth cycle and cover a wide range of corporate activity including MBOs and buy-and-build strategies, as well as the provision of acquisition finance, development capital and replacement capital.



If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, we may be able to help. For more information please contact:

Salvus House, Aykley Heads, Durham, DH1 5TS. T: 0191 731 8595

Earl Grey House, 75/85 Grey Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6EF. T: 0191 731 8590

THE VALUE OF ADVICE

One of the problems financial advisers face is being able to prove to a new or potential client that they are worth their fees. Existing clients are usually comfortable with this because they know and “feel” the value provided.

I say “feel” because an element of what we provide is intangible. It is the comfort that the client feels by having someone they can bounce ideas off, that keeps them on track with their planning and makes them feel safe, or at least safer.

However, whilst the warm fuzzy feelings are important, it is also possible for the adviser to make it more tangible and put figures on the value.

Last year The Telegraph published an article about this very subject, concluding that individuals who took advice were significantly better off.

Investment giant, Vanguard, together with Standard Life and Royal London have individually produced their own studies. So have the academics, including the University of Montreal. All concluded that advisers add value, and it can be considerable. Standard life estimated it was an average value of £40,000.

The areas where advisers score are numerous and include tax planning, investment asset allocation, behavioural coaching, withdrawal strategies, investment selection and rebalancing.

Adding up the small percentage gains, and based upon the lowest figures produced in any of the studies in each area, gives an enhanced annual return of around 2.5% per annum, after allowing for adviser charges.

As this benefit compounds year upon year, in the longer term the differences can be eye-watering.



Peter Rutherford

By way of example, I was advising a lady with a relatively small fund but with a 25-year time horizon. We considered the appropriate asset allocation and what we could reasonably expect the markets to give us as a return. We also reduced some of the added value assumptions.

Over 25 years, the market return was 281.34% compared with 558.4% with the added value we could give. In money terms, her £75,000 would be £286,000, with standard market returns, compared with £493,000 with advice.

Clearly, these figures are a powerful illustration of the value of advice, but just an illustration, nonetheless. Inflation would also reduce the buying power of these sums.

One of the biggest added value factors is behavioural coaching and the reader may be wondering what I am on about. I sometimes refer to it as the “Don’t panic, Captain Mainwaring” factor. It is about avoiding knee-jerk decisions.

For example, a client of ours became nervous in

the last quarter of 2018 as markets became more volatile. He wanted to pull his money but was persuaded to sit tight. By the end of the year, he was agitated as there had been c10% fall in the markets. However, as I write, by actively doing nothing, he is now ahead of where he was when he became concerned. Further, he has avoided the costs of trading and any tax on gains he might have realised.

Significantly, we have avoided the decision of when to get back into the market. That is called timing and is impossible to achieve consistently. Time in the market works better than timing the markets. There is research by the ton to back this up, yet human instinct pushes us to make emotional and wealth damaging decisions. Behavioural coaching seeks to avoid taking these destructive actions.

If you or would like more information, or would like to discuss your own position, then please do not hesitate to contact me or my colleague, David Hughes.

**Peter Rutherford is a director at Rutherford Hughes Ltd. He can be contacted on 0191 229 9600
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HEALTHCARE TEAM GOES DIGITAL

The Healthcare team at a Newcastle-based accountancy firm has managed to revolutionise its client base by placing all its dental associates on digital software.

As part of a major technological shift in the way accounts need to be filed to HMRC, better known as Making Tax Digital, Robson Laidler Accountants in Jesmond has achieved 100% success two years ahead of schedule, by migrating all its dental associates onto cloud-based software within 12-months and are currently transferring its entire healthcare client base on digital platforms.

Making Tax Digital means that from now, HMRC requires businesses over the VAT threshold to keep digital records and from 2020, all businesses, regardless of turnover, must keep records digitally and update HMRC quarterly.

Robson Laidler healthcare director Michael Smith said: "We have worked tirelessly to customise the software to better fit the needs of our healthcare clients. As specialist healthcare accountants, we manage our clients' businesses in 'Xero', a cloud-based accountancy platform that keeps everything up-to-date in real time.

"Our decision to get our clients on Xero quickly isn't just about keeping HMRC happy. Live data means closer working relationships with our clients, advice in real time, and better strategic decision making, which allows their businesses to grow stronger.

"The power of accounting technology is allowing clients to drive real efficiencies into their business. Our package of Xero and connected apps really simplifies the bookkeeping process through the use



L-R: Neo Orthodontics practice manager Zara Aguiar with Robson Laidler healthcare Director Michael Smith with the digital software.

of technology and automation. Our clients simply take pictures of their invoices and the software processes them automatically. This simplification creates more time for our clients to focus on what's really important to them.

Client, Paul Thapar, principle of Neo Orthodontics based in Newcastle and Ashington said: "Robson Laidler never fails to ensure we are ahead of the curve when it comes to technological advancements.

"The migration to a cloud-based software package was a seamless transition and could not have been easier. We were given a one-to-one demo of the software and were guided through the whole process.

www.robson-laidler.co.uk

"Like all dentists, we were used to completing gruelling annual returns, making complicated adjustments and even discovering a few unpleasant surprises at the end of the financial year. But now we receive meaningful data, which is more relevant, up to date and delivered in a timely fashion, allowing us to forecast and plan ahead much more efficiently.

"Our information is ready to submit to the HMRC at the click of a button. It is saving our book-keeping staff vast amount of time and effort. The entire process really is straight forward."

Robson Laidler Accountants has been working with healthcare clients since the firm was founded in 1920. Its healthcare team act for many GP and dental practices as well as locums, associates and consultants.

The team's expertise within accounting, taxation, financial planning and payroll allows Robson Laidler to deliver a holistic service including specialist accountancy and tax advice as well as NHS pension guidance.

Robson Laidler are members of the UK 200 Group, a membership organisation representing some of the best independent firms of accountants throughout the UK and worldwide as well as the Association of Independent Specialist Medical Accountants (AISMA), a national network of over 75 accountancy firms providing expert advice to medical practices, sessional GPs and hospital doctors.

PENSION ADVICE LAYS THE FOUNDATION FOR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY CONSULTANT'S LIFE AHEAD

Making pension and retirement plans can be two of the most important decisions people have to make in their lifetime, which is why turning to a professional for expert advice can alleviate that pressure.

One person to do just that is 59 year old, health and safety consultant, Kevin Wood of Swarland near Morpeth. Kevin is married to Vivienne. He has a son Darren, a stepdaughter, Sophie and a granddaughter, Martha.

Kevin sought financial advice from family-run Explore Wealth Management – who were able to help map out his future plans. Kevin is currently semi-retired and works three days a week for a local construction firm.

Kevin said: "It has always been my long-term goal to retire at some point in my sixties after enjoying a successful professional career, with the years ahead giving me the opportunity to spend more time with my family and explore everything the world has to offer."

Kevin has been lucky enough to travel around Europe throughout his working life taking in places like Italy, Holland, Germany and France but they were whistle-stop visits, and in his retirement years he intends to return to some of the locations for a longer stay to absorb the heritage and culture.

Kevin already had a trusted 25 year affiliation



Kevin Wood

with Explore Wealth Management as he used their services in many guises during his professional career. Kevin said he was initially cautious when striking up a rapport with a financial advisor but Explore always put him at ease. He said: "The great thing about Explore Wealth is the way they explain quite complex things in Layman's Terms. They are able to advise about any potential investment pitfalls and never pigeonhole your circumstances.

"I was comfortable chatting with the team about

how to prepare for important purchases like a new house or a new car. I felt very reassured that my finances would be in good shape."

Steve Cattle, Senior Financial Adviser at Explore Wealth Management, said: "People sometimes find it difficult to talk about their finances as money is a very serious matter and an important part of our daily lives. We totally understand this as our approach is to always appraise each and every customer on an individual basis."

For further information about Explore Wealth Management please visit www.explorewealth.co.uk or call (0191) 285 1555.



TAIT WALKER ANNOUNCES REBRAND AND BENEFITS TO LOCAL CLIENTS

North East-based accountancy and wealth management firm, Tait Walker, unveiled its new look on 9th April, adopting the name of national accountancy association MHA.

The rebrand of the company sees MHA added to Tait Walker's title whilst the firm also adopts the brand of its global network, Baker Tilly International.

Unveiled at an exclusive event at the Baltic, Gateshead on the 9th April, in which the Millennium Bridge was illuminated green and the new logo displayed on Baltic Square, the new branding aligns Tait Walker with the MHA network whilst maintaining its local identity in the North of England.

Since becoming a member of MHA in 2011, MHA Tait Walker has helped shape the network into the collaborative and thriving association that it is today. Bringing together like-minded, independent accountancy firms across different regions in the UK, MHA enables firms to share best practice, training, knowledge and skills to ensure that clients get the best possible service. Through MHA, Tait Walker also has membership to Baker Tilly International, an international network of accountancy firms.

Andrew Moorby, managing partner of MHA Tait Walker, said: "It has been fantastic to be a part of MHA for the last eight years and we are really excited to align our branding with the global brand. Our new brand seeks to demonstrate the breadth



of resources and skills we can bring to help all our clients.

"Despite this new look we remain an independent North East business, with no changes to our local ownership, management or our commitment to service the business community in the North to

the highest possible standard. We have been part of MHA since 2011 and we are simply seeking to emphasise the benefits of this to our clients."

Over the last eight years Tait Walker has been able to offer both clients and team members a better experience, through the ability to develop new services, share industry expertise and offer staff global standard training and development. This has been achieved through growth in the local delivery of the services that the firm offers, whilst expanding the local team from 110 to 165 members of staff.

The firm will continue to focus on the North and its existing clients, delivering services from its five offices across the North, including Newcastle, Northumberland, Durham, Teesside and Carlisle.

"The new modern look better matches our commitment to making a difference for our clients, our team members and our communities through a local, personal relationship. We share knowledge and experience with other member firms on both a national and global scale, meaning that we can offer our clients the most up to date information and the best possible advice.

"We are looking forward to the year ahead, as we continue to grow and develop with our clients and our team."

For more information on MHA Tait Walker, please visit www.taitwalker.co.uk



REBRAND LAUNCH

North East accountancy and wealth management firm Tait Walker unveiled its new look on Tuesday 9th April as it adopted the prefix name of its national accountancy association MHA. The rebrand of the company sees MHA added to Tait Walker's name whilst the firm also adopts the brand of its global network Baker Tilly International.

Unveiled at an exclusive event at the BALTIC Gateshead, clients and the business community heard from managing partner Andrew Moorby on why the firm had decided to rebrand, the benefits to their clients and the firm's continued focus on the North. Guests were also treated to a display of the millennium bridge illuminated in lime green, MHA Tait Walker's new corporate colours.



TREAT YOUR CREDIT FILE LIKE A MEMBER OF THE FAMILY!

The majority of banks and building societies treat mortgages like a commoditised product, with automated decisions and a computer says yes or no business model (generally determined by your credit score).



Paul Hardingham, Director of Innovate Mortgages and Loans

For this reason your credit file and the credit score it produces, together with each lender's interpretation of that score, will in most cases determine whether or not you qualify for a mortgage.

Ideally, we would recommend that you speak to a mortgage expert well in advance of any borrowing requirements (even if you are just remortgaging to improve the interest rate) as credit checks will always be carried out. Missed or late payments on any credit commitments, disputes with utility or mobile phone companies, not being listed on the electoral register and taking out payday loans – things which you may perceive as being relatively minor – can all cause problems when it comes to applying for a mortgage.

Quality independent mortgage advice at an early stage will allow the advisor time to work together with you to improve your credit file where necessary. Simple things like registering to vote, ensuring that all addresses and accounts are correctly recorded, taking out a new credit card to build a credit history or even closing old cards which you no longer use can all have a positive impact on your credit score.

Don't despair, however, if you are still struggling to qualify for a mortgage. There are now a growing number of mortgage lenders which take a more human approach and will take the time to fully assess your circumstances and the real risk of providing you with a mortgage. These are generally not high street lenders and many of

these are not available direct to the public.

If you are in any doubt whatsoever, please take expert mortgage advice as early as possible. If you apply directly to a number of different lenders and are told no on each occasion, this can cause irreparable damage to your credit file and make it more difficult to get the mortgage that you need. It is our job as mortgage experts to fully assess your needs and use our in depth knowledge of the various lenders' detailed requirements to find the correct match rather than a scatter gun approach to see who may be able to assist.

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

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

The purpose of this article is to provide technical and generic guidance and should not be interpreted as a personal recommendation or advice. Your home is at risk if you do not keep up repayments on a mortgage or other loan secured on it.

CAN I ORDER A PRESCRIPTION FOR FINANCIAL PEACE OF MIND PLEASE?

By Chartered Financial Planner and NHS pension specialist, Amanda Cowie at Robson Laidler Wealth.



We know / that as busy medical professionals, it's difficult to find time to prioritise your own plans. For most doctors, your NHS Pension will underpin your plans to reduce hours/stop work altogether later on. However, there have been so many changes to the NHS Pension and pension legislation in general over the past seven years that it becomes near impossible to keep up with how these might affect you now and in the future.

When I speak to doctors and dentists a lot of the questions are around understanding where they are at the moment and getting a handle on what they can expect later on. They don't understand how recent scheme changes will affect them but more specifically are concerned about the impact of the Tapered Annual Allowance and are wondering if they have an outstanding tax bill but, because the rules

are so complicated, are struggling to work out what that might be.

My advice to start with would be:

- Don't bury your head in the sand and more importantly, don't bury any Annual Pension Savings Statements under that pile of outstanding paperwork! If you can't work it out, then speak to us – we can't do what you do, you can't be expected to know everything about tax legislation!
- Get a Total Reward Statement www.totalrewardstatements.nhs.uk to get a feel for what you have accrued to date. These tend to get refreshed for salaried doctors around September/October time. You will possibly see the position to 31 March 2018 at the moment. If you are a GP it might be 31 March 2017 depending on your Practice Financial Year End. It will still give you a good idea of what's in the pot.

Whilst we have specific knowledge of the NHS Pension, our main job here is to get you to think ahead. What will you be doing in 10 years' time for instance? What do you want your finances to look like? What do you need to do to get there?



Amanda Cowie

Because this is important to us, we are fairly sure it's important for you. Talk to us if you would like us to help you plan. Email Amanda Cowie on: acowie@robson-laidler.co.uk or telephone: 0191 281 8191 www.robson-laidler.co.uk/wealth

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How can I pass on my wealth to loved ones?

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What about long term care?

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Robson Laidler Wealth

t: (0191) 281 8191 e: wealth@robson-laidler.co.uk w: robson-laidler.co.uk
Fernwood House, Fernwood Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1TJ

WISE FINANCIAL WORDS FROM MICHAEL SAGE

The local Wealth Management firm with an office near you.

When Michael Sage set up his own financial Practice in 2008, he was determined to provide local people with the sort of service that you may only expect to receive from a major international company in a city centre office.

Let's face it, people who live in small provincial towns and villages are likely to have very similar requirements to those who live in a leafy part of our major cities.

Consequently, you will find Sage Wealth Management offices in Chester-le-Street, Hexham and Alnwick. Don't be fooled into thinking that although the offices aren't in plush high rise, glassy buildings that you are going to get a lesser standard of service.

On the contrary. You will be talking to someone who more than likely lives in your area and will clearly understand what you are looking for. You will get one-to-one, friendly advice from the Sage Wealth Management experts. Everything is tailor-made to you.

You will also be gaining access to one of the UK's leading wealth management organisations, St. James's Place Wealth Management, who manage client funds of around £95.6 billion. In fact, due to their success and high standards, Sage Wealth Management is now a Senior Partner Practice of St. James's Place Wealth Management. This is a stunning achievement for Michael and gives all of his clients' peace of mind.

"We like to see ourselves as a local company providing good, common sense advice to local people, but still offering them the support of a huge organisation," said Michael Sage. "We intend setting-up other Practices across the North East so that people really can just pop in for a chat over a cup of coffee. It sometimes doesn't need a formal meeting...it can just be a quick question followed by some quick advice. That's what we're here for. Customer service is important to us...we want to help."

Sage Wealth Management has a team of experts, led by Chartered Financial Planner, Michael Sage. Many of them specialise in certain areas of finance, but they all deal with areas such as Retirement Planning, Corporate Services, Investment Planning, Mortgages, and an area which is becoming increasingly important...protecting you and your estate.

"Intergenerational planning is ensuring that your estate will pass on to your loved ones as smoothly



Michael Sage

as possible and as tax efficiently as possible," added Michael. "You've worked long and hard to accrue property and finance, and it's important that you can hand these on to your children or other relatives. It's staggering how many people simply haven't thought about it. They may have a Will in place, but that is not the same as having your financial affairs in order. We can take care of that."

Michael has also started to see a pattern emerging when a client eventually does decide to do something about their estate; their sons and daughters arrive to ask about retirement plans of their own.

Word is spreading about the high standard of work you can expect from Sage Wealth Management. The company is now being asked to stage seminars with solicitors and accountants.

"It's a logical step," said Michael. "A lot of the work we undertake has legal implications and of course we deal with a lot of finance. The provision of financial advice is now heavily legislated in much the same way that solicitors and accountants now have to be fully qualified. We are no different in Financial Management. This legislation is something we applaud because clients must have total confidence in what we are doing. We are helping them to plan for the future; we have a lot of responsibility on our shoulders."

Once you've had a no obligation, initial meeting at one of the Sage Wealth Management offices or in a place that is convenient to you, there will be a full review drawn-up. At this point there will be another meeting and a series of options will be provided. Michael or one of his experienced Financial Advisers will take you through what you can expect and what costs are involved. It is then up to you to decide what to do.

But that won't be the end of it. Over the following months and years you will receive regular contact from Sage Wealth Management to keep you fully updated as to how your arrangements are performing and, crucially, whether anything needs to be changed.

Feel free to pop into one of the offices to ask for any news. Bearing in mind that we live in an ever-changing world, it's important to keep a very close eye on what is happening in the financial sector. That is precisely what Sage Wealth Management, with the support of

St. James's Place Wealth Management, will be monitoring. If it is felt that a change is required, you'll quickly hear about it.

Your home may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage.

So, why not call into one of the Sage Wealth Management Practices in Chester-le-Street, Hexham or Alnwick to speak to someone. If you need any further details and want to find out about the services they offer, go onto their website www.sagewm.co.uk or give their head office a call on 0191 731 4539 to arrange a meeting.

Sage Wealth Management Ltd. is an Appointed Representative of and represents only St. James's Place Wealth Management plc (which is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority) for the purpose of advising solely on the group's wealth management products and services, more details of which are set out on the group's website www.sjp.co.uk/products. The 'St. James's Place Partnership' and the titles 'Partner' and 'Partner Practice' are marketing terms used to describe St. James's Place representatives.

NEWCASTLE GETS 'PLAN HAPPY'

Expansion plans take North East firm to the next level, as they take their unique financial planning process to Newcastle.

Joslin Rhodes have been growing in their Teesside base since 2007, when founder and CEO, Neil Parker, started the company with just himself and an admin assistant.

Since these humble beginnings, the company has grown rapidly, due to their distinctive approach to pension and retirement advice.

Through focusing on lifestyle, rather than just talking numbers, and helping people uncover what they want from retirement and what 'enough' means to them, Joslin Rhodes have developed an entirely new and individual way of helping people plan for the future. Called 'Plan Happy', they're the only firm using this process, and one of very few companies in the UK who approach financial advice in this way.

The expansion into Newcastle takes Joslin Rhodes from a Teesside only company to one that serves the entire North East region and allows many more hard-working people the opportunity to get the retirement lifestyle they deserve.

One client had this to say: "I Met my new Planner today and it was an absolute pleasure. Very knowledgeable and made me feel comfortable. I wish I'd come to you years ago."

The company's mantras of simplifying to empower and telling it like it is, are just two of the values the team of more than 50 live by, and with their



recent win of 'Best Financial Adviser to Work for' from Professional Adviser, it's easy to see why they've grown in reputation and popularity across the region.

The Newcastle site offers the same great service and is located on a tranquil business park close to the city, overlooking the River Tyne.

CEO Neil Parker said: "I'm so proud of the way Joslin Rhodes is developing and can't wait to bring Plan Happy to Newcastle."

My vision has always been about redefining retirement and showing people it's nothing to fear. This is why Plan Happy has been so successful, it essentially proves to people that everything's going to be okay.

It's never been about multimillionaires, instead it's about helping hard working people retire in the way they want to. Our expansion to Newcastle is simply a continuation of this."

www.joslinrhodes.co.uk

Find out when you can retire

Our unique **PLAN HAPPY** process will show when you'll have enough. With our help it could be sooner than you think.

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EVENING
MEETINGS
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* Statistic based on a normal retirement age of 65 and compared data from 76 Joslin Rhodes clients who were told they could retire at an average age of 59.58. **The Financial Conduct Authority does not regulate Estate Planning.

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& Retirement Planning Specialists

Joslin Rhodes is authorised & regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority

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DELOITTE INSPIRES NEXT GENERATION TO BECOME GAME-CHANGERS

It has been estimated that science, research, engineering and technology jobs will grow at double the rate of other occupations up to 2023.

However, despite this predicted employment boom, it is widely acknowledged that skills shortages in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subject-related areas are increasing.

With this landscape in mind, business advisory firm Deloitte is leading the way in inspiring the next generation to focus on STEM subjects and, in turn, generate enthusiasm and opportunities for youngsters to look at careers in sectors including technology, media and telecoms (TMT).

As part of this important agenda, students across the country were challenged to pitch a business idea that makes a 'game-changing' difference through Deloitte's successful national One Million Futures partner schools programme.

The TMT Predictions Schools Challenge was to create an innovative use for smart speakers – predicted to be the fastest-growing connected device in 2019 by Deloitte in its TMT Predictions Report - in either retail, gaming, education or hospitality.

A team of students from Cardinal Hume School in Gateshead were named the national competition winners. The team's smart speaker idea – the General Artificial Intelligence Assistant - helps those with special or additional educational needs by reading worksheets and exams aloud, scribing in place of humans and delivering content in a student's first language.

It uses behavioural and emotional analytics tools and the judges said it had the strongest business potential.

Rebecca Headley, 17, said the competition, which saw Cardinal Hume compete against two schools from London in the grand final, had been instrumental in her deciding to pursue a career in the tech industry after university.

Rebecca said the team was extremely grateful for the advice, help and support it received from Deloitte.

"What really made the difference was our team of three mentors from Deloitte who were amazing – giving up time from their working day to help a group of 17-year-olds.

"They not only shared some great feedback with us, they also gave us a lot of independence to develop our own idea while opening our eyes to possible opportunities for us in the future – it was really inspirational and helped us to believe in ourselves."

Stephen Hall, office senior partner at Deloitte in the North East, said inspiring the next generation of workplace talent was a vital part of the firm's work.

Stephen said: "Of the 5,000 people who joined Deloitte in our last financial year, more than a third were graduates and school leavers.

"Therefore, we recognise how essential it is to give

younger people the enthusiasm and importantly the opportunities as early as possible to help fire their imaginations to pursue STEM subjects and subsequently careers in areas such as technology, media and telecoms.

"We have been hugely impressed by all the schools that have taken part in the Challenge, which as well as showcasing academic capabilities, also demonstrates the importance of teamwork, enthusiasm and self-motivation – all important factors employers, including Deloitte, look for from applicants."

Rebecca added: "While it's great to have won, what is life-changing for all of us is what we have learned and using skills that will really benefit us all when applying to universities, apprenticeships and in our future careers."

Kirsty Smith was equally enthusiastic about the benefits of the initiative and said: "The Challenge made me really think about the real-world application of what we study at school, something you don't always get an opportunity to do. My eyes have been opened up to the diversity of roles in science-related jobs."

Martin Errington, assistant head teacher at Cardinal Hume, added: "Students rarely have opportunities to apply the skills and knowledge they are learning in contextual situations which is why this Challenge has reaped such huge dividends as well as raising the aspirations of our students."



A MILLION POUNDS IS NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

Anybody that thinks a million pounds will be enough to retire to a life of champagne and caviar is in for a shock.

A million invested in the bank today would earn less than £20,000 a year before tax - hardly a living wage for many people.

But if invested tax-efficiently and spread between a balanced mix of stocks and shares, it is possible to achieve a net income of £30,000-£35,000 a year – that's the equivalent of a taxable salary of over £50,000. While this is a respectable retirement income, it does not provide much margin for error in terms of how it is invested and how that income is achieved, especially if the million pounds needs to provide an income for your whole retirement.

This is why the way in which that million pounds has been accumulated makes all the difference and highlights the value of expert financial advice at an early stage.

For example, remember that the £35,000 of income referred to above will only be tax free if the million pounds has been invested ISAs.

"If you just inherited a million pounds, or you have that money solely in pensions, then the net return will be substantially less" says Gary Fawcett, divisional director and investment manager at Brewin Dolphin.

Saving in the most effective way possible will include making the most of two of the most generous savings' tax breaks available - the annual

£20,000 ISA allowance, and also the generous tax relief on pension contributions.

"Ideally, when arriving at retirement, you want a mix of pensions and ISAs to draw from" says Gary. "Not only can you withdraw 25% of your pension fund tax free, you get such generous tax breaks on your pension contributions that they can more than offset the effect of tax on the withdrawals."

Aside from tax, another factor that can reduce your income is inflation.

While relatively low by historical standards, inflation still has a surprisingly damaging effect on the spending power of your money. It is therefore important that your capital is invested in a way that enables it to grow, thereby provide a rising income over time.

This is where investing in stocks and shares become so important.

"Although they can be volatile over the short term, equities have the capacity to grow in value over time, creating a larger pot of money which in turn produces an ever-increasing income. It is the most effective way to negate the damaging impact of inflation on your income."

Even at today's levels of around 2%, the impact over time is shocking. £1,000,000 left under the mattress today would be worth the equivalent of

just £545,000 in 30 years' time.

"It highlights not only the insidious damage that inflation can do, but the importance of building up as large a lump sum as possible during your working years, spread across ISAs and pensions, so that you have the broadest possible options when you hit retirement" said Gary. "It's easy to be complacent when you're younger, but it's absolutely vital to save as much as you can afford – most people underestimate both how long they'll live and how much money they will need in retirement."

It is possible to achieve a slightly higher income by investing in high-yield bond funds. These are currently paying around 4.5%. But they provide no potential for capital growth, exposing your money to the ravaging effects of inflation. Plus the bonds are relatively risky, increasing the chances of some capital loss.

That said, for those with the appropriate appetite for risk, they can have a role to play in certain circumstances.

As you can see, there is a lot to think about if you want to earn a decent return even from a some as large as a million pounds. If you want to discuss how Brewin Dolphin can grow your wealth in the most effective ways possible, then contact the Newcastle office for a consultation today.

YOUR EYE ON THE REGION...

ANDREW POTTS

KP Simpson Certified Public Accountants

KP Simpson, based in Jarrow, South Tyneside have just been shortlisted for the Best Small Accountancy Firm of the year in the North East Accountancy Awards.

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

Yes, born and raised in the North East and couldn't be prouder!

What do you think it means to be a businessperson in the North East of England?

An opportunity to work with some of the nicest people in the region. Also, as an accountant, an opportunity to work with like-minded and well-driven self-employed people. It's been a sound way of making a living and providing for my family, which may not have been the same, should I have stayed employed.

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

Just generally being a Geordie and being loved by everyone, no matter where you go in the world. We also have the best coastlines and I feel genuinely grateful to live in the best part of the world!

Do you have a favourite hotspot for a business meeting?

Not really, I like visiting clients at their home or places of work, as they are usually much more relaxed and able to discuss their finances and tax position at ease.

Where do you like to eat out in the region?

Living in South Tyneside and having them as a client, we love dining at Mambo's Wine and Dine or Mambo's Italiano in South Shields. Another favourite haunt is Blacks Corner in East Boldon.

Where do you like to unwind within the North East?

I like to go running in the streets of Boldon or Cleadon, play cricket at Whiteleas and Harton and I also enjoy playing golf at South Shields Golf Club.

Are the people really friendlier?

I would say so, personally, but I may be biased! People from outside the region say the same, so they can't all be wrong!

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

St. James's Park probably – but I also love the South Shields coastline, it really does take some beating.

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

I think being self-employed has some of the best opportunities in the North East. I can't really comment on employment, although I do believe unemployment numbers have reduced lately, it can still be a challenge for people to find suitable employment.

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

I've always worked local and have known no different. As I have no plans to find out, as I don't intend to leave the North East, it's hard to answer this question, even with all the bad weather we can get, I'd still rather live here than anywhere else. I guess I am just a home-bird at heart.





Andrew Potts



PATRICK PARSONS – NEW OFFICE CLIENT EVENT

Leading figures from the North East business community were in attendance as multi-disciplinary engineering consultancy Patrick Parsons welcomed guests to celebrate its new city centre headquarters!

On 7th March around 100 of the company's clients from the construction, transport, architecture and planning & development sectors packed the boardroom to enjoy drinks, canapes, a magician and even a caricaturist.

The new office is located within the landmark building at Central Square, Forth Street, with stunning views of the Tyne. The move sees Patrick Parsons solidify the growth of recent years, with the firm now operating across a number of UK-based offices, including London and Birmingham premises, and a further two international offices located in Sydney and Dubai.



GREAT NEWS FOR LANDLORDS AND PROPERTY OWNERS

We recently read that a landmark court case found that buyers purchasing uninhabitable properties shouldn't have to pay the extra stamp duty surcharge on second homes; great news for landlords and property owners.

Since 2016, there has been an extra 3% stamp duty tax on second properties bought as an addition to the buyer's home; meaning before the buyer had even commenced work to bring the house back to a liveable condition, they had to shell-out more to the tax-man.

Now homebuyers, buy-to-let investors, and developers buying an additional property might be able to cut out the surcharge if the home is derelict!

In a recent article, The Times analysed the impact of a tax tribunal in Bristol ruling in favour of two homeowners. For £200,000, the couple bought a derelict bungalow located in Weston-super-Mare as a buy-to-let investment and second property. The bungalow was infested with asbestos and didn't have central heating, so they completely demolished it and built a new home.

Even though HMRC tried to argue the buyers should have to pay the higher rate of stamp duty if the property could be used as an abode in the future, the tribunal

said the charge should only apply if the home is immediately habitable; which it was not. This came as exciting news for investors and developers.

The ruling could allow previous buyers who paid the extra charge for an uninhabitable property to claim money back, circa millions of pounds no doubt... Additionally, the outcome of this case could encourage more developers and property investors to buy the eye-sore derelict buildings to renovate.

Recently, there have been a lot of tax changes for landlords and buy-to-let investors, which have made it more difficult for them to make a profit on their affairs, so this recent ruling is likely welcome news. If you're a landlord or property investor and want to know what you're entitled to, give us a call at Advanced Funding Solutions. We can help you find practical and affordable funding solutions as well as give you the most up-to-date industry information regarding your tax affairs.



Chris Adlam

To book a free consultation give Chris a call on 0191 486 2089 or visit the website www.advancedfunding.co.uk

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TOP TIPS FOR RECOVERING DEBTS



Susan Howe, partner and head of dispute resolution at Muckle LLP, has some advice to help businesses recover payments.

It's a common problem businesses face. You've provided the agreed goods or services and your customer hasn't paid for them. You've probably chased and been promised payment, but nothing has materialised. So what can you do?

1. Find out why they're not paying

Is the debt disputed? Are they waiting for a payment from a supplier?

If you can find out the reason for non-payment, it might help you agree when and how a payment will be made and to assess whether there is an underlying issue.

2. Check your contract

What are the contractual terms around payment? You may be entitled to terminate the agreement and/or stop providing goods and services until payment is made.

This might also give you scope for negotiating payment with the customer. However, before terminating or ceasing to comply with your obligations, check the contract carefully and take advice rather than risk being in breach of contract yourself.

3. Check the company out

It's often worth checking the company filings with Companies House. This will show the company's most recent filed accounts and will also show if administrators or liquidators have been appointed.

There may be news or talk in the industry about the company and its financial position. This will help to inform your approach to recovering the debt.

4. Try to agree payment or a payment plan

Using the information you have gathered through the above steps, try to negotiate a payment with



Susan Howe

your customer (assuming you can get hold of them).

The approach you take will depend on your relationship with your customer and whether that relationship is ongoing. You should take care to document any agreed terms and take advice if necessary.

5. Issue a letter of claim and then proceedings

If you've tried all this and they still haven't paid, a letter of claim could help. You should take advice from a debt recovery specialist or law firm, as with all the following steps, but this is not necessarily expensive and can be a real turning point.

A letter of claim is essentially a demand for payment that complies with the court rules that parties must follow before issuing proceedings.

Sometimes, this letter is enough to prompt payment. If not, you can issue a claim. Once a claim has been served, your customer will need to either admit or defend the claim and, if they fail to do so, you can get a court judgment against them.

6. Issue a statutory demand

People commonly think this is the solution to recovering a debt but statutory demands should be used with caution.

This is a formal demand for payment which, if unsatisfied within 21 days, would give you the entitlement to apply to court for the winding up of your customer's company.

Statutory demands can only be used where the debt is undisputed by your customer. They could also potentially apply to court for an injunction to prevent their winding up, which may be costly.

It is therefore sensible to take advice before serving a statutory demand on a customer.

7. Winding up petition

If your customer does not satisfy the debt once the statutory demand or shorter period for payment has expired, you could petition for the company to be wound up.

This is an extreme option and cannot be used simply to enforce a debt. Ultimately, if a company is wound up, its assets will be divided amongst its creditors and the creditors will recover only part of the debt.

It is therefore sensible to take legal advice before choosing this approach, as it can have costly consequences if deployed inappropriately.

The appropriate course of action will depend on the circumstances – the ability of your customer to repay, the contractual terms, the relationship between the parties.

Whatever your situation, our dispute resolution team can help - we advise on contractual disputes including claims for unpaid sums. In addition, our specialist debt recovery team charge as little as £50 per case and have an 89% success rate in collecting business to business debts.

For more information and advice, please call Susan Howe on 0191 211 7920 or email susan.howe@muckle-llp.com



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Buzz

A stylized bee with white wings and a brown body is shown flying to the right. A dashed white line trails behind it, curving downwards and then back up.

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L-R: Deb Tweedy, Paul Lott and Luiza Robson

TEAM SPOTLIGHT SERIES: EMPLOYMENT

We sat down with The Employment Team at Gordon Brown Law Firm LLP (GBLF) to get to know them a little better and discuss how the team's expert knowledge can assist you in all aspects of Employment law.

Can you tell our readers a little more about the services the Employment team provide?

The Employment team can assist businesses with the implementation of contracts of employment (including worker contracts e.g. casual worker agreements/zero-hour contracts). Clauses are carefully drafted to ensure business protection, should a client later end up in an employment dispute.

Our team specialise in drafting company policies and procedures. Carefully aligned clauses help future proof the client's long-term interests. Our team can provide sub-contractor agreements which ensure intellectual property, and confidential information is protected against theft and/or destruction.

We provide assistance on all procedural issues which arise during employment, e.g. discipline and grievance, capability and absence management. TUPE, settlement agreements, redundancies, restructures, unfair/wrongful/constructive dismissals are also areas of specialism within the team.

Who makes up the Employment team?

The team is headed up by Deb Tweedy LLM and a Chartered member of the CIPD. Legal support is provided on a day to day basis by Paul Lott,

Solicitor and Luiza Robson, Paralegal & Associate member of the CIPD.

What will clients typically come to the Employment team for?

Clients typically come to the Employment team when they are facing an issue which is outside of their technical remit, i.e. when disciplinary issues ensue or when a grievance is raised. Clients will also come to the firm when they are either defending or pursuing an unfair dismissal claim. Other common areas of concern are the procedural elements of redundancy and restructuring.

Tell us something that we didn't know about the Employment team?

The team have a pragmatic and cohesive approach to matter management. They pride themselves on keeping their clients happy and protected against tribunal claims.

What motivates the Employment team?

The team are motivated by providing quality strategic business HR and employment law advice. Obtaining competitive advantage in a highly competitive world needs carefully aligned advice and cannot be understated. We look to ensure not only happy clients but happy employees, which affords clients the opportunity to become an employer of choice.

What does a successful week look like for the Employment team?

A successful week for the employment team is knowing that we have delivered upon our client's expectations while ensuring their business interests and their employees' well-being are protected. Reputational damage is a significant issue for companies, and we always look to offer the best advice possible in every unique situation.

What does the future hold for Employment law?

With the increase in the number of employment tribunal claims employment law advisors have seen an increase in both tribunal claims and settlement agreements. Also, with the uncertainties of Brexit, we have seen a substantial increase in redundancies and restructures. TUPE advice is also on the upturn. With these changes in mind, the future of employment law is set to look busy.

Lastly, who makes the best cup of tea/coffee?

As to who makes the best cup of coffee – I think we might have to toss a coin for that. All of the team make a good brew, but that is because we all look after each other and recognise when a good brew is needed.



Arrival of Proton Beam Therapy in the North East will have major impact on UK cancer care

The Rutherford Cancer Centre North East in Northumberland is set to begin treating patients with high energy proton beam therapy in the coming weeks, a significant milestone that is likely to have a huge impact on UK cancer care.

The centre has been operational since 2018 and has been treating patients with conventional cancer therapies such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy. Its proton beam therapy suite will be the first in the North East and forms a major plank in the push to transform cancer care in the UK. The centre could prove to be critical in battling cancer, with the North East home to some of the highest cancer rates in the UK according to government figures.

The centre is part of a network of Rutherford Cancer Centres operated by Proton Partners International, who plan to make proton beam therapy accessible within a 90-minute drive of 75% of the population. It was the first to introduce proton beam therapy to the UK through its centre in Newport, Wales, and has since treated 25 patients with proton beam therapy.

Proton beam therapy is a type of radiotherapy that delivers heavily charged protons in a more targeted manner to reduce damage to peripheral tissue and organs. Its high precision and ability to stop at a defined point means that it dramatically reduces long-term side effects. There are more than 90,000 cancer patients in the UK who require radical radiotherapy, according to Proton Partners, at least 10% of these patients – the figure accepted throughout Europe – could be better treated with proton therapy.

There are three fully operational centres in the network, the Rutherford Cancer Centre South Wales, Rutherford Cancer Centre Thames Valley and the Rutherford Cancer Centre North East. A fourth centre is under construction in Liverpool. Each centre will be capable of treating 500 patients a year with proton therapy.

Mike Moran, CEO of Proton Partners International, said: "In four years we have built three state-of-the-art Rutherford Cancer Centres, by August this year all three will be treating patients with proton beam therapy. This will take the UK from being a country that significantly lagged behind the rest of Europe and North America when it came to proton beam therapy provision to one that is at the very forefront. It will be a phenomenal turnaround for UK cancer care, and we are proud to have played such a critical part in that."

Chris Land, manager of the North East centre, said: "The centre in Northumberland will be hugely important. Unfortunately, the North East has some of the highest incidence of cancer in the UK. We hope that by having a state-of-the-art cancer clinic with the latest technologies and treatment options, we can begin to win the battle against cancer in the North East and transform cancer care in Britain."

The Rutherford Cancer Centre North East will offer diagnostics, planning and treatment for patients. It will provide CT, MRI, Radiotherapy, Chemotherapy, Infusion Therapy, Immunotherapy and high energy proton beam therapy. Its sister centre, the Rutherford Cancer Centre Thames Valley in Reading, will begin treating patients with proton beam therapy this August.

Rutherford

Cancer Centre North East

For further information
0800 210 0402
therutherford.com

GDPR – ONE YEAR ON

By Ben Jackson, Solicitor in the Corporate & Commercial team at Hay & Kilner Law Firm in Newcastle.

This time last year, the GDPR forced organisations to prioritise data protection as a key issue and caused all sorts of confusion and consternation among the business community.

Badged by the government as a law “fit for the digital age,” the General Data Protection Regulation came into force on 25 May 2018, with many companies frantically rushing to comply with its requirements before the deadline arrived.

Almost one year on, there are now three types of organisations - those that are GDPR-compliant, those that are in the process of becoming so, and those that are yet to begin.

Whichever category your organisation falls into, there are still simple steps to take to ensure your business is moving in the right direction.

Data audits

A “data audit” may sound overwhelming, but it is essentially about understanding what data you hold and where it is stored?

Developing a uniform template, which sets out what the data is (e.g. customer/client, employee or supplier) and where it is stored (e.g. electronically, filing cabinets, a box in the loft) should be your starting point.

The Spring clean

Once you have rationalised what data you hold, put together a categorised data retention schedule.

As the regulations don’t prescribe specific retention periods, it’s up to you to justify what your business keeps based on its specific needs and legal requirements.

Deleting, shredding or anonymising any electronic or physical data that isn’t needed will help hugely if you ever receive a subject access request from an



Ben Jackson

individual, as you obviously can’t disclose data you no longer hold.

Be transparent

The GDPR gives enhanced rights to individuals and, as a result, businesses are usually required to tell such individuals what data it holds about them.

Inform employees, customers/clients and suppliers what data you have, how it was collected, why it is processed, where it is transferred to, how long it is stored for and what their rights are as individuals.

The “consent” myth

The idea that consent is the most appropriate legal basis to rely upon when processing personal data is a fairly common misconception.

Each processing activity your business carries out needs to be judged on its individual merits, particularly with regards to employee data and direct marketing. Identifying the relevant lawful basis for processing is a vital, and often complex, task.

Policy matters

Introduce a dedicated data protection policy and make sure staff are aware of what is expected of them through internal or external training and seminars. Creating a “culture” of data protection alongside these policies is vital.

A note on Brexit

It appears no issue is safe from Brexit. However things turn out, there will be an impact on data protection matters that will need to be carefully assessed, but for now, the advice is, unsurprisingly, to continue to be compliant with data protection law.

It’s not too late

The GDPR is not, in practice, as radical a departure from pre-existing data protection regulations as was portrayed last year, but there are still issues that need your attention and pragmatic steps that your business should be taking to stay on the right side of the regulations.

To discuss any data protection matters and how your business can work towards becoming GDPR-compliant, please contact Ben Jackson at Hay & Kilner Law Firm on 0191 232 8345.

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SHAREHOLDER AGREEMENTS

What is a shareholders agreement?

A shareholders agreement is a document that governs the relationship between shareholders of a company, sets out the rights and obligations of the shareholders and regulates the sale of shares in a company.

Why do you need a shareholders agreement?

It is easy to assume that as you have a good working relationship with your fellow shareholders, you don't need a formal document that sets out your working arrangement.

However, if a situation arises in future where there is a disagreement, a well thought through shareholders agreement will give individual shareholders legal protection and help avoid costly litigation.

Who needs one?

Any shareholder in a company with more than one shareholder should consider the benefits of a shareholders agreement. Whilst a shareholders agreement is recommended for every company, there are certain situations in which it might be more relevant. For example:

1. Where an employee is issued shares or granted a share option as an incentive for their loyalty - in such a case you need to ensure that there share transfer provisions to apply in the event that they cease to become an employee.
2. 'Dragons Den' type scenario – A third party investing money into your business. In such a scenario, the investor will want some control over the company to protect their financial stake.
3. A company that offers professional services (Solicitors, financial advisers etc.) where a shareholders agreement will contain provisions so that if one of the shareholders is struck off and no longer able to carry on with their professional duties, then the other shareholders would be able to force a transfer of that person's shares.

How does the shareholders agreement protect a minority shareholder?

Without a shareholders' agreement, a minority shareholder will generally on their own have little control or say in the running of the company. However, a shareholders' agreement that includes the requirement for all shareholders to



Surbhi Vedhara

approve certain decisions ensures that minority shareholders have a say in the important decisions that impact the company. A minority shareholder may also want a provision included that if someone is willing to buy the shares of a majority shareholder, that shareholder can only sell the shares if the same offer is made to all shareholders. This is often referred to as a "tag along" provision and this ensures that minority shareholders receive the same return on their investment as the other shareholders.

How does a shareholders agreement protect the majority shareholder?

If a majority shareholder wants to sell their shares but a minority shareholder is unwilling to agree the terms of such a sale, then including a provision forcing that minority shareholder to sell their shares is important otherwise the minority shareholder could hold the majority shareholders to ransom. This is often referred to as a "drag along" provision. This will then allow the majority shareholder to realise their investment at a time and price that they feel is appropriate.

Another concern is that a minority shareholder could transfer their shares to someone that the majority shareholder may not approve. To overcome this problems, a shareholders' agreements will often be drafted to include rules around share sales and transfers – who shares can be transferred to, on what terms and at what price.

Every situation requires careful thought and professional advice to ensure that the documentation is suitable for the intended purpose. As with any other legal documents, it is extremely important that you obtain professional legal and protection advice to give effect to your specific requirements and to ensure that that you and your business are fully protected.



Sweeney Miller Law's Commercial Team headed by Surbhi Vedhara can assist with such matters. For a no obligation chat, contact our Newcastle office on 0345 900 5401 or email Newcastle@sweeneyml.com

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BUILDING AN INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY STRATEGY

Key areas to consider when devising an intellectual property (IP) plan for your business.

WHERE TO START

You should bear in mind firstly that there is no "one size fits all" strategy as far as IP is concerned. Your strategy should be carefully tailored to the needs of your business.

You should think about the industry and market sector in which you are active, the level of risk you want to take, what financial means you have at your disposal and whether your IP portfolio is to be used as leverage when seeking finance.

IP STRATEGY GUIDE

The guide below outlines key IP areas of focus and what you should consider in each area.

Trade Marks

- What trade marks do you use or plan to use? Do you want to have exclusive rights in the brand names? Are you offering a range of products or services under one "family" brand?
- Get professional advice on choosing distinctive word and logo trade marks.
- Carry out searches to check that using your marks won't infringe the rights of other parties.
- Register the important marks in the countries where you want protection.
- Check the markets and take action to stop others using your marks.



Keith Jones of Murgitroyd

Patents

- If your business involves developing new products and services with a technical element, patents may offer the best protection.
- Introduce a "new invention" procedure, perhaps with inventor rewards, to identify innovations at an early stage so that you can make effective decisions about patent protection.
- Educate your staff on the importance of confidentiality.
- Protect important technical innovations through patents, optionally after carrying out patent searches to check if the idea is patentable.
- Do you have key competitors abroad? If so, consider patenting in their home countries as well as in your major overseas markets.
- Budget for ongoing costs over the 20 year life of a patent.

Design Rights

- In creative industries where product appearance

is important, consider registered design protection. This can be a cost effective way of protecting multiple different designs.

- Keep records of all new designs.
- Establish a review procedure to decide at an early stage if and where a new design should be protected by registration, or whether it is sufficient to rely on unregistered design rights (UDR). UDR is a free right which lasts for 10 years in the UK and provides useful protection against direct copying.

Other Key Areas

- Check who owns the copyright in material you use.
- Protect confidential information within your business.
- An IP audit can help you identify all your business's valuable information and develop an IP strategy. You may qualify for an IP audit grant. Contact Murgitroyd for more information.

Murgitroyd (murgitroyd.com) is a pan-European firm of patent and trade mark attorneys with a Newcastle office based in Collingwood St. Contact Keith Jones to help define an IP strategy for your business: keith.jones@murgitroyd.com

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BANYAN BAR & KITCHEN EVENT

Banyan Bar & Kitchen set down its roots in Newcastle last month, opening directly opposite Greys Monument. On the evening of the launch, over 1000 people were welcomed for an evening of entertainment, cocktails and canapes.

Banyan offers an extensive breakfast, lunch and dinner menu alongside 30 signature cocktails and an extensive gin menu, including Newcastle exclusives such as the Speyside Sour. Open seven days a week, the private dining room also offers the perfect location for important business meetings or private party gatherings.



CARE FEES THE MYTHICAL 7 YEAR TIME LIMIT

Putting aside the politics all of us need to think carefully about future care, whether it is for ourselves, our parents or our grandparents.

There is so much information in the media, exchanged in conversation and broadcast daily that confusion has spread very quickly.

In one sense the publicity surrounding social care is positive, because it is generating debate. It has started to make us all consider the reality of care seriously.

On the other hand, many of the rumours and political messages are not accurate and, in some cases, misleading. There is NO 7 year time limit. In fact there are no time limits at all

At Kidd & Spoor we have been striving to deal with many misconceptions and misunderstandings about care costs, financial assessment rules and connected issues for decades. We have succeeded where many others have not. There are complexities but they can be simplified.

There is nothing more rewarding than the smile on a client's face when they understand how we can help them, and when "niggles" that they have been worrying about disappear, like the mythical 7 year time limit.

Come and see one of the team at Kidd & Spoor, or we can visit you at home. First meetings are always free and without obligation.

Don't be afraid to talk it over with us. We have the experience and expertise, and we can help. It won't cost you a penny to discuss it, but it could save your family a fortune.



Who gets my house?
My family or the government?

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Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

A SHAGGY DOG STORY

In 1959, American academic William Foster-Harris postulated that there are three plots for a novel or movie. 'Happy Ending', 'Unhappy Ending' and 'Tragedy'. In 1977 Meatloaf reached number 32 in the UK charts with 'Two out of three ain't bad'.

Which, in the private rental sector is what Governments have achieved so far. I look forward to three out of three, but I am not optimistic.

The latest piece of well-meaning legislation is the Tenant Fees Act 2019. When this was announced, it was greeted with howls of joy and social media frenzy. "Agents will no longer be allowed to charge us fees" was the cry.

Landlords have costs to bear. Managing agents have staffs, leases, vehicles and business expenses to bear. Managing agents' choices are limited. Reduce service levels or ask the landlord for a higher fee which will invariably put up the rent. No prizes for guessing which option will be favourite with landlords. So, the tenant pays, one way or the other.

Then enter stage left, a hero who will save the day. The tenant might hope for Uma Thurman out of Kill Bill, or Mary Poppins. Nanny McPhee would do. But no. Step forward Insurance Companies. With a

lovely plan to sidestep regulation in place to protect tenants. It is called the Zero Deposit Scheme.

The tenant pays the insurance company a fee to cover the deposit. So that is a 'zero deposit' agreement. The tenant signs the agreement. All is well until the tenant gets offered a new job somewhere else and asks to be out of their agreement. In the past, this would be fine. The tenant would pay a £100 for landlord costs to assign their agreement and stroll on to the sunlit wonder of their new job. This fee will be made unlawful by the new Act. So, the landlord says 'no' and the tenant is stuck with paying rent until the end of their rental agreement.

This is not just an issue for tenants. If a zero-deposit plan is in place and the tenant vanishes in the night, how much time and effort will the insurance company devote to tracking the tenant down? Might it not be easier for the company to

email "Can't find tenant. Not paying you. Regards"?

Then there is the issue of pets. Our furry companions. Who come at a price. Cats scratch soft furnishings and shed fur. Wet dogs lie on the carpet and smell. This will have to be dealt with at the end of a tenancy. Nobody wants to move into a property where the sofa is shredded and the carpet stinks of wet dog.

In the past a landlord might say, "I am fine with Tiddles and Satan but there will be an additional £200 deposit". Not any more thanks to Tenant Fees Act 2019. Which means, if you are a pet lover, buy a tent.

I understand our Government is trying to do the right thing by tenants. I shall leave the last word to Confucius who said "When it is obvious that goals cannot be reached, don't adjust the goals, adjust the action steps."

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DAVID WILSON HOMES HELPS LOCAL FAMILY WITH LIFE-CHANGING HOME RENOVATION

Local housebuilder David Wilson Homes has recently helped a local Northallerton family in a life-changing home renovation to improve quality of life for Mia Stokes, aged 13, and her family.

Mia has an undiagnosed brain condition which means she cannot sit, stand, walk or talk. Despite this, Mia's unwavering determination helps her to communicate with her family in her own, unique way.

Mia, her parents Carly and Paul and her two younger sisters Molly and Boe moved into a four-bedroom detached home on the Castlegate development in Northallerton at the beginning of last year. Since their move, Carly and Paul have encountered difficulties in trying to adapt their new home to suit Mia's needs via the local authorities and so contacted David Wilson Homes directly to ask for their expert help.

David Wilson Homes donated their products and resources free of charge to help facilitate the adaptations to Mia's home. The work involved reducing the size of the study to install a level access wet room for Mia, creating a further opening from the hallway and re-routing the electrics and plumbing.

RARE COMMERCIAL SITE AVAILABLE ON GOSFORTH HIGH STREET



One of the most prominent commercial sites on Gosforth's High Street recently came onto the market, with the option of freehold or leasehold for sale.

The former Midland Bank is owned by a pension fund acting on behalf of estate agent Duncan Young of Sanderson Young, who has relocated his very successful rare! brand into his regional headquarters at 95 High Street in Gosforth.

The building has a unique architectural style and quality, with a small terrace to the elevation onto The Grove, along with a parking bay.

The former bank has previous planning permission for a first floor office extension which provides an attractive addition for investors looking for a special building on the main gateway between Newcastle city centre and Northumberland.

Duncan said: "We bought the freehold 17 years ago and it has provided a fabulous home to our business for many years, although with so many changes in estate agency taking place and the speed of communication now available through social media, fewer clients need to visit our premises. The larger building at 95 High Street accommodates a newly refurbished suite of offices for our rare! Colleagues. Ashleigh, our manager, with her team are loving their new home."

"Clients are delighted with the move with many parking bays nearby and a fabulous coffee shop below providing a welcome drink to those who visit us. We look forward to meeting many of our past and current clients in our new boardroom to discuss their property requirements seven days a week."

The former Old Bank is available for sale or lease through Sanderson Young on 0191 223 3500.

KNIGHT FRANK PLEDGES TO BECOME A PLASTIC FREE BUSINESS

Knight Frank LLP has made a commitment to reduce the harm posed by discarded single-use plastics, both in their UK business and by influencing the personal choices of their employees.

The firm's primary aims are to remove disposable 'single use' plastic from the business, to significantly reduce the plastic footprint and reliance on plastic products and to dispose of unwanted plastic responsibly.

To realise these aims, Knight Frank is partnering with Surfers Against Sewage, who are widely recognised as one of the UK's leading marine conservation charities.

Knight Frank's employees have all received a reusable and fully recyclable metal water bottle. The average UK adult uses 175 plastic water bottles a year and with over 2,000 employees, this has the potential to remove 350,000 plastic bottles from waste circulation over the next 12 months.

Peter Bowden, Head of Knight Frank's Newcastle office, said: "We have reached a tipping point where we need to change the way we view and use plastics. Everyone needs to take responsibility for changing their habits and understand that small changes can make a real difference."



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QUARRY HOUSE, RUDCHESTER, HEDDON ON THE WALL



PRICE GUIDE: £1MILLION

Quarry House is an imposing six bedroom detached house, occupying a stunning south facing elevated position with open aspect rural views, large gardens, mature woodland and a paddock extending, in total, to approximately 7 acres. The superb family home offers well-proportioned and versatile accommodation over two floors with an impressive 31ft sitting room opening to the garden, an 18ft garden room, a study, a separate office, a superb 36ft kitchen/breakfast room with AGA and potential for a self-contained one bedroom wing/annexe with private entrance and separate staircase for relatives/family. The property, accessed via a secure gate and long private driveway, is located for easy access to the A69 and Military Road for Ponteland, Newcastle city centre and International Airport and the A1 for commuting throughout the region.



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

90

MILLION POUNDS WORTH OF SALES IN QUARTER ONE

THE REGIONAL STATISTICS FOR SANDERSON YOUNG IN THE FIRST 13 WEEKS OF 2019 MAKE EXTREMELY GOOD READING.

The market may have been affected by Brexit, economic uncertainties and even some local worries, but in reality many people seem to be focused on dealing with their own important housing requirements as soon as possible. The first quarter of 2019 saw some very positive results for the company with just short of £90 Million pounds worth of sales being newly agreed or exchanged.

The most significant feature was the newly agreed sales where in an average week, £4.3 Million pounds worth of sales were agreed. This contrasts with the actual exchanges of contracts just before the completion of the sale, which was over £2.6 Million pounds per week.

The ongoing demand for houses up to £500,000 in value is extremely strong and buyers far outstrip the sellers. Between £500,000 and £750,000 there are still more buyers than sellers which creates a significant opportunity to sell very well and effectively. It is only over £750,000 when the buyers begin to subside, but given recent shortages of stock, price levels are returning to more confident pre-2014 levels.

The ongoing procrastination of Brexit and the inability of the Government to find a proactive and

positive way forward seems to have finally bored the public and people are therefore getting on with their own personal lives, business and work ambitions as effectively as they can. One of the most impressive figures within our statistics is the number of new homes that are being built and the ongoing commitment we have for the over 45 sites in the region which provide a fabulous choice of new build luxury apartments, town houses, terraces, duplexes and even beautiful stone built mansions.

As we continue to supply extra stock to the region's choice, we are greatly encouraged to see the numbers of buyers who are out there and the increasing levels of sales we are achieving over £500,000, which is a stronger measure of confidence.

At just under £90 Million pounds worth of sales in the first quarter we look forward to seeing our statistics grow even further as the second quarter is traditionally the busiest for most estate agents with the onset of good weather, the continued delay of a decision on Brexit and the willingness of the North East public to get on with their lives. We encourage our buyers and our tenants to make that commitment and contact us as soon as possible.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO BEING OF HELP TO YOU AND ARE AVAILABLE AT OUR REGIONAL OFFICE ON 0191 2130033

DUNCAN G YOUNG
Chairman
SANDERSON YOUNG



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GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £695,000

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GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £650,000

ROSEWORTH AVENUE

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £500,000

BEAUMONT TERRACE

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £335,000

ELMFIELD GARDENS

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £325,000

BE PART OF
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SALES SUCCESS

GRAHAM PARK ROAD

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £1.4 MILLION

SEA VIEW

LONGFRAMLINGTON



PRICE GUIDE: £749,500

ROSEDENE

HOLYWELL



PRICE GUIDE: £1.25 MILLION

SOANE HOUSE

DURHAM



PRICE GUIDE: £795,000

FIELD HOUSE FARM

EAST BOLDON



PRICE GUIDE: £750,000

BLOOMSBURY COURT

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £625,000

NORTHUMBERLAND AVENUE

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: OFFERS OVER £600,000

WHINBANK

DARRAS HALL



PRICE GUIDE: £565,000

HUMBLETON ROAD

GREENSIDE, GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £510,000

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COQUET VALE

FELTON



PRICE GUIDE: £575,000

LITTLE DENE

HIGH WEST JESMOND



PRICE GUIDE: £475,000

GREYSTOKE PARK

GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: OFFERS OVER £325,000

ALLENDALE HOUSE

NEWTON



PRICE GUIDE: PRICE ON APPLICATION

BRANDLING PARK

JESMOND



PRICE GUIDE: £695,000

EDLINGHAM CLOSE

SOUTH GOSFORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £350,000

ALLERBURN LEA

ALNWICK



PRICE GUIDE: £320,000

BRIDGE VIEW

WARKWORTH



PRICE GUIDE: £325,000

RAYLEIGH DRIVE

WIDOPEN



PRICE GUIDE: OFFERS OVER £269,950



Lewis Chambers

ENDOWMENT-LINKED MORTGAGE BUBBLE HAS BURST – BUT WHAT NOW?

By Lewis Chambers, Director of Mortgages and Finance at Bradley Hall Chartered Surveyors and Estate Agents

Back in the 1990's, between Spice Girls mania, Gameboy obsession and the launch of the (sorry to mention) European Union, 3.3 million people took out an interest only mortgage. These mortgages were often linked to endowment policies which would, in theory, pay back the outstanding balance once the mortgage matured.

The idea of these endowment linked mortgages seemed great at the time as they allowed homeowners to make small monthly payments, however, it turns out that these types of mortgages were, in fact, a terrible idea. Endowments began to perform badly, lenders continued to sell interest only mortgages despite borrowers having no plan in place to pay these loans back. In fact, a large part of my career has been supporting those who have been negatively impacted by endowment-linked mortgages.

Research from the Citizens Advice Bureau has

shown that 1.7m of the 3.3m people who took out these loans aren't able to repay their mortgage at the end of the agreement. According to the Financial Conduct Authority, around 81,400 mortgages with a value of £9.2bn are due to expire in 2019.

It transpires that most of these mortgage holders are of retirement age, and for most people within this demographic, lending can be more difficult. It is essential for those coming to the end of their interest-only mortgage to put a plan into place to avoid any repossession or becoming out of pocket, but what are the options for those at the retirement stage in life?

What is a retirement interest-only mortgage?

A specialist retirement interest-only mortgage is very similar to a standard interest-only mortgage, with two key differences and two parts to pay,

including the interest and the outstanding capital. Instead of relying on an alternative investment to repay the loan, the outstanding capital of the loan is usually only paid off when you sell the house, move into long term care or when you pass away. The second difference is that you only have to prove you can afford the monthly interest repayments.

Taking a retirement, interest-only mortgage allows you to avoid having to downsize to a smaller property. The loan term is not fixed, and is usually, generally cheaper when compared to most Lifetime Mortgages.

Retirement interest-only mortgages were reclassified when the FCA backed the changes to allow more of this product to be offered. This allowed a wider range of the product to be offered and opened a number of opportunities for lenders to create new products to support those who would benefit from this type of mortgage.

For further mortgage advice or information please visit www.bradleyhall.co.uk or call 0191 260 2000



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PLANNING AND DESIGN FIRM CELEBRATES 100% SUCCESS RATE AMID FIRST YEAR MILESTONE



Mark Ketley

As Mark Ketley celebrates his first-year anniversary as Director of BH Planning & Design, he discusses the success and achievements of the firm.

My first year with BH Planning & Design has been a busy one to say the least. We hit the ground running back in May 2018, working on several exciting projects across the residential and commercial sectors; preparing, submitting and managing a wide range of planning applications for local and national housebuilders and commercial investors; and promoting strategic land opportunities through the plan-making process in several local authority areas.

BH Planning & Design is currently involved in schemes and strategic site promotions that could see the delivery of more than 4,000 new homes and the creation of around 1,250 new jobs across the North East over the next 10 years, all of which represents significant investment in the region.

The diverse approach and experience of our team also allows us to work for a range of smaller clients, including supporting local SMEs, charitable organisations, public and private sector firms and individual developers with recent schemes ranging from changes of use, pubs and restaurants, gym and leisure facilities, and domestic household extensions.



Notably, to date 100% of our planning applications have been successful which is something we are very proud of. Our experience and professional approach to applications, combined with our excellent relationships with Local Authority planning departments, has maintained a high level of success for each of our clients, allowing the implementation of several key development projects across the region. Such projects not only impact on the landscape and economic success

of the North East, they also create thousands of opportunities for the people who live and work in our region. Residential projects provide high quality new housing for local families, charitable projects can provide life changing opportunities for people who need them most, and commercial projects offer the chance for businesses to thrive and secure vital new job creation for local communities.

The recent raft of instructions has enabled us to grow the team at BH Planning & Design and within the past year we have appointed Senior Planner, Joanne Wood, who has become an integral part of the business. We have also recently welcomed another Senior Planner, Daniel Puttick, who joins us from an established career at Northumberland County Council, and graduate placement Nathan Puckering who joins us having secured a first class planning degree from Leeds Beckett University, showing a genuine commitment at the company to develop the next generation of planners.

Our growth, success and reputation will allow us to provide our services to even more of the region's organisations and individuals and we look forward to becoming the market leader in our field.

To find out more please call 0191 232 8080



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we apply to our developments. A prime residential location, exciting elevational treatments, an exemplary quality of finish and beautiful landscaping are the hallmarks of a Wynyard Homes development. Selecting idyllic sites from some of the most desirable locations in the North East, Wynyard Homes realise the potential to transform the land into a home that combines modern, luxury living with the classic, timeless feel of a property that has matured alongside its surroundings. All of its individually designed homes feature

superior quality materials and highly-specified interiors including carefully sourced modern fixtures and fittings that provide both functional, and stylish living. Our aim is to make the process of purchasing a new home an enjoyable one, and because of our experience we are able to carefully co-ordinate and assist you through the entire process. Past clients frequently ask to be updated on new developments, confirming a high level of customer satisfaction.

**To register your interest contact Bradley Hall Durham
0191 383 9999**

durham@bradleyhall.co.uk





Kevin Scully

FROM VALUING THE HISTORIC, TO THE KEBAB FACTORY, TO A CANNABIS FARM - A COMMERCIAL VALUER GIVES US AN INSIGHT INTO HIS COLOURFUL JOB

An interview with Kevin Scully, Partner at Knight Frank, Newcastle.

What is your job?

I value commercial properties – from single, small units, right up to multi-million-pound portfolios and everything in between. The bulk of my work is valuing buildings on behalf of banks and funds who need to know exactly what the properties on their books are worth. But we do also work directly for owners of commercial properties.

How long have you been a commercial valuer?

Just under 20 years. I'll never forget my very first valuation job which was a bonded warehouse type pub in Sunderland on the banks of the River Wear. It was one of those places that was always heaving on a match day.

"People assume it's just a case of putting a figure on it. If only."

What are the biggest misconceptions about your job?

People think I can tell the value of a commercial building just by looking at it. Alas, it's a bit more complex than that. For example, if that property has a lease, I need to study it to assess what the principal terms are that could affect value such as how long the lease is for, who is responsible for repairs, whether there are any rent reviews and also assess the financial strength of the tenant before I can even begin to arrive at a value.

People also assume it's just a case of putting a figure on it. If only. The lion's share of my time on a job is

spent providing advice to a client on what things are impacting on or have the future potential to impact on their property's value.

"Most of the time...the value of the building lies in the lease, rather than the bricks and mortar."

How do you value a commercial property?

As well as the physical inspection itself, and looking at the lease, the main thing I use is knowledge of the market. That really is key to an accurate valuation. And by that I mean, what deals are going on, how the market is moving, what's selling – and for what price – and also what's due to come on to the market. You need to look ahead for predicted upturns and downturns and I do this by listening and talking to our capital markets and agency guys on a day-to-day basis.

Most of the time, particularly if it's an investment property, then the value of the building lies in the lease, rather than the bricks and mortar. An investor is effectively buying an income stream. Therefore, how long the lease is and how financially robust the tenant is, have a significant impact on the value.

"I quickly called the police and headed back to the office."

What are you currently working on?

I've been working with my colleague Rob Flucker,

who's a residential valuer, on valuing a substantial mixed-use portfolio of 750 houses and a significant number of commercial investments.

Tell us about the most memorable buildings you have valued.

Oh where do I start [laughs loudly]. A few weeks back, I was asked by a bank to go and value a vacant shop in a suburban neighbourhood. A straightforward enough job. Or so I thought. To cut a short story even shorter, there was a strange smell coming from the basement and I uncovered a full-on illegal cannabis farm. Complete with plants, lights and dripping water. I quickly called the police and headed back to the office.

We value lots of old properties, rich in history, which are always a pleasure to look around. We recently valued an operational papermill in a stunning spot on the River Tyne. That was an interesting one. The owner was looking for advice on – not only the value – but also on potential future uses for the site if it was redeveloped.

I have just valued the splash park, Wet and Wild, which was a bit different. I didn't try out the slides though if that's what you're wondering. It was purely an inspection followed by an assessment of the lease and the income stream.

I would say the worst jobs were a game factory, full of dead deer, ducks and rabbits and a manufacturing plant that makes doner kebab meat. I don't think I have eaten either, since.

Kevin Scully is Partner in the Valuation & Advisory team at Knight Frank Newcastle. He can be contacted on 0191 594 5022 or kevin.scully@knightfrank.com

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The spacious kitchen, dining and family room of The Hepscott at The Fairways.



The stylish Fairways apartments.

With the last of the properties remaining at The Fairways – less than a decent tee shot from the town's golf course – and a new release of homes at the stylish Saint George – set in beautiful woodlands on the edge of the market town – people on the move could be barbecuing in the back garden by summer.

At The Fairways, the remaining properties offer huge variety – from two bedroomed apartments, to the four bedroomed Nedderton and the five bedroomed Hepscott.

The Aston Court apartments – priced from £162,500 – are situated at the rear of this small development, adjacent to the golf course. The open-plan kitchen/dining/living area offers plenty of space to both relax and entertain and there is a double bedroom, plus a second bedroom and bathroom. Buyers will benefit from an allocated parking space and access to the communal garden which surrounds the building.

The Nedderton, which comes with stamp duty paid and flooring fitted throughout, features a fabulous kitchen/family room and is on the market at £389,995.

And finally at The Fairways is the stunning Hepscott, providing all of the comforts and features expected by the modern family. This spectacular home offers four double bedrooms – three en-suite – and a single

bedroom and is available at £489,995.

Offering a range of bespoke three to five bedroomed homes, in six types, Saint George provides a fantastic lifestyle opportunity for growing families and young professionals.

Prices start from £230,995 for the three bedroomed Eveleigh, with four bedroomed options being the Goodridge, at £279,995; the Wordsworth, £309,995; the Coleridge, £327,995 and the Sandringham at £394,995. All are superbly designed homes – perfect for growing families.

With expansive living spaces, arranged over three floors, the opulent five bedroomed Osborne – priced £489,995 – has it all. An imposing exterior, exhibiting all of the classic touches and stylings of a traditional executive home, including bay and dormer style windows, blends with a contemporary interior, that delivers the very finest – and luxurious – fixtures, fittings and finishes.

If reservations are made soon, buyers at Saint George could also benefit from free flooring throughout and Stamp Duty paid.*

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For more information, visit the sales offices (The Fairways NE61 2BT and Saint George NE61 2NU), open Thursday to Monday between 10am and 5pm. Alternatively, for The Fairways call: **01670 751 097**** or visit: lindenhomes.co.uk/theairways and for Saint George call: **01670 751 826**** or visit: lindenhomes.co.uk/saintgeorge.



The stunning living room of another Saint George home – The Wordsworth.



The Wordsworth's delightful breakfast bar and open plan kitchen.

*Full terms and conditions of all Linden Homes' offers and incentives such as Part Exchange, Assisted Move, Help to Buy, flooring included and Stamp Duty paid are available on request. **This call will cost 7p per minute plus a phone company access charge. Photographs and computer generated images show typical Linden homes at Saint George and The Fairways. Prices and details correct at time of going to press. ¹Source Google maps.



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PROPERTY PEOPLE...



RUSSELL HALL

Managing Director,
Taylor Wimpey North East.

Did you always envisage a career in property?

I got the 'bug' during my A-levels whilst I was doing geography. My interest in the built environment led me to study a degree in Town & Country Planning and I haven't looked back since.

Tell me about your current role?

I am the MD of Taylor Wimpey North East which is one of Taylor Wimpey's 24 Regional Business Units. As a team, we are responsible for the whole life process of the Taylor Wimpey development from site identification and acquisition through to handing our completed homes over to our customers and ensuring they have a high-quality experience throughout their whole journey.

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

Over the course of my career, from a young Planning Officer at Hartlepool Council in the early 2000's, joining a private planning consultancy in 2010, to my various roles at Taylor Wimpey I have seen changes in house prices, mortgage

availability, government planning policy and development funding. However, the fundamentals of the property market have remained constant. Put simply, demand still significantly outstrips supply and as an industry, more needs to be done to increase the supply of private and affordable housing.

How would you advise people looking to buy property?

Use your vision. If the location, size of the property and community are right for your needs, you can always decorate/dress a house to your own tastes at your own pace. The beauty of buying new means there is no need for renovations or repair work, you can simply decorate to your liking.

What is the most exciting thing you are working on?

We have a number of fantastic ongoing developments across the North East that deliver a range of private and affordable housing. The business is working on a further substantial phase of development at Newcastle Great Park, where we will deliver a further 600 Taylor Wimpey homes along with releasing land for another primary school, secondary school and a range of sports facilities.

What is your fondest career memory?

Winning my first planning appeal as a Strategic Land & Planning Manager after a week long Public Inquiry was fantastic. It was not just the success, it was the way that the team prepared and conducted

themselves with the inspector, the public and the council.

What are your remaining career aspirations?

Having just joined Taylor Wimpey North East in January as an MD, my primary focus is working as part of the team to deliver the short to medium term operational requirements whilst looking forward to set out, and then deliver, the long-term strategy for the North East business.

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

There are many great places to live in the North East. We have a range of key transport links (A1 & A19) that mean employment, recreational and leisure destinations are never too far away. You can be walking along the Northumberland coastline with the family one minute and having dinner and drinks on the Newcastle Quayside the next.

Tell us about your team?

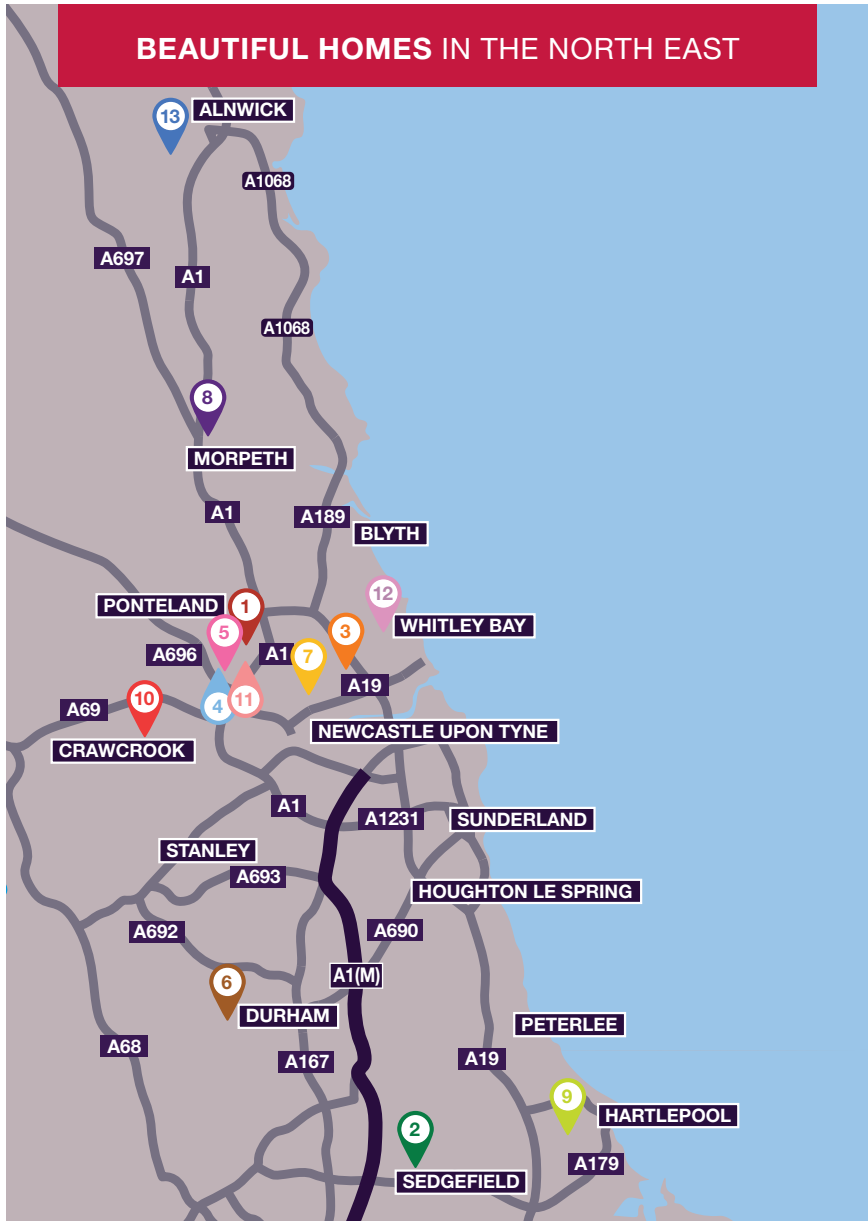
We have fantastic team who have a wealth of knowledge and experience amongst them as well as a great mix of emerging talent which creates a vibrant place to work, both in the office and on site. This means we have the ability to deliver homes that delight our customers.

How do you like to relax?

When I'm not spending time with my wife and our two boys, I can be found across the North East and North Yorkshire playing bass guitar and vocals with my band at many different venues.

www.taylorwimpey.co.uk

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FAÇADE SPECIALISTS HAVE THE BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

A pair of façade draughtsman are mining over half a century of experience and fronting-up an exciting new business.

With over 50 years' experience of façade design – Colin Marshall and Steve Henderson have launched Atomic Design and Consulting Ltd, after taking up office space at the BIC.

The duo first met as apprentices over 25 years ago before going their separate ways and then linking up again in previous roles at one of the region's leading façade companies.

However, due to volatile market conditions, that firm was forced to close just after Christmas and Colin and Steve found themselves out of work.

"We always had ambitions of working for ourselves however it wasn't until our previous employer ran into difficulty that we were given the push we needed," said Steve.

"It's a huge risk setting up a business and with both of us having families to support, it would always have been hard to quit our jobs and set up on our own.

"But, once we were made redundant, it was a no-brainer."

Colin added: "Neither of us wanted to work for another company and we had both spoken previously about our desire to work for ourselves, so it made sense for us to go into business together.

"Combined, we have over 50 years' experience in the industry and we've both accumulated lots of contacts throughout this period, so it made perfect sense."

Having been made redundant just after Christmas, the pair began seeking suitable office space after the holidays and looked at a number of city sites before settling at the BIC.

Steve added: "We looked at a number of locations across the city, however we'd both previously worked at the BIC and were impressed by the amenities on site.

"Not only does our office boast stunning views of the Northern Spire but the transport links are great, we can use the conference rooms and training rooms and we have the on-site café. It has everything we need!"



OFFICE EXPERT PICKS THE BIC FOR NORTH EAST BUSINESS



Charlie Dawson is something of an expert when it comes to work space, having spent the past 25 years working in the office refurbishment industry.

So, he knew exactly what he was looking for when setting up a new Northern base for his Leeds-headquartered employer and he found it at the North East BIC.

Charlie has joined a growing community of businesspeople, entrepreneurs, start-ups, consultants and freelancers who are using the BIC's Open Space Coworking facility as a flexible base for their work.

From here he manages all of Time Limit Interior's North East projects in his role as Sales and Commercial Manager – visiting clients across the entire region and overseeing work to transform their workplaces.

And Charlie says setting up at the BIC felt like a natural choice, having worked there in the past for another office refurbishment company.

"It felt like coming home," he said. "I originally took a

serviced office in Newcastle but quickly realised the BIC was where I wanted to be. As soon as I walked through the door and saw so many friendly faces, I knew I'd made the right choice.

"I don't need an individual office but I do need a professional working environment with access to good facilities like car parking, a café and meeting rooms. Open Space Coworking fits perfectly with what I need. It's also nice to be surrounded by other likeminded businesspeople who work in a similar way."

Charlie spends half of his working week in Sunderland, travelling from his home in Harrogate, and says his location puts him at the centre of his North East client base.

"It's so central for travelling around the region. It makes a huge difference to the working day to not have to sit in traffic getting in or out of a city centre – I'm just straight off the A19. Having the option of using the BIC's Darlington office is really appealing too."

BABY BOUTIQUE PROVES PERSONAL SERVICE NEVER GOES OUT OF FASHION

Nicol Lamb is adding a bit of pink to The Green in Southwick, Sunderland, after realising her childhood dream to open her own baby boutique.

Little Lambs Boutique has certainly been catching the eye of shoppers since opening its candy pink doors, having already earned itself a loyal fan base with parents and little ones alike.

But there's a smart business brain behind the sweet façade, with Nicol working with the BIC to develop the type of retail offer that can compete with the growing trend of online shopping.

Specialising in Spanish designer wear for babies and children, as well as accessories, gifts and prams, Little Lambs is now attracting shoppers with its combination of quality products and a personal service.

Nicol said: "We all know the high street is really struggling at the moment so we aim to give people

a real reason to shop locally. By providing a lovely shopping experience, unusual stock at competitive prices and a personal service, we are a genuine alternative to online shopping.

"We've already had so much support from the community and it's lovely to be part of local life. People often send me photos of their children wearing my clothes and the Little Lamb community is really growing. It's very rewarding to see my customers so happy when they find something they love and their children enjoy wearing."

Nicol sought help from the BIC to get her business off the ground and was supported through its start-up programme by business adviser Margaret Cook.

Nicol said: "Margaret has been there, right by my side, throughout – offering guidance and support and I'm extremely grateful for that. I honestly could not have done this without her."





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SMART WORKS AND SINTONS

A bring and buy event held by law firm Sintons and Michelle Simpson HR Recruitment attracted over 80 female professionals from across the region.

The unique event was held in aid of Smart Works, a charity which supports vulnerable women in the North East into employment by providing interview clothing, styling and coaching to help empower these women and give them the confidence and skills to enter the world of work. The event, hosted by Sintons at their headquarters at The Cube, Newcastle, saw scores of women donate smart clothing, shoes, jewellery and accessories, in exchange for the opportunity to 'buy' new clothing donated from big brands like Hobbs, Whistles, Burberry and LK Bennett.





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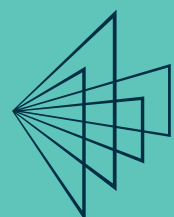
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IN CONVERSATION WITH...

ROBBIE KALBRAIER

MD, Tyneside Group

As MD of property investment, development and management specialists, Tyneside Group, Robbie Kalbraier has overseen the transformation of some of Newcastle's coolest accommodation and office space – including Picton Manor and 5-8 St James' Street. We discovered more about what he thinks makes property so appealing...

How did you get into property management?

I have always been interested in property and property development. It first started from working as a labourer in the holidays and, after being lucky enough to stumble into a few great opportunities, it grew into something bigger.

What is your proudest business achievement?

The recent sale of our development at Picton Manor on Ellison Place, ranks as my proudest achievement to date. The project itself was very complicated right from the outset, and this extended from the first outline design works all the way through to the sale. It was challenging at every step, but it was successful and now, when I stand back and look at the building we created, I am proud of all the effort my team put into it.

What is the most exciting thing about your industry?

I think there are two things that make today's construction industry exciting. The first is the number of different opportunities that exist within the sector – in this respect, it is unlike any other. From Architect to Bricklayer, or Joiner to Quantity Surveyor, there is a role for everyone no matter what skill set they have - and every role is required in order to create a successful finished product.

The second thing is the way the general public's opinion of construction is changing. It has long been the case that qualifications and skills are required for all site workers, no matter what their job is – however, this hasn't always been well known. In order to walk onto site today and operate any tools or machinery, you need to have passed a number of different tests and hold a variety of different tickets.



Robbie Kalbraier, MD Tyneside Group Ltd

Working in construction is not straight forward, it requires a lot of knowledge, skills and experience. I think it is a credit to the skills of all those working within the industry that it is becoming recognised in the high regard it deserves.

How has the industry evolved since you started your career?

The construction industry is always improving as new legislation is implemented, new products are invented, and new techniques are devised. The biggest change that has occurred since I first started in the industry surrounds the on-site safety of all trades people, and the future health implications of working in the industry. We now know how people can be affected in later life by both incorrect manual handling practices and the regular inhalation of dust. Simple training and the provision of the correct equipment can mitigate the risks of these two examples entirely.

With the resources and knowledge that we have in this country, I believe workers' welfare should continue to be paramount within the industry. There is no reason why the personal wellbeing of a site worker should be any more at risk than someone who works in a modern office building.

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

It is your people that are more important than anything else. If you want to deliver a quality

product, whatever industry you are in, you cannot do it alone. You need to have a team of great people working together to allow you to make it.

How do you like to unwind?

I love being outside in the fresh air walking the dog - both the Lake District and the West Coast of Scotland are favourite places of mine, so stick me on a hillside anywhere in that region and I'll be happy!

What is your favourite piece of architecture in the North East?

We are incredibly lucky in Newcastle that there are so many beautiful buildings from many different periods and in every conceivable style. I don't have a specific building that is my favourite, but I do love spotting details that aren't obvious at first glance. You can walk down a beautiful street and miss so much if you don't look up – there's so much going on above street level and people pass by every day and often don't see it at all. Particularly when it comes to historic buildings, I think it is the roofs and all associated features that are often the most attractive parts!

What does the next 12 months look like for Tyneside Group?

Well that's a good question, we have some exciting projects on the go at the moment and they are all at various different stages, so it's going to be a busy time. Watch this space!

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CURTIS GABRIEL OFFER A BRIGHT FUTURE FOR TALENTED GRADUATES

North East-based Social, Digital & Design agency Curtis Gabriel are set to welcome their latest graduates to the business over the next few weeks.

We sat down with two senior members of the Curtis Gabriel team to find out how their careers have developed at one of the North East's fastest growing Digital Marketing agencies.

Jonny Shafto, Operations Manager

What was your first role at Curtis Gabriel and how have you progressed?

I originally joined the company as an intern on a temporary basis upon completion of my Journalism degree at Northumbria University. Fast forward two years and I've progressed through several different positions within the company, where I'm now heading up the operational side of the business as Operations Manager.

What do you enjoy about working at Curtis Gabriel?

Working alongside such a personable, funny and creative bunch of people is by far the greatest aspect of working at Curtis Gabriel. This, together with the ability to be able to showcase our creativity whilst delivering exceptional results for our clients all-year-round.

What skills have you developed since you first started at Curtis Gabriel?

Since joining the company just over two years ago, I'd say that my leadership, problem solving and communication skills have improved the most to date. Combining these skills have allowed me to develop both personally and professionally.

What advice would you give graduates looking to start their career in Social Media & Digital Marketing?

If you're truly passionate about embarking on a career in the Social Media & Digital Marketing industry, do not be afraid to take up a bit-part role at first. It may be an age-old saying, but by 'getting your foot in the door', you're able to prove to your employer that you are the real deal and strengthen your chances of a full-time role.



Abbie and Jonny

Abbie Walker, Head of Section – Hospitality

What was your first role at Curtis Gabriel and how have you progressed?

My first role at Curtis Gabriel was as a Social Media Executive. After a couple of months, I quickly progressed into the role of Account Manager, which was a huge step for me and a very exciting one having just recently graduated university after studying Multimedia Journalism. As an Account Manager, I worked with a number of clients from the Hospitality sector which I really enjoyed, and after a year, I was promoted into my current role as the Section Manager for our Hospitality division. My current role is fantastic, I love my team and it is great to be able to support them on a daily basis.

What do you enjoy about working at Curtis Gabriel?

Every part of my job at Curtis Gabriel is fantastic.

I could list lots of reasons but my top three would most definitely have to be 1) Working in social media - I love how creative we can be for each and every one of our clients. 2) Our team is brilliant - everyone helps each other, and we all get along really well. 3) The clients we work with - I really enjoy speaking to clients and getting to know their business, but most importantly, I love contributing to making their social media presence unique and successful.

What advice would you give graduates looking to start their career in Social Media & Digital Marketing?

Be passionate, demonstrate your creativity and be keen to learn. A job in Social Media & Digital Marketing is very rewarding - if you enjoy writing and being creative then you will love your role and be very successful at it.

2019 has already been a year of significant growth and expansion for Curtis Gabriel and we are always looking for talented individuals to join our teams in Newcastle, Leeds & London. For more information visit www.curtisgabriel.com



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Hybrid Mail is a printing solution that has been around since the 1970's. However, businesses have only started paying attention to it in the last five years (although, it's safe to say that it has evolved as a process since then).

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Hybrid Mail is designed to cater for many different types of businesses, from SME's to national banks. Any company that manages their postal activity on an unstructured, ad-hoc basis should consider out-sourcing to a Hybrid Mail facility. Those could include, banks, insurance companies, councils, and many more.

By allowing MetroMail to handle the task of printing and posting your documents, your staff can focus on the important aspects of their jobs, saving them time and boosting productivity.

You will also be able to save money! Through no longer needing to spend money on stationary and postage, you could create a cost-reduction of up to 60%. Also, with the introduction of Hybrid Mail, the need for a franking machine is diminished – reducing the overheads created through expensive rental and maintenance costs.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO MY BUSINESS?

Not only can you reduce costs through using Hybrid Mail, you also help reduce your carbon footprint. As a mailing house, we are strongly aware of our impact on the environment and we have a commitment to decreasing the impact mail has on our planet. Our energy-efficient equipment is, on average, 30% more environmentally friendly than the typical office printer, and since we also handle the paper, you will reduce any unnecessary waste when it comes to your stationary.

Alongside our environmental responsibility, we also take information security seriously – with each process in line with our ISO 27001 accreditation. This means that each and every document you send to us on our system adheres to this standard.

Security is paramount to us, so our system ensures absolute confidentiality with end-to-end encryption – helping to protect your data from malicious behaviour. We also only keep your data for an agreed period of time, so you can be assured that your information is in the best of hands.

The software itself is quick and easy to use. The Hybrid Mail print driver is installed on your computer, so when it is time to print, selecting us as your printer can be done with a click. You are also able to upload letterheads on to the portal – allowing you to maintain brand consistency on all of your printed documents. This can be accessed through a secure login and can be used by multiple staff members. The portal also gives you full visibility and control over your documents from the moment you send them over to us until it enters the postal stream – this means that you know where your printed materials are in the process.

Not only this, but you can be assured that you receive a high-quality product; from our inks to our envelopes you never have to worry about what the finished product looks like!

MetroMail Presents: HybridMail

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Scan to watch our Hybrid Mail animation.

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Create document



Electronically send to us



We produce and post to your customers on your behalf

Benefits

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SARAH HALL CONSULTING LAUNCHES PODCAST SERVICE

Sarah Hall Consulting Limited has launched a new podcast service for clients. Here associate Sam Walker, award-winning broadcaster and podcaster and managing director of podcast and presenting consultancy, What Goes On Media, explains why this increasingly popular way to communicate is worth considering for your business.

Podcast listening is booming in the UK. According to Ofcom, six million adults of all ages are listening to podcasts each week. And that figure has doubled in five years. Apple's historical dominance of the podcast market with the iTunes platform has been challenged by other platforms this year.

Spotify recently acquired podcast creation tool Anchor and media company Gimlet Media. It's aiming for podcasts to become a fifth of its output as a hedge against artist royalties.

Google has recently started machine transcribing podcasts to make content searchable via its podcast app. You can hunt down audio that you've previously heard or find original content using a search query.

The most popular podcasts centre around comedy, music and film, but there are also hugely popular true crime, sport, history and business podcasts too.

Audio is an intimate form of media that enables an organisation to develop a direct relationship with an audience. Podcasts are a wonderful, portable resource for entertainment, learning and understanding.

But they're also more than that. Because a podcast could also be great for your business.

Walk to the talk

Why? Well, we already know that audio is a very intimate medium and can go wherever you go, whatever you're doing, from walking the dog, cooking a meal to having a bath. You don't need to sit in front of a TV screen or hold a book or paper to engage with audio content.

This means its powerful in a number of ways. In a world that is becoming increasingly frenetic it's harder to demand your customer's precious time. Even with a values-led business proposition where you're focussed on serving your customers' needs



Sam Walker

before profit, how can you expect them to sit and read a report you've commissioned into the challenges their sector faces?

It might be excellent, it might provide exactly the solutions they're looking for, but they don't have the time sit in front of a computer screen at the end of a busy day.

But what if they can listen whilst doing the washing up, or the weekly shop? What if it feels more like learning than work?

Sharing your story internally and externally

Because of the nature of audio, a podcast can take your customers into places in your organisation that they have never been before, forging stronger relationships. It can help reinforce your company values or introduce new values to your clients, it can even help you find new client bases. It's your story, so you tell it as you wish.

Private or internal podcasts are also a brilliant tool for communicating with your staff. Often trying to cascade a message from your CEO through various

levels of management structure can be problematic.

One senior manager in a multinational construction firm told me: "The boss is hugely charismatic and inspiring when he talks at the Annual Conference but it's not practical to get more than about 200 managers to fly in and hear him speak, so it's then up to them to share the message with their teams all over the world and impossible to replicate well. Nuances get lost and his message gets watered down."

A podcast allows you to communicate directly with your staff in a much less formal and rigid way, sharing knowledge and ideas whenever you need to. Staff can engage at a time that suits them. They can catch up with the annual conference whilst sitting on the train to work or doing some filing. It's intimate and efficient.

With podcasting, there are no rules. They can be three minutes long, sharing the latest press release or three hours long. You can release them every day, or twice a year.

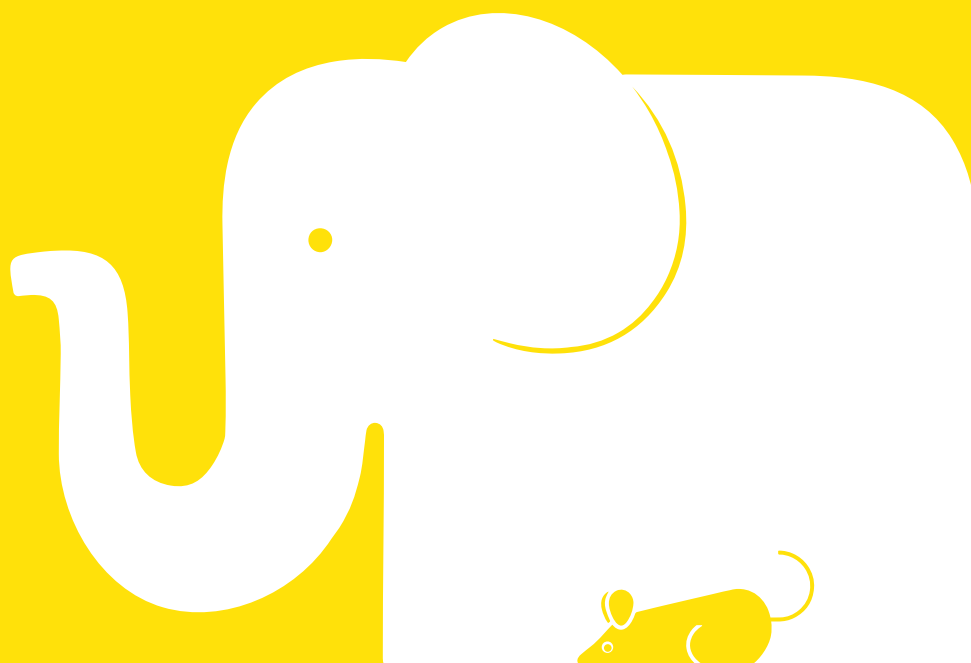
It's all up to you. The potential is endless.

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TRACK 5: AH, PUSH IT - PUSH IT REAL GOOD

Now wait a minute y'all, we know that this dance ain't for everybody which is why we're here to help you push it! For the fifth track of our hospitality insight, we're going to be talking you through the perfect way to master calls to action and the impact they can have on your sales.

Now wait a minute y'all, we know that this dance ain't for everybody which is why we're here to help you push it! For the fifth track of our hospitality insight, we're going to be talking you through the perfect way to master calls to action and the impact they can have on your sales.

Calls to action are a set of marketing influences that guide customers to specific outcomes, e.g. making a reservation or purchase. The whole point of using a call to action is to get people to move around your site in a prescribed maner, keeping them online for longer and in turn more likely to make a purchase. Don't panic, this is not a hostage situation, just a calculated method of helping people make purchasing choices easily.

Nobody knows your business as you do. You know your place in the market, you know what your customers will want and ultimately you know which services are easier to sell than others. Knowing this, you've got yourself a bit of head start, but we're not there yet. Here is our guide to the impact of calls to action to you increase your online sales, engage audiences and keep people moving around your website.

Goal setting is key, knowing what you want to achieve from each visit helps you set up targeted calls to action. As soon as a visitor lands on your website, we want to subtly move them through the process. Should they book a room, reserve a table or attend an event? If you don't direct them to the most relevant content, chances are you're missing out on a sale.

The best part about being an account manager is getting to work closely with our customers and taking the time to understand their consumers and better ways of reaching them. We use data and insights collected from inside the industry to understand how people shop online. For example, did you know that over 60% of hotel bookings are based on an impulse purchase? It is our job to capitalise on this and guide customers through the booking process as efficiently as possible. How often do you book a weekend away on the fly?

Calls to action aren't a new thing, in fact, they're almost unavoidable on some websites. Most people hear the phrase and think of the annoying pop-ups, sign up forms and animated banners, but that's not how we do it. For the most part, we are direct, emotive and clear with what we say, but with the stigma behind other methods of practice, we need to be clever about how we approach them. Having an online 'Booking' button at the top of your website is not a call to action, however, a helpful 'Book now' link to the side of a captivating image is. It's not rocket science, we need to use our own personal experiences to help us understand what works and what doesn't.

Our three things to consider are;

- 1) What's it going to say?
- 2) Where will it take them?
- 3) What will it look like?

First, consider what your customer wants. What makes your service valuable? Ever heard the phrase, "Sell the benefits, not the features?", nothing is more true. Show people what they will get in return for clicking on the link. Use simple language, make it clear where the link will take them and don't give the user reason to hesitate when making that click.

Secondly, as well as keeping the link relevant, I cannot stress how important it is to avoid taking them to a different website. If there is anything the internet has taught us, it's that a link to another website equals danger. Clickbait is huge on social media, we don't want your visitors to associate any risk with a call to action which could hinder their buying choices. If you do need to navigate to a secure external site, web agencies have some clever tips and tricks to help build trust in consumers before moving away.

Finally, what will it look like? We're not going to use crazy fonts or flashing buttons and if you even dared to think about sound effects, you're banned from reading the rest of this guide*. Really, the best practice here is to keep the calls to action as "on brand" as possible, simple is always better. Let your imagery and style do the talking. You can't appear genuine if you're doing the website equivalent of shouting in their face.

Ultimately, we want your visitors to feel the call to action is helping them make a decision and making their life easier. Finding and booking a room can be a painful process and it doesn't have to be. Your job is to engage customers and make them feel the centre of attention. If they land on your website and are subtly guided from page to page by relevant calls to action and they then commit to a purchase, the process has worked. Now, watch your bookings go through the roof.

*We like cheesy sound effects as much as the next person, unfortunately, Safari doesn't.



- Track 1: Hotel, Motel, Holiday Inn
- Track 2: Hello! Is it me you're looking for?
- Track 3: Oops!... I did it again
- Track 4: I believe in miracles
- Track 5: Ah, push it - push it real good
- Track 6: It's everything you ever want
- Track 7: We're gonna have a party tonight
- Track 8: What's cooler than being cool?
- Track 9: Some will win, some will lose
- Track 10: Don't believe me just watch
- Track 11: You've got a friend in me
- Track 12: Start spreadin' the news



Written for Northern Insight by
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YOU'VE "HIGHLIGHTED" OUR BUSINESS - EXECUTIVE COMPASS

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.

Newcastle-based Executive Compass are celebrating a decade in business and are looking forward to helping their clients win even more contracts worth millions of pounds.

The firm specialises in writing tenders for companies bidding into the public sector and is experiencing sustained growth in demand for their services across all sectors. Client wins include contracts for law, IT, health and social care, facilities management, security, the NHS, central government, online gaming and the energy sector amongst others.

Managing Director, Neil Capstick is an advocate of the university system and has based part of his company's business plan on the recruitment of graduates of which he currently has six, including Director of Sales and Marketing, Amy Forshaw.

Highlights PR featured Executive Compass in a number of newspaper articles, online business sites and lifestyle magazines. In particular the story of graduates Kate Hull and Alexander Holt who both attended the same South Shields school featured prominently.

Neil said; "We wanted to let our clients and potential clients know that we are passionate about investing in the bid writing talent of our young people. Highlights PR gave us that opportunity by raising our profile and focusing on their success."



Keith Newman with members of the Executive Compass team

Contact Executive Compass at: Studio 5, The Kiln, Hoults Yard, Walker Road, Newcastle upon Tyne.
info@executivecompass.co.uk 0191 338 6975/020 3507 0314

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



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DO WE VALUE OUR VALUES ENOUGH?

By Veronica Swindale,
Managing Director of nesma

Core values are what support the vision, shape the culture and reflect what the company is about. But you need to make sure your values add up.

Values aren't just something whose initial letters conveniently spell out your company name. They drive the way we influence, how we interact with each other, and how we work together to achieve results and contribute to our competitive advantage.

Are values a soft option?

Levi Strauss & Co uses the same statement of purpose which it made in 1873 when it started production of the first-ever blue jeans which is 'to deliver profits through principles to make an outside impact on the world.' However, how this is expressed and embodied by its values has moved with the times.

"What we've learned is that the soft stuff and the hard stuff are becoming more intertwined. A company's values – what it stands for, what its people believe in – are crucial to its competitive success. Indeed, values drive the business." - *Robert Hass, when CEO and Chairman of Levi Strauss (1990).*

Robert Hass shared this insight following a five-year period in which sales increased by 31%, and profits rose fivefold to \$272 million.

Should organisational core values be set in stone?

Absolutely not, values are dynamic to context and should keep in pace with business growth. Some of your values may never change, but others will as the outside world and internal people around the business change. It is good business practice to revisit, revitalise and share core values regularly and to double check they still align with who you are and where you're going.



Veronica Swindale

Do values pay?

In 2015 research published in the European Journal of Management set out to answer the burning question 'will articulating your values pay off?' There are a variety of theories which suggest that having articulated core values makes it easier to attract the talent you are looking for, inspires greater confidence in stakeholders and investors, and helps organisations be more agile in an increasingly complex and uncertain world.

The researchers studied the stated organisational values of 92 companies listed in the Fortune 100 and compared those findings to recognised measures of performance including profitability. And here's what they found;

- Companies with stated core values perform better than those without.
- Companies with 5 or 6 core values do better than those with 3 or 4.
- Companies with different values to their competitors do better than those with similar values. Proving that a 'maverick' set of values performs better than the common soundbite type values.

- Companies who refresh and revisit their values do better than those who don't

So where does that leave us? Every person and every organisation (which is after all is a collection of people) has a pattern of priority values which shape their actions and attitudes every day: there is no choice in that. The decision lies in whether you want to connect to that driving force or not: and if you do, this research tells us how to make that connection work to your advantage.

If you think working with values is just soft, perhaps it's time to think again!

You can hear more about 'The Value of Values' from nesma associate, Jackie Le Fèvre, at the People Power Event at Northumbria University on 12 June, or you can sign up for her workshops starting in May at our study centre in Gosforth. If managing the whole big picture is something that has just landed in your lap it might be worth looking at the CIM Marketing Leadership Programme which will help you navigate your way through the whole strategic competitive advantage pathway which has a start date of July.



Whether it's working on your current skill set or exploring a new area of expertise, nesma has all your marketing, communication and digital know-how covered.

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MEDIAWORKS NAMED AS DIGITAL PARTNER FOR HOME GROUP



Mediaworks' development over the past 12 months has seen nothing but incredible growth with outstanding financial results, a new office relocation and a host of new national and international clients.

However, their latest collaboration is one of their most special, with the No.1 Independent Agency in the North East coming together to work with North East based social enterprise Home Group on the design of their website user experience.

Recently announced as the sixteenth largest company in the North East, the housing and social enterprise is one of the largest UK providers of high-quality housing, health and social care. They enlisted Mediaworks to ensure their digital presence online was as effective as their offline brand.

Jo Hamilton, Head of Digital at Home Group spoke about the decision to choose Mediaworks as one of their trusted digital partners: "Mediaworks provided class leading insight into the challenges that Home Group face in building our online presence. We're excited to work with all the teams to deliver a great customer site that is accessible for all."

With a long-term goal of building up to 10,000 new homes, as well as continuing their reputation

as being the UK's largest provider of care and support services, Home Group need to redevelop their website to ensure they have a user-friendly website suitable for all customers. Over the next few months, Mediaworks will design the front-end of the new website, ensuring they use data from Home Group and Home Group's customers to understand the customer journey and enhance user experience.

Heading up the project from a creative standpoint, Andrew Blenkinsop and his team of highly talented and experienced designers will execute the development of the design. The dedicated project team here at Mediaworks will ensure a timely execution and working with Home Group to provide the insight they require at any point of the design.

Mediaworks has established itself as a leading full-service digital agency over the past decade, operating across all areas of digital marketing to deliver inclusive, successful campaigns. The digital

partnership with Home Group is the next great leap for Mediaworks as they strive to become the North East's trusted digital partner.

Managing Director, Brett Jacobson discusses the new client and what it means for Mediaworks going forward.

"Home Group is the perfect foundation for our future growth plans going forward and is a huge win for Mediaworks. We are incredibly proud to become one of Home Group's trusted digital partners and we can't wait to get started working with them on the web design and UX project."

"After a hugely successful 2018, our aims as a business are to continue with the effective approach we've had by increasing our client base both regionally and nationally, as well as bringing in a further 30+ new recruits and being recognised nationally as a thought-leader for the digital industry to ensure that our services continue to meet the evolving needs of our clients."

GOODBYE SOCIAL MEDIA

In a bold marketing move, Lush UK breaks up with social media and says goodbye to its Facebook, Instagram and Twitter profiles.

The retailer recently declared that it was “tired of fighting with algorithms” and did “not want to pay to appear in newsfeed.” Instead, Lush UK will move its customer communications to its newsletter and website, offering customer service through phone, email and its live chat feature. Let’s just rewind the clock 10 years.

Lush UK is walking away from its more than 1.19 million followers on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. It will also shut down the other social media accounts for Lush Kitchen, Lush Life, Gorilla, Soapbox and LushTimes, which carry even more fans.

The company’s move is interesting in light of the increased difficulty that marketers face standing out online and appearing in their audiences’ social media timelines without resorting to spending large amounts on advertisements and influencer campaigns.

But is this the best move they could make?

In 2019, many of us are time poor and the thought of speaking to a customer service advisor after being on hold for however long just isn’t a good use of our time.

Social media is the best customer service tool as you have direct access to your customers through direct message and Facebook Messenger.

If any business wants to open up the conversation with their customers why would they move away from where their customers are? By focusing more on call centres and email support, which is disruptive and less convenient for customers, have they thought their strategy through? Will this mean customers are more likely to spend wisely, and not impulse buy in the hope they will



April Bowden

return? Will this mean a decrease in return rate? Will it mean they’ll ultimately close down their website with the aim to attract more people to their stores?

In my opinion, if a business or brand isn’t using social media I presume that business isn’t no longer trading. Right?

Social media is all about having a conversation with customers and like minded people to create conversations to help build awareness and to grow a loyal customer base, which ever industry you are in.

Unlike Lush who have decided to throw the towel in even after building up an enviable amount of

followers, don’t be disheartened by slow growth or limited engagement.

Perhaps a social media audit is the right thing to do to see what is working and what isn’t. Take a step back, look at which platform is working for you, generating the most engagement and focus on that. If you’re using a particular platform and it isn’t generating growth, try changing your content, post at different times of the day, engage with hashtags and share content from other pages to keep your page varied and current.

If all else fails, contact Play the Field who will be happy to meet and discuss your social media strategy with you so you don’t ‘do a Lush.’

What’s your thoughts? Tweet me: @play_thefield

ASK SILVER BULLET...

“

WHAT DOES A 'DISRUPTIVE BRAND & DISRUPTIVE MARKETING' ACTUALLY MEAN AND INVOLVE?

”

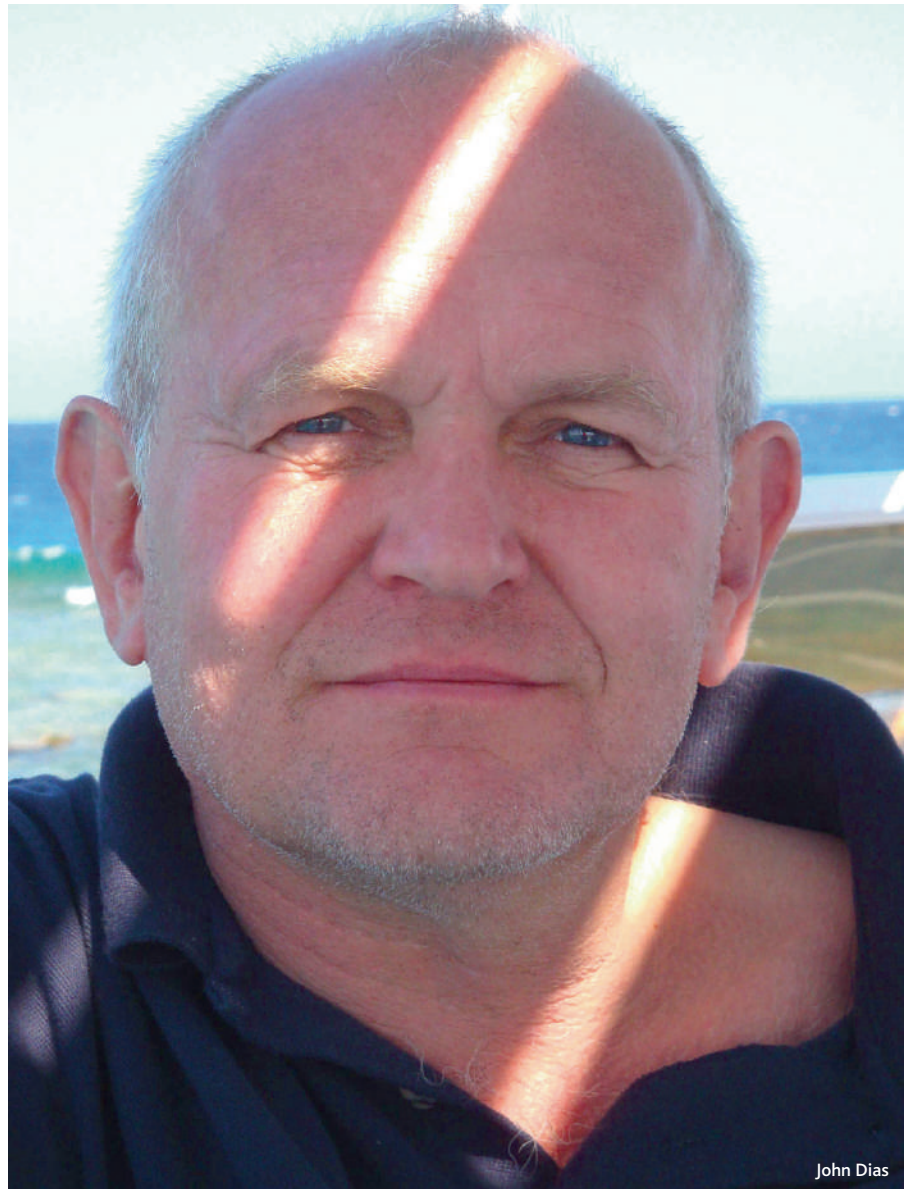
'Disruptive' is one of those phrases that the marketing industry loves as it can cover a multitude of sins and is currently right on trend.

Everyone knows what a disruptive child is – someone who disrupts the smooth running of a class, school or even a household – so it's not a quantum leap to understand that disruptive marketing is simply a 'catch-all' expression that covers not only new and often innovative ways to market a product or service but also ways which can upset or disrupt the traditional route to market for these products and services, thereby ripping up the established rule book.

At the heart of this is the fact such bold strategies are usually undertaken by 'disruptor' companies that are committed to establishing a whole new market, often by new technology, by offering an improved product or service to new customers. The results can be dramatic, not only for the new company, but also for the established market which is forced to react to this new threat.

Two of the best global examples in recent times have been Uber and Airbnb.

Uber was founded in San Francisco in 2010 and has since spread to most cities throughout the world, often in the face of a furious rear-guard action by established taxi companies who see it as a very real threat to their livelihoods. Uber simplified the whole business of taxis by utilising new technology – it's easy to use with no hailing, phoning or searching, it reduces any uncertainty of whether the taxi will arrive and it simplifies payment. The existing



John Dias

business model of traditional taxi companies has been forced to adapt to the new service or fold.

Airbnb, which also started in San Francisco, had humble beginnings in 2008 and was named after the air mattresses its three founders rented out on the floor of their apartment during a design conference, when most of the city's hotel rooms were sold out. There are now 2.2 million homes on the system with 90 million users in 34,000 cities. It offered a whole new concept, allowing visitors to live like locals in real homes, yet took many of the doubts of traditional B&B accommodation away. Interestingly, the reaction of the hospitality industry was actually to embrace the new visitors as they saw this as just the latest phase of an industry that had continually evolved from 'digs', or boarding houses as they were called in the USA, and luxury hotels for the rich, through the advent of mainstream chain hotels to the growth of specialised boutique hotels – each servicing a slightly different market but actually complementing each other.

What now links these two global brands is their success – one is now the world's largest public transport provider yet owns no vehicles, whilst the other is the world's largest accommodation

provider yet owns no properties – whether this was the model that the current (just) Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, was following when he awarded Seaborne Ferries their lucrative contract, is open to question...

But disruption and disruptive brands aren't new – every time someone comes up with a new idea or innovation which earns the attention and respect of a market a 'disruptive' brand is born. The current disruptors like Brewdog, with its 'punk' approach to the UK brewing sector, Netflix with their innovative streaming service, Apple with the first iPod leading to the digital revolution in music, Amazon, Aldi and the host of other global brands are actually following in a rich tradition of innovation, stretching right back to the Industrial Revolution when new manufacturing technology changed human society. Fast forward to 1913 with Henry Ford designing the very first moving assembly line and the transportation industry was disrupted for ever.

So while we may think the latest disruptor brands are altering our way of life, we also have to realise that new brands selling new products and services in innovative ways are just around the corner and will probably have a similar effect.

Do you need some assistance with your marketing, PR or design? Do you need to review your strategy or do you want to know how we can help your business? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.

IDEAS COST NOTHING...BUT THEIR VALUE IS PRICELESS

The competition we all face as businesses in attracting and maintaining anybody's attention is enormous. The platforms and channels we have at our disposal are seemingly never-ending and they're only going to grow. It's a tough time if you're in the business of trying to attract that attention.



Christian Cerisola

It's a pretty demoralising to speak to a number of people in business who's view of how PR and communications agencies can help their brand extends to not too much more than punching out appointment releases. You have to ask what that does to enter the consciousness of a busy consumer, regardless of whether you're trying to attract B2C or B2B customers.

I went to a great talk from a guy called Joe McEwan, who was speaking at an Entrepreneurs Forum event recently. Joe was head of brand at Innocent Drinks for many years. They're one of the finest exponents of engagement with their customers. There were two things that stuck out for me. He said, very simply, that interesting is memorable. That remains something that drives their culture from top to bottom, not least in their social media activity. The second was that Innocent are always self-aware enough to understand that they can only ever demand the tiniest fraction and a fleeting moment of anybody's

attention. Let's be honest - even a brand's most ardent fans simply aren't sat there waiting for you to say or do something. You have to earn that attention.

Cut to the most recent pancake day and a task set by W client, Jif Lemon. You might argue this is a brand that only really has relevance one day a year. So how are we going to create something interesting and memorable for them? Pancake recipes? They have their place, but who doesn't know how to squirt some lemon onto a pancake? And it's not really going to grab fresh headlines to learn lemon and sugar is the most popular pancake topping.

So we had an idea. What would happen if we put the nation's most famous lemons and sugars together?

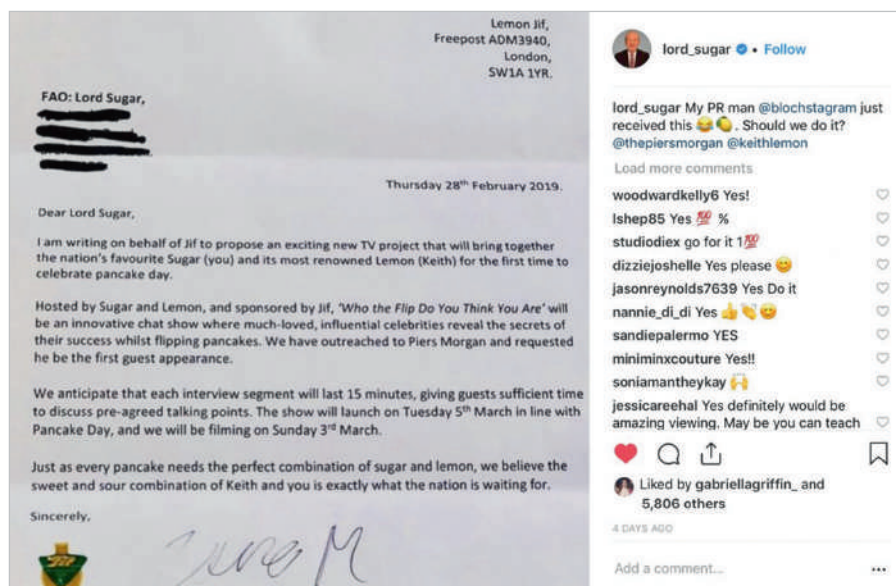
Could we, somehow, bring Keith Lemon and Lord Alan Sugar together? Timings and budgets, quite simply, didn't allow us to actually see this one all the way through to its natural end, but here's the thing about great ideas. They don't actually need to come to fruition to, erm, come to fruition. And this one played out beautifully.

Knowing we couldn't afford it, but having an ally on one side at least, we handed Lord Sugar's PR representative with an 'approach letter' on behalf of our clients at Jif, inviting him to be a co-host, with Lemon, for a new celebrity interview-led talk show where they would quiz their guests, all the while prepping and enjoying pancakes together. Guest number one, of course, would be Piers Morgan.

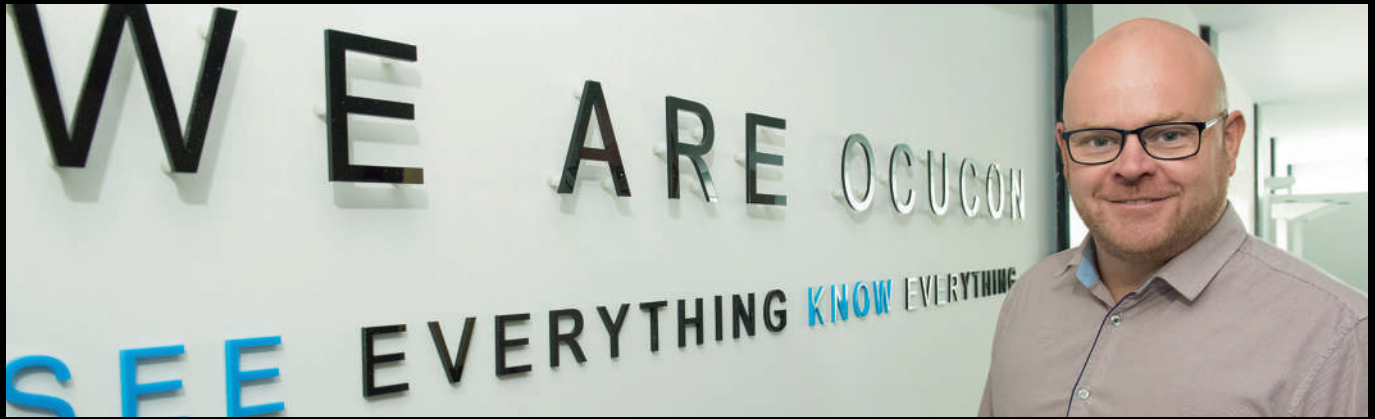
Celebrity pancake tossing. An absurd talk show idea and one straight out of Alan Partridge's repertoire, but nevertheless, the letter was made to look as genuine as possible. Lord Sugar saw the funny side and asked his Twitter and Instagram followers whether it had legs. Keith Lemon and even Amanda Holden loved it too, publicly supporting the idea on their own social feeds.

The spark now had fuel and up it went! As is their wont, celebrity-obsessed tabloid press picked up on the excitement and carried the story too. With thousands of likes, retweets and comments off the back of Lord Sugar's posts, and the subsequent tabloid interest, it was a bona fide PR hit, executed off zero budget. But is the show ever going to get made? Well, probably not. That was never the intention.

Good ideas cost nothing (they can also cost thousands too!). In this case though, it was the cost of the time spent to craft a letter about an imaginary new TV show, fronted by Keith Lemon and Lord Alan Sugar. The same time it would have taken to draft an appointment release. What would you prefer?



Christian Cerisola is head of W North, part of W Communications www.wnorth.co.uk @WCommNorth



NORTH EAST START UP COULD SAVE BUSINESSES THOUSANDS

With latest figures revealing UK retailers spent a staggering £1 billion last year tackling retail crime, a first-of-its-kind initiative by leading North East-based cloud storage provider Ocucon, could help save businesses thousands of pounds.

In an industry first, the world's first fully managed Video Surveillance as a Service (VSaaS) system - Ocucon - has announced that it will provide free upgrades of all CCTV hardware for customers of its standard cloud-based storage package, as it launches a first-of-its-kind zero capital expenditure model in the surveillance industry.

Over the last year, the cost of retail crime and crime prevention has risen by 12% in the UK.

Whilst CCTV is commonplace, the potential to utilise the very latest in cloud-based surveillance analytics and software can be problematic for some businesses and organisations due to compatibility issues with existing CCTV infrastructure or the high costs associated with replacing hardware.

Breaking new ground in surveillance technology, North East-based Ocucon delivers a powerful, cloud-based storage and retrieval platform.



ROTARY IGNITES TECHNOLOGY SPARK FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Around 100 young, budding technology entrepreneurs took part in a dynamic new competition to find the region's tech stars of the future.

Organised and funded by Rotary North East with support from a number of forward-thinking technology companies, the first North East Technology Tournament took place in Sunderland with 13 schools from across the region competing.

Teams of four children, aged between 11 and 16, were challenged to achieve a technical goal of creating a working electro-mechanical device from a kit of parts supplied by Rotary. The competition, hosted at Argyle House School, Sunderland, was a huge success and offered students the opportunity to develop skills in design and technology, team-working, problem solving and communication.

Rotary District Governor, Stewart Atkin, said, "It's vital to give young people an interest and a passion for technology. The North East is crying out for skilled professionals and we predict a massive need in the future."

WATERSTONS UNVEILS NEW DURHAM HQ



UK business and IT consultancy Waterstons has marked its 25th anniversary of business growth with the official opening of its bespoke Durham HQ in Aykley Heads Business Park.

For a quarter of a century, Waterstons has enjoyed significant success and is now one of the top business and IT consultancies in the North East with a global client base.

The company's new office epitomises Waterstons 'people first' culture with colleagues playing a key role in its design.

To mark the official opening of the office, a special plaque dedicated to the memory of Sally Waterston's brother and sister, William and Susan Liddon, was unveiled by Chief Constable Mike Barton of Durham Constabulary, also based in Aykley Heads.

Susan Bell, Chief Executive Officer at Waterstons, said: "The office is an embodiment of our collaborative culture which has helped to drive our success – empowering us to work together towards the common goals of growth, innovation and providing the best service for clients."

LEADING NORTH EAST ENTREPRENEURS LAUNCH REWARD ME NOW INSTANT DISCOUNT APP

Sam Morton and Gary Hunter are two leading entrepreneurs based in the North East with their company Redu going from strength to strength.

Founded in 2014 Redu have grown their revenue from a standing start to over £2.5 million turnover. Redu have several strands to their business which are all consumer led and they are now selling over £40m of goods for UK retailers every year.

Redu use in-house technology to analyse shopping behaviours and select the most relevant and

attractive products, brands and deals for its audience.

Members of the app have access to over 150 high street stores and online brands, including Primark, Pizza Express, New Look and River Island.

The handy app Dashboard allows members to track their savings, and forecast how much they'll save within a year. Another great reward benefit is the Reward Me Now shopping card. By making a 7% saving each time they top up their reloadable card, money saving is made easy.



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SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY – DON'T BE THE WEAKEST LINK

You might think that if your organisation is protected against cyber-attacks, that's all you need to worry about. Even if you have put measures in place to make sure your network and systems are highly available but also safe and secure, have you considered whether those in your supply chain can say the same?

Hackers deliberately target supply chains as easy gateways through which they can reach a large number of infrastructures through a single attack, and wreak a considerable amount of damage.

It is a well published fact that employees frequently succumb to sophisticated phishing and ransomware attacks, if these attacks are built around a profile that looks like a bona fide member of the supply chain. It is estimated that 91% of successful data breaches started with a spear phishing attack.

Which makes it all the more surprising to read figures from the National Cyber Security Centre's Security Breaches Survey 2016 which show that only 13% of those businesses surveyed set minimum cyber security standards for their suppliers. That breaks down to 25% of medium sized organisations and 34% of large organisations, with data-heavy sectors such as finance, insurance, education, health and social care sectors leading the way.

Around 50% of those that set standards insist on a recognised quality standard such as ISO27001, with 8% looking for suppliers who hold Government and industry-backed Cyber

Essentials certification, and 5% asking for Cyber Essentials Plus.

The Government is holding up Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus as demonstrators of information security good practice, and from 2014 required all suppliers bidding for contracts involving the handling of sensitive and personal information to be certified. We believe that this will become the 'must have' minimum to which customers and suppliers must adhere.

Securing the supply chain can be difficult but the need to act is more urgent than ever before, in the face of continually sophisticated cyber-attacks which are costing UK businesses millions, both directly and indirectly. Witness the £100,000 fine levied on communications firm TalkTalk by the Information Commissioner's Office, which was actually down to a supply chain third party's misuse of data, but responsibility ultimately rested with TalkTalk.

So what can you do to ensure the security of your supply chain?

As cyber security experts our advice is to start by embarking on the Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus certification processes. These serve as markers that demonstrate an organisation has

adopted good practice in information security. Relatively quick to implement, and available at a modest cost, having them in place creates solid foundations for creating a robust cyber-security wraparound for your own business.

Looking outward to your supply chain, the NCSC has published useful guidance in the form of 12 principles designed to help businesses understand the risk, establish control, check arrangements and maintain a cycle of continuous improvement to ensure their supply chain is as secure as possible.

It is not an easy task but it is a very necessary one. Ian Levy, technical director of the NCSC calls it "a complex problem with lots of nuances." It may look daunting but if you have the right IT partner in place, it should be something they have done hundreds if not thousands of times, and they should be able to help you.

Businesses can no longer rely on simply protecting their own organisation, they must look further afield at partners and suppliers and satisfy themselves that they too have the right security measures in place.

Any chain is only as strong as its weakest link. Give our cyber security experts a call and see how we can help you turn any weak link into a strong defence.

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

LOVE IN THE WORKPLACE

By Justin Short, Chief Technology Officer, Synergi.

When Robin Williams said "There are no rules. Just follow your heart" he was speaking about life but considering that we spend so much of our lives at work, employee engagement is becoming crucial to the digital workplace.

Digital transformation and cloud platforms have been driving a profound change in the way that our organisations work with customers for more than a decade, initially through email, ecommerce, and customer relationship management and more recently into a landscape where we've seemingly got an app for everything.

We've invested heavily in making our customers' digital experiences seamless but in a modern cloud environment, the integration between customer-facing and internal systems and processes pushing to the cloud are all having a large impact on employees.

Platforms like Office 365 from Microsoft have brought integrated and mobile communication and collaboration tools that have opened up a whole new world of possibilities in terms of how, where and when employees interact with the projects, teams and systems.

Digital innovations have changed the role of employees and whilst much of the attention is often given to the potential negatives of automation and artificial intelligence, in the modern workplace employees are more empowered than ever before.



Justin Short

In my role at Synergi, I help businesses to develop fast, lean and resilient integrated systems and recognise that the employee has effectively become an internal customer whose digital experience needs to be developed and honed with as much care as that for external customers.

We need to take into account fundamental factors

such as security, privacy, accessibility and skill levels but we also need to make this a vibrant, dynamic, personalised and compelling experience to drive adoption and maintain the momentum of change. Digital transformation has to be lead from the executive level but it only takes hold and finds successful momentum when our employees are fully engaged.

Thinking of employees like customers helps to attract and retain top talent, you have a great head-start if you're known for nurturing employee innovation, automating monotonous processes and using devices that support flexible and collaborative workspaces.

It's no surprise therefore that the technologies evolving around Office 365 are focussed on helping organisations to build a digital workplace. Valo www.valointranet.com (Finnish for 'Light') is one of the leading examples and is all about employee experience, interaction and social engagement; it's easy to deploy, beautiful to look at and it brings a warm, inviting and engaging front-door to what can otherwise be a complex and confusing digital landscape for many employees.

If you're interested in seeing Valo in action then drop me a line, I'll be hosting a digital workplace event on Friday 14th June when we'll be explaining it all through, without the 'geek speak', over a warm coffee.

It's time to fall in love with your digital workplace.

Contact enquiries@synergi.it or call us on 0191 477 0365 for further details

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THE FUTURE IS SKY HIGH

Aero Networks Limited, The Cloud and IT specialists have enterprising and ambitious plans for 2019, pushing the breakthrough of cloud technology, especially within the SME sector. With cloud computing, comes the sheer importance of cloud data backup and innovative security.

Managing Director, Paul Curry, aims to aid and educate existing and future clients about the need for cloud services, cloud security, and its relevance to modern day technology. "Aero Networks believe the future of business is in the cloud. Its capability, and the opportunities cloud creates are endless." Paul comments.

The current digital era we live in has prompted and proposed the idea of a cloud-based world, which complements Aero Networks as they have been able to cater their services around the versatility of cloud technology. There is no vital usage for traditional backups anymore, now that companies are swiftly migrating into cloud-based environments. Cloud data backup provides an automated backup strategy, with support across multiple operating systems and applications. It has the ability to restore single files or entire applications, so your data is available when needed. Aero Networks pushes the boundaries of onsite backup systems, by offering an automated and faster backup, which is more reliable for the future.

Still not sure whether to switch from traditional external backup to cloud backup? Here are some vital reasons why Aero Networks can provide



Paul and Ben Curry

you with a cloud backup service that will suit your requirements. It is a convenient, safe and affordable service, which allows for seamless file sharing, provides an exquisite amount of security, and can be accessed anywhere with an internet connection. With cloud backup, there is no risk of security breaches, loss of data, or excessive hardware costs, which traditional backups may be accustomed to. Whether your company has one computer, or one hundred; switching to cloud data backup with Aero Networks is a no-brainer. "Here at Aero Networks, we strive to provide robust backup strategies, to fit our clientele's needs. Cloud backup is the perfect first step in your journey towards moulding your company around the cloud." Paul comments.

We live in a world where we need the confidence of knowing our business-critical information can be accessed at any time, and is secure in its place. As our needs for quick accessibility of data increases, securities can be compromised, without cloud services in place. Aero Networks can

provide the finest amount of cloud security that entails your specified requirements. Migrating to cloud services can be a strenuous process, but Managing Director Paul, and the team at Aero Networks, aim to provide an utmost level of security and a sense of easiness when it comes to their cloud services. Aero Networks hosts the majority of their own servers, which stores their clientele's cloud data. "There are no compromises when it comes to protecting our clients' data in a secure, and stored environment. We take away our clients' insecurities of un-safe and lost data as soon as we help build their cloud journey, with a promising amount of security." Paul states.

Cloud technology is becoming more relevant and significant to the business world each day, we strongly welcome any company to get in touch if you want to start your cloud journey with us. If you are interested in the cloud data services Aero Networks provides, or simply want to know more about our other services; we can offer you a free demonstration or trial, to see if it suits you.



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TECH DRINKS

The North East tech sector turned out in force last month for another successful Tech Drinks, an evening of informal networking held by Mincoffs Solicitors' Technology Team at Beeronomy, Newcastle.

The popular meet-up has been running regularly since 2017 and is one of an increasingly successful collection of industry networking events run by the firm which includes Franchising Drinks and Property Drinks as well as the Fizz in the City ladies' networking events.

Keep up to date with Mincoffs' busy calendar of events on their website and social media.

@mincoffs #TechDrinks
www.mincoffs.co.uk





GATESHEAD COLLEGE NAMED BEST IN COUNTRY



Gateshead College has been ranked the best performing college in England for post 16 education and training, firmly putting the North East on the map.

Figures from the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) show an overall achievement rate of 96%, more than 10% above the national rate for further education colleges.

The ESFA data shows college performance tables for achievement rates based on the number of students staying on at college and successfully achieving qualifications.

At Gateshead College there were 16,500 enrolments to further education courses including A Levels and vocational programmes in the academic year 2017/18.

Judith Doyle, principal and CEO of Gateshead College, said: "To say that the North East is home to the best performing college in the country is a great message for everyone, for students, our employees, for businesses located here but also those looking for somewhere to invest; it is very positive news for the region."



QUEEN ETHELBURGA'S JUDGED 'EXCELLENT' BY SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Celebrations are underway at Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate (QE) this week after the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) awarded the Collegiate the top grading of 'Excellent' across all schools and areas, praising the pupils' outstanding academic achievements and personal development.

The glowing ISI reports follow a three-day inspection in February this year, with inspectors observing every aspect of school life at QE through attended lessons, assemblies and extra-curricular activities.

They held discussions with pupils, parents and staff across the school, in addition to examining samples of pupils' work. Inspectors also visited boarding houses and the wider facilities, together with learning support and educational resource areas.

Steven Jandrell, Principal said: "These are the Inspectorate's highest possible ratings and are a ringing endorsement of the quality of teaching delivered, extra-curricular opportunities offered, and pastoral care provided to students here at QE. The findings reflect our collective determination to always provide our students with the best possible opportunities to develop successfully and happily.



CHAPTER HOUSE EARLY YEARS JUDGED 'OUTSTANDING' BY SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Staff and children at Chapter House school are celebrating this week after the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) judged their Early Years provision as 'Outstanding' across all areas, praising the 'excellent care and learning experiences that the setting provides'.

The glowing ISI report follows a three-day inspection in February this year, with inspectors observing every aspect of school life.

Chapter House welcomes children from 3 months to 10 years (Year 5) and is the preparatory school of Queen Ethelburga's Collegiate. The Collegiate was hailed as being 'Excellent' across all schools, in both the quality of its pupils' academic and other achievements and the quality of their personal development.

Karen Kilkenny, Head of Chapter House said: "I am delighted with the report and so proud of our wonderful children, staff and parents who make Chapter House the warm, vibrant and engaging school it is."

HISTORIC DURHAM SCHOOL BOAT CLUB WINS SPONSORSHIP DEAL FROM MAJOR BOAT MANUFACTURER

Durham School's famous and historic Boat Club has taken delivery of a new rowing eight, having secured a valuable sponsorship deal from Rowing Centre UK and Swift Racing boats and being named as their 2019 UK School's Sponsorship partner.

Durham School Boat Club was founded in 1847 and rowing has been one of the School's great strengths throughout its history. The City's Durham Regatta is a key feature of the School calendar and generations of Durham School pupils have taken part.

"Swift Racing and Rowing Centre UK are really excited about the new relationship with Durham School Boat Club," says Dominic Vincent, General Manager of Rowing Centre UK.

"We were really impressed by the Club's development potential over the coming season and had no doubt that we wanted to help their rowing squad to achieve more by providing the best equipment that we could."



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BRIBING YOUR WAY INTO SCHOOL

By Kieran McLaughlin,
Headmaster at Durham School.

America was shaken recently by the revelation that several high profile business people or showbusiness personalities had allegedly made payments so that their sons and daughters could access places at top colleges such as Yale or Harvard.

Operation Varsity Blues, as the FBI investigation was called, took place over a number of years and uncovered two primary methods by which places were fraudulently obtained: cheating on college admissions tests and fabricating achievements by the applicants, particularly in the area of elite sports.

The details are shocking in several ways. Most obviously, the shamelessness with which the cheating was carried out is breath-taking. Impostors took tests on behalf of the applicants and achieved scores far beyond the candidates' abilities. Claims about the sporting abilities of others were audacious in their creativity, making in some cases grand claims about people who had never even played the sport. The high-profile names attached to the scandal also ensure some wild headlines in the tabloid press. But in many ways, what is most shocking is the sums of money exchanged in order to buy those places; up to half a million dollars was donated to the bogus charity set up to launder the funds through to those behind the operation. It was an instructive reminder of the importance of the Ivy League on a CV to progress in corporate America. And that, ultimately, was what shook American society hardest. Despite their pride in its meritocratic nature, their belief in the American Dream, fundamentally it illustrated that the cheque book still provided the necessary oil to grease the gears through which the most successful in its society moved.

It is all too easy to look across the Atlantic from our position of smugness and reassure ourselves that of course it couldn't happen here. And in many ways of course it couldn't; our university admission system is much more transparent and straightforward. The UCAS system ensures a common application



Kieran McLaughlin

form for all of the universities ensuring the criteria are consistent; offers are made on the basis of A Level results rather than specific university exams and these of course are administered under strict conditions by schools rather than anonymous SAT centres; universities are monitored both internally and externally to ensure the robustness and fairness of their procedures for admissions.

However, whilst our universities haven't suffered anything like the admissions scandal in the US, there is still a nagging problem of access to the top universities from all sections of society. The Sutton Trust has for a number of years published some challenging statistics on both university access and exam results by both school type and geographical region. Briefly put, the results are probably what you would expect; the starkness of the differential however may surprise. A flavour of the situation is given by the statistic that a certain eight schools send as many pupils to Oxbridge as almost three

thousand others put together. It's not just about schooling however; almost one in four pupils at school have received some form of private tuition. So, in the UK, money buying access to opportunity is not an unknown phenomenon either.

As the Head of an independent school, some would argue I was part of the problem. I certainly can't deny and indeed I would endorse the fact that many parents choose to educate their children privately because they believe their chances of gaining a place at a top university are higher. But I also believe we are part of the solution. Independent schools across the country work in partnership both their state school neighbours, working with pupils to help prepare them for Oxbridge and other elite institutions. We also offer life-changing bursaries for pupils who can use us as a springboard for future success. We are charities and at our heart is a desire to improve the lot of all young people, irrespective of their backgrounds.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email admissions@durhamschool.co.uk or visit www.durhamschool.co.uk

TO TELL THE TRUTH

By David Tickner, Headmaster at
Newcastle School for Boys

Independent schools are frequently misrepresented in the national press. Ludicrously, one broadsheet columnist recently suggested that private schools were almost entirely to blame for Brexit and its associated shambles.

Fee-paying schools are, more often than not, portrayed as ornately-architected strongholds of the rich and overflowing with resources and state-of-the-art facilities.

Newspaper stories referencing an independent school hardly ever fail to quote fees. Whilst £40,000 might be the annual fee at the most well-known UK boarding schools and £20,000 may be a realistic day school fee in the south east of England, this does not mean that these figures are representative of the sector as a whole. There is significant regional variation and these amounts make no allowance for scholarship or means-tested assistance that may be available.

News articles are often accompanied by images of independent school pupils in idiosyncratic uniforms that are only worn in a very small minority of schools. Having taught over the past twenty-five years in a number of independent schools, I've never encountered a pupil in knickerbockers, a top hat or a boater.

The media tends to quote go-to heads of some of the larger and more famous schools. Depending on the issue, it can be very difficult for these figures to reconcile representing the diversity



David Tickner

of their sector with the position of their own schools.

There are around 2,500 independent schools in the United Kingdom. Whilst the sizes of these schools vary tremendously, the average is around 250 pupils. Size can be a major factor in the distinctive offer of an independent school. It means that pupils can receive a lot more individual support, attention and care. Understandably, this is very attractive to parents.

As the financially besieged maintained sector responds to decreasing funding, some state schools are becoming larger and/or part of larger multi-academy chains. Individual children can get lost amongst the economies of scale and dwindling resources.

This is making smaller schools like Newcastle School for Boys increasingly attractive. It is

certainly cited, directly or indirectly, by a growing number of prospective parents who want their children noticed, known and nurtured.

The presumption of homogeneity of schools in the independent sector only perpetuates misrepresentation, misunderstanding and, in some cases, prejudice. Our media has contributed to the current spiral of vilification of independent schools.

How much financial assistance independent schools offer to make their education more accessible is seldom reported. Similarly, there is little or no mention of the contributions made to the local community and economy.

Many independent schools, including all of those in our region, continue to work hard to widen access and opportunity and take seriously their social responsibility.

Final places for September 2019 are available in some year groups. To discuss your son's admission into the School or to arrange a visit, please contact admissions@newcastleschool.co.uk, 0191 255 9303 or visit www.newcastleschool.co.uk

THE DREADED EXAM SEASON

By Simone Niblock, Headteacher, Durham High School for Girls

As this article goes to press, hundreds of thousands of A Level and GCSE students will be embarking upon the dreaded 'Exam Season'.



Simone Niblock

As the Headmistress of my school back in the 1980s used to say: 'Remember that this is a marathon, not a sprint'. That, I'm afraid, was all the revision advice that was given to us at this time; this was decades

before Carol Dweck's 'Mindset', Malcolm Gladwell's 10,000 hours theory, and Professor Steve Peters' 'The Chimp Paradox'. Therefore, my generation of O Level (yes, I am that old) and A Level students muddled through with record cards, recorded notes on to a Sony Walkman- if we were lucky enough to own one of these highly-prized 'gadgets' - and kept ourselves awake with a ready supply of Nescafe Gold Blend.

Students, today, however, have a plethora of exam tips and revision guides, with the ubiquitous Post-It notes covering every available surface with aide memoires and checklists. Exam revision schedules are created and, surprisingly, adhered to; 'productivity' apps are increasingly used to ensure that revision time is carefully calibrated, with time even built in for review and recall. Our teenagers are, overall, well-organised, diligent and ambitious to do well. Therefore, what these young people need is adult care and common sense during this period. Those who are looking after them need to ensure that they work, of course, but then they 'rest and play'- without necessarily resorting to eating the chocolate bar that this mantra used to advertise. We, the adults, need to be mindful that the health of our teenagers - mental and physical - is of paramount importance. As the proud Head of a girls' school, I have used assemblies this term to emphasise the importance of sleep, rest and the restorative powers of reading for pleasure i.e. 'Bibliotherapy'. Today's students are au fait with how to learn effectively, but I am conscious that some of them are so busy being human **doings** that they need reminding of how to be effective human beings.

To our glorious teenagers and their patient parents, I salute you and wish you Godspeed.

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The fact that Audis are great to drive, comfy, reliable and hold onto their value like a limpet, merely adds to the sensation that you are driving a terrific car.

There is something for everyone in the Audi range. If anything, one of the problems with Audi is keeping up with the steady flow of new models.

If you want a compact hatchback, go for the surprisingly roomy Audi A1. Fancy something a bit bigger, then move up to the A3 which is available as a 3-door hatchback, 4 door saloon, 5-door Sportback and a really pretty cabriolet. There is a wide range of trim and engines plus sporty S and RS versions.

The Audi A4 has become one of the most popular cars in the UK. It oozes quality and makes long journeys a joy. Available as a saloon, Avant estate or Allroad for those who need a slightly more rugged A4.



The Audi A5 has an interior that resembles a work of art. Available as a two-door coupé or 5-door Sportback, it is instantly recognisable. The A5 Cabriolet also rates as one of the most handsome drop-tops available...anywhere.

If you fancy some extra legroom, move up to the A6, A7 and luxurious A8. They are now a firm favourite in the executive class. When it comes to sweeping along in near silence, nothing does it better than these big Audis. The A6 Avant is also available as an Allroad model which provides additional ground clearance and some bodywork protection. The A8 can also be specified with a long

wheelbase to provide even more space in the rear.

SUVs are arguably the biggest hit of the 21st Century when it comes to cars. Audi has got all bases covered with the Q2, Q3, Q5 and dominant Q7. The latest models to arrive are the stunning Q8 and futuristic, all-electric, Audi e-tron. Audi call the e-tron the most advance Audi yet which, bearing mind the sort of technology you will find in all of the other models from Audi, is really saying something.

Oh and we said that the Audi range has something for everyone. The Audi TT has become an iconic sports coupé and offers a sensational drive, but even the TT can't match the pace of the Audi R8. The R8 is a true supercar with shattering performance but, like every other Audi, is aimed at providing driver and passenger comfort and enjoyment while offering day-to-day transportation.

As we said, the Audi range has something for everyone.

But now, Lookers Audi has come-up with a great idea for anyone who fancies sampling the delights of Audi ownership...

If you need any further details, get in touch with the Lookers 'On Demand' team at Newcastle Audi on 0191 226 4577 or email: newcastle@uk.audiondemand.com



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SUNDERLAND EMPIRE SET TO STRUT INTO NEW SEASON



Sunderland Empire's glittering new *What's On Guide* is out now, showcasing a fabulous array of Spring/Summer productions, alongside an exciting preview into Autumn.

80's vibes are set to live forever with *Club Tropicana* (20-25 May), a brand new 80s musical from the producers of *Hairspray* with an all-star cast including Joe McElderry.

Legendary rock musical *HAIR* (6-11 May) also bursts on stage in full psychedelic glory, direct from a sell-out London run. Adored for its Grammy award-winning score featuring iconic hits such as

Aquarius and *Let the Sun Shine In*, audiences will enjoy its affirmation of life, freedom and equality.

The glorious, romantic musical *The King and I* (5-15 June) will also arrive, with one of the finest scores ever written including *Whistle a Happy Tune*, *Getting to Know You* and *Shall We Dance*.

Strut into summer with the high-heeled hit *Kinky Boots* (25 June – 6 July). With songs by Grammy and Tony winning pop icon Cyndi Lauper, the show takes you from the factory floor to the glamorous catwalks of Milan.

The world's best-loved musical *Grease* is also back (30 July - 3 Aug). Prolong those summer nights with this brand-new production, grittier and more glamorous than ever before, with special guest artist Peter Andre as Teen Angel.

The rhythm is gonna get you when *On Your Feet*, the story of Emilio and Gloria Estefan, hits the stage, (30 Sep – 5 Oct). You can bet your bottom dollar that tickets to *Annie* (7-12 Oct) will be popular and be sure to tumble outta' bed and stumble to Dolly Parton's rip-roaring musical *9 to 5 The Musical* (5-9 Nov).

SQUEEZE'S CHRIS DIFFORD COMES TO THE NORTH EAST



Squeeze's Chris Difford is available for interview & will be appearing at the Sage Gateshead on 17 May as part of his 'Up the Junction' tour.

With his collaborator, Squeeze co-founder Glenn Tilbrook, Chris has written some of the most enduring and best-loved songs of our time such as 'Up the Junction', 'Cool for Cats', 'Tempted' and many others. The band returned with new album 'The Knowledge' in October 2017, followed by an extensive world tour in 2018.

Chris is one of the country's most respected songwriters and has worked with a host of musicians and performers including Elton John, Wet Wet Wet, Elvis Costello and Jools Holland. He has also managed Bryan Ferry and The Strypes.

A Grammy nominated and double Ivor Novello Award winning lyricist, Chris has brought us characters and sketches from everyday life and has successfully turned the mundane into the beautiful, the urbane into the exquisite, for over 40 years.

Chris has hosted songwriting retreats for over 25 years, some in prisons, some in rehab and some in Somerset with the Buddy Holly Foundation. He has also written his long-awaited memoir 'Some Fantastic Place' which was published in paperback last summer.

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NEW CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY FOR CULLERCOATS

The sun shone this weekend for the opening of a colourful new art gallery in Cullercoats. Artist Joanne Wishart and her husband Ross Wishart from North Shields have followed their dream of opening an art gallery together and St Georges Road is the perfect setting.

Joanne has been painting colourful coastal scenes of the North East coast for nearly 15 years and in 2009 won a female entrepreneur award for the North East England's Best Creative Business. Ross joined the business in 2008 to act as Joanne's business partner and agent and since then the business has grown from strength to strength.

Joanne's work is available as original paintings, deckchair artworks, limited edition prints, greetings cards and gifts. Her greetings cards and gifts are supplied to gift shops and galleries nationwide and she has licenced images to Dunoon Ceramics to make beautiful fine bone China mugs.

Joanne's former studio was at the Mushroom Works in the Ouseburn but it was always her dream to open a gallery at the coast. The new space on St Georges Road has had a major refurbishment with a spacious gallery space featuring real wood floors and a stunning fireplace, setting the scene for her paintings.

RECORD OF THE MONTH – LEWIS CAPALDI 'DIVINELY UNINSPIRED TO A HELLISH EXTENT'

It hasn't taken long for Lewis Capaldi to capture the hearts and minds of the British public. His beautifully emotive single "Someone You Loved" and warm, good-humoured charm has propelled him on the pathway to superstardom and has drawn comparisons with the likes of Adele.

Such a rapid rise has not went to his head though as any follower of his social media feeds will testify – posts are marked by typically self-deprecating patter and a somewhat bemused attitude towards fame. His debut album, will drop on 17th May and features another single "Grace" alongside other stand out tracks Bruises, Fade and Lost on You.



WHAT'S ON THIS MAY?

UB40

May 5

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Matthew Bourne's Swan Lake

May 7-18

Theatre Royal Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Wet Wet Wet

May 11

Newcastle City Hall T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

Marc Almond

May 13

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Chris Difford

May 17

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Mark Knopfler

May 19

Utilita Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.utilitaarena.co.uk

Olly Murs

May 20

Utilita Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
www.utilitaarena.co.uk

Captain Corelli's Mandolin

May 21 – 25

Theatre Royal Newcastle T: (0844) 8112 121
www.theatroyal.co.uk

The Cult

May 26

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

The Waterboys

May 29

Sage Gateshead T: (0191) 443 4661
www.sagegateshead.com

Sean Paul

May 29

Utilita Arena T: (0844) 493 6666
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THE IMPORTANCE OF ALPHABETTI THEATRE

Photographs courtesy of Lauren Stone



Outside Alphabetti Theatre during Moving Parts Puppetry Festival, April 2019



A busy bar during Moving Parts Puppetry Festival, April 2019

Northern Insight catches up with Ali Pritchard, founder and Artistic Director of Alphabetti Theatre to discuss why theatre is so important to the fabric of a city and the business support that NE1 is providing.

Arts organisations have been one of the sectors hardest hit by years of recent austerity and political uncertainty caused by among other things, Brexit.

Small arts organisations in particular are on a knife's edge as austerity and cuts bite hard. They may be more adaptable but because of their size they are also more exposed and have less security.

At Alphabetti Theatre here in Newcastle they are managing to ride the storm by filling a gap in the theatre market in the city and working hard to extend links and reach outside of the confines of the theatre. The team is being supported in this task by the help offered by Business Improvement District company, NE1 Ltd who recognise the importance of a thriving theatre community and grass roots cultural organisations for the contribution they make to the fabric of the city. A city's rich cultural identity is enhanced by grass roots cultural organisations that enrich the city making it cooler, more diverse and interesting.

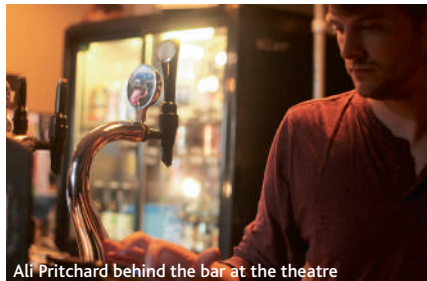
Since Alphabetti was launched six years ago, it has enjoyed support from NE1 Ltd and from other organisations in the city and the wider region, allowing the theatre to grow significantly in a relatively short space of time.

The theatre has a novel proposition, based on St James Boulevard in the city opposite fellow artistic venue and long time supporter, Dance City it is open 6 days per week, 48 weeks of the year. The team works with over 1,000 artists targeting over 9K audience members. In 2018 alone it staged over 240 performances, 30% of which were their own productions. Its growth is huge compared to other theatres and cities. While traditional theatre audiences are in decline – Alphabetti continues to buck the trend making work that continues to attract healthy audience numbers financed through a novel, 'pay as you feel' funding model. Instead of having a set pricing and ticketing structure Alphabetti audiences are invited to pay what they feel they would like to pay at the end of each performance.

Financially this may not be the best or most secure



Live music in the theatre bar - St Patricks Day 2018



Ali Pritchard behind the bar at the theatre

form of funding but audiences respond well to this trust scheme and people tend to pay more when they pay what they feel. The money balances out across all donations averaging between £9 - £12 per donation.

Their success in part has been down to the gap they fill in the market. What prompted the creation of Alphabetti in the first place was the huge gap in the ecology of performance arts space in Newcastle. Other more established and traditional theatrical venues did not have the capacity or the scope to develop smaller productions – not through lack of interest or desire but due to lack of facilities and wherewithal.

This became particularly evident when as an aspiring artist emerging from Northumbria Uni, Ali Pritchard approached established theatres looking for support – they all said the same thing – 'I Like the idea – invite us to your next show'.

Ali realised that if every venue was saying this to him

they were saying the same thing to every artist who approached them and clearly there was a problem.

To support artists to help themselves, Ali wanted to provide not just a venue and rehearsal space but to offer crucial support for budding theatrical artists to help them hone their craft, identify their audiences, raise funding and make sure audiences turn up to watch their shows.

They secured funding from Newcastle Council's Newcastle's Cultural Investment Fund to help deliver this support – which offers a modicum of security that in turn is passed on to the artists.

There is also an exceptionally strong and supportive theatrical and creative community in Newcastle and with support and help from NE1 Ltd, the team at Alphabetti are now working hard to forge wider links across other industry sectors in the city.

The city benefits from this cross fertilisation and Alphabetti's business model depends on it – they don't have big marketing budgets for outdoor advertising campaigns or for social media marketing – instead they rely on people walking through the door and enjoying what they see when they do.

The team is confident that they can win people over with the work they put on, in the atmosphere of the bar and in the spaces available for private hire.

It is important that they continue to attract audiences to the venue and get them through the door. Alphabetti is currently working with the Bank of England on a series of their business networking events. Alphabetti is being used as a quirky space for the Bank to hold a series of talks for businesses. Events and income generation of this sort creates a new income stream for the theatre which provides more financial stability which in turn helps audiences and artists in a delicate eco-system.

Alphabetti has some exciting plans for taking the theatre out into the city this summer in a collaborative project with NE1 Ltd. The hope is that it will introduce new audiences to the theatre, strengthen links with other events and organisations in the city and grow the future of theatrical performance in the city.

A NEW ARTIST'S SHOWCASE



A new arts and crafts hub selling local artists' work has opened open at Vallum Farm on the Military Road.

The Creative Arts Studios Northumberland, founded by Lucy Hudson, is a venue designed to support and showcase artists based in the county.

The studios offer exhibition space for 40 artists selling and 15 artists delivering workshops in their field of artistic expertise to generate further income and attention to their business.

Lucy said: "It has long been a dream of mine to have a space and platform for me as well as other local artists and makers to promote art work and hold art and craft workshops for the general public. My Gramps was a wonderful artist and always encouraged me to chase my artistic dreams, if he were alive today he would have loved this venture."

The studio's hold workshops for children and adults in various arts and craft techniques and lends support to local artists to help them with branding and social media.

Lucy added: "These sessions will offer artists the opportunity to come together and network with another, work on their creative projects with others around them to get feedback from and generally be in a supportive environment.

"We support as many Northumberland artists



as possible, not only to sell their work but so they can teach others and help they're creative businesses thrive."

The Studio shop has a wide selection of work from

Sea Glass Jewellery to Lino Print Artwork from Glassware to Macrame so there is something for everyone.

Lucy said: 'I have done my best to curate a gallery shop where there are no crossovers and lots of variety. It was also important to me to make sure we had a lot of different price points so that anyone can come into our shop and take something away with them. I believe that art should be available and accessible to all as it can bring so much joy.

The Studio is currently offering a wide range of workshops, a list of which can be found on their Facebook page 'The Creative Artist Studios Northumberland'

The Creative Artist Studios is not the only business up at Vallum Farm which has called itself 'Hadrian's Wall Gateway to Artisan Makers' They also have an interior design and up-cycling shop called 'Jolaru' a catering and indie food brand called 'Flat Earth' and home ware store 'Ibbis' who boast a selection of goods bought from around the globe.

Finally the farm has its own Tea Room and outdoor play park for children so it really is great day out for all the family.

For any further information please contact Lucy Hudson at thecreativeartiststudios@gmail.com

LIFE COACH DRAWS ON EXPERIENCE TO RELEASE HARD HITTING NOVEL

A life coach who spent much of her early career working with women in prison, has released a gritty and exciting novel, much of which is based on her experience.

Northern woman Annette Greenwood, who is now a personal and intuitive life coach to women, has released her novel *Imprisoned Heart* on Amazon this week and the book is already selling hand over fist.

Based upon the life of Katrina Sanderson, the plot follows a young woman as she falls foul of the law through no fault of her own whilst trying to provide stability for her family. Including love plots, twist and turns mixed with plenty of laughter and tears, the novel shows how when women are faced with challenges and suffering, their true fighting spirit comes through.

And now Annette is delighted to have finally released her long awaited book, which is being bought by female clients, past prisoners and followers of Annette on social media and the web worldwide. Annette said: "Writing this novel took twelve months around a full time job, but the following eight years to publication have been the most challenging and rewarding.

"When writing *Imprisoned Heart*, I adopted the principle of putting myself whole heartedly into each character. I lived them, breathed them and got to know them intimately and through this they came alive, especially the main character Katrina Sanderson, who I am especially fond of because she has so much of me in her."

Over the last eight years, Annette has undergone a number of challenges in her life, more recently nearly losing her husband John, who miraculously survived a serious illness. She has also experienced the loss of her beloved mother and brother in quick



Annette Greenwood

succession and a number of traumatic changes to her working life.

Prior to that Annette has suffered from severe depression and anxiety. She found conventional treatments unhelpful, and found Adaptation Practice, a radically different approach that helped her turn her life around. She in turn is now helping other women do the same from her coaching practice in Yorkshire.

Annette believes that by releasing her novel, she is showing the world, and the women in it, that if you have a goal it can be achieved despite negative circumstances. Annette concluded: "Following a turbulent personal life and career, I now live a much simpler life that is settled, so it seemed the perfect time to release my book. I hope my open heart will inspire others to overcome adversity.

"The purpose of this novel is to encourage women



to trailblaze. To be who they know they can be, not listen to naysayers, doubt or fear. Face the world, be proud and follow their own true North even if it seems scary! I hope this novel touches the life and the heart of millions of women, the same way it did for me when I was writing it."

More information on Annette is available at www.annettegreenwood.com and *Imprisoned Heart* can be purchased on Amazon now.

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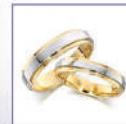
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Mary Ann Rogers

...MEET the ARTIST...

Northern Insight talk to the renowned water-colour painter, Mary Ann Rogers.

Did you always want to pursue a career in Art?

I never really thought about painting as a job when I was a child, it was simply something I did, part of my everyday life. Career wise, I never really had any clear ambitions, which is possibly why I only had mediocre results for my 'O' and 'A' levels!

Tell us about your career path so far?

It feels like a brief, white knuckle ride, but its only when I stop and count the years that I realise how long the journey has been so far!

Although a lot has changed in the world of art and how people look at and buy art, I continue to exhibit both original paintings and prints in a handful of carefully chosen galleries up and down the UK as well as overseas.

One of the biggest changes has been the advent of the internet. I was an early adopter, and had my first website in the early 90's. I have always applied the same energy and integrity to the business side of things that I do to the actual painting, otherwise one or other would suffer.

Highlights of my career have included meeting some amazing people and hearing how they have been touched by my work. Receiving the 'Best Selling Published Artist' award was great, but being the first female, self-publishing artist to do so was an especially big deal for me.

The building of my studio, which is attached to my home, was a massive achievement, and having the process filmed for a Discovery Channel design programme was a big moment!

What are you currently working on?

Im working on a big painting of hares racing around the field, something I see at this time of year. Im also working on paintings of the sheep, painted directly from the field behind my studio.



What do you most enjoy about your work?

I enjoy everything about painting. I use watercolour, which is an absolutely thrilling medium. Something quite magical takes place between the intense pigment and the water on the pure white 100% cotton paper I use, which is never the same twice. In some ways, the less 'controlling' I am, the more exciting things take place. Anyone with a certain amount of skill can reproduce accurately what they see in front of them, but if you allow the pigment and water to take on a life of their own, an alchemy takes place which can be coaxed into something beautiful which can become part of a finished painting.

What is the most challenging aspect?

Every day is a challenge. There are always part-completed paintings, new ideas to develop and major distractions. Focussing on the important things depends on what is important!

Who are your heroes in and out of world of Art?

Most of my heroes are people like Sir Edmund Hillary, Roald Amundsen, Anatoli Boukreev and Ernest Shackleton. I'm an armchair explorer and avidly read about climbers and explorers who have achieved extraordinary feats of endurance in appalling conditions.

Art heroes are less easy to identify as I know very little about most artists' lives. I find the life and work of Frida Kahlo fascinating. Other artists whose homes and studios I have visited include Stanley Spencer and Sir Edmund Munnings. Both artists left me with a great sense of admiration, and some of their paintings have stayed with me in my memory for many years.

How do you see the world of Art evolving in the next 5-10 years?

Given that the 'World of Art' has changed more in the last 20 years than in the previous 200 in my opinion, I can only imagine that the pace of change will continue.

The internet has been responsible for immense change. Artists are no longer isolated from the public, and kept at arm's length from art collectors by the galleries. Nowadays, most artists engage directly with the public via social media etc, and sell work directly through their own websites and actual galleries. Original artwork is frequently bought without even being actually seen, which would have been unheard of 20 or 30 years ago.

Nothing can replace the experience of standing in front of an original piece of art, made by a real person, so I would expect and hope that there will still be art galleries on high streets selling art.

How do you like to unwind?

As a rather 'driven' person, I tend to work hard and play hard, so when Im not working, I am probably either riding or competing one of my horses, hill walking, or swimming. I am a lifelong wild-swimmer, and have recently taken up open water swimming, with some long distance swims planned for this year which I am training for. The River Rede and North Tyne nearby have several lovely deep stretches for swimming, I also enjoy organised open water swimming at Sweethope Lough nearby, where fellow enthusiasts enjoy long evening swims on this beautiful lake, surrounded by trees, wind turbines and open moorland.

I also like watching grim crime dramas on my iPad!

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OUT & ABOUT - BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL

for the National Exhibition Centre



On my most recent visit to the National Exhibition Centre I stayed deliberately at a previously dreadful hotel which is definitely on its way up.

The Rowton Hotel in the Digbeth area of Birmingham is described as "a charming Victorian-style building". It is rated on TripAdvisor as the 107th of 117 hotels in Birmingham. Austere, Gothic or Institutional might be better than Charming. Opened in 1903 it is definitely Edwardian. With 250 rooms at around £30, frankly I like it, and there was nothing to complain about with my redecorated room. In the past, I rebelled against the black and fluorescent green colour scheme. Bus 50 runs frequently into the city centre, or it is a 15 minute walk. I took the 50 the other way to Moseley Road to dine at Gymmy's Healthy Grill (631 of 1866 restaurants) where (despite a restricted menu) I had a good meal.

The Rowton was formerly known as the Paragon, but I do remember once having a phone which was out of charge when needing to make a call. The helpful receptionist produced a cardboard box of chargers left behind by former occupants and lent me the right charger overnight. Many 5* hotels would not do that for you. Breakfast was always good, and it has a fascinating history of being a hostel for 800 men, mostly Irish labourers. If bland chain hotels are not for you, try the Rowton, but maybe not for a romantic break away!

Cross Country Trains run from the North East to Birmingham New Street twice an hour. Many also serve Birmingham International, for the NEC and Birmingham Airport (by monorail link 21 hours a day). The NEC has both trade and public shows and entertainment of all kinds at the Arena on site. Originally opened in 1976, there are now 20 Halls. It's the largest exhibition space in the UK and the 7th in Europe. Moving walkways and escalators help you move about efficiently, and it's always interesting to visit co-located shows that take place at the same time. When I went to the British Tourism and Travel Show, the only other exhibition was the "UK Concrete Show" – not many people had interests spanning both of those! Meanwhile the Classic Car show was in build for the opening over the weekend.

The NEC is truly an impressive space, so it's sad to report that "Resorts World" failed me totally when I wanted to use the spa pool and facilities between the show closing at 1600 and my train home about 1830. They do a two hour spa special. I had with me my normal Gate8 luggage cabin bag, the sort you can put in an aircraft overhead locker without checking it in. So, not very big! However, the spa people did not have a locker big enough, nor could they look after it in reception. I asked at the adjacent Genting hotel but I could only leave luggage if I was resident. Clearly wedded to the 29,000 spaces for car parking customers, and giving no thought to people arriving by train! "Resorts World" gets a big

fat zero, even though I was willing to pay £40 for use of the spa - less than the saving from not getting an earlier train. I had to wander around the airport for two hours instead before my first class split advance ticket for £53 took me home to the North East.

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- Tea and coffee with mints
- A glass of prosecco for the toast
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- Hire of the Royal mail post box
- Chavira Chairs for 60 guests
- Top table ivory swag
- Our resident Dj will start your evening from 7pm and take you through till 11pm.
- Your evening guest will enjoy the hot baps buffet for 60 guests

*Additional day time guests would be £67.50 per head children under 12 will be £30.00
Additional Evening guests would be £15.00 per head*



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- Exclusive use of our Secret garden and function rooms
- Ceremony room with a fresh flower arrangement
- All guests will be greeted with a glass of prosecco as they leave the ceremony room
- 3 Course Wedding breakfast for 60 guests with a glass of wine during the meal
- Tea and coffee with mints
- A glass of prosecco for the toast
- We will provide you a personalised table plan and menu cards
- Hire of the Royal mail post box
- Chavira Chairs with sash for 100 guests
- Top Table ivory swag
- Our resident Dj will start your evening from 7pm and take you through till 12am.
- Your evening guests will enjoy either a 5-option finger buffet or the hot baps buffet for 100 guests
- 2 nights accommodation in the Luxury Suite BB this includes the night prior to your wedding for you and 3 bridesmaids, tapas and bubbly.

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Additional Evening guests would be £15.00 per head*



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- Ceremony room with a fresh flower arrangement
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- 4 Course Wedding breakfast for 80 guests with 2 glasses of wine during the meal
- Tea and coffee with mints
- A glass of prosecco for the toast
- We will provide you a personalised table plan and menu cards
- Hire of the Royal mail post box
- Chavira Chairs with sash for 100 guests
- Top Table ivory swag
- Ceiling draping with fairy lights, star cloth back drop
- Our resident Dj will start your evening from 7pm and take you through till 1am.
- Your evening guests will enjoy either a 6-option finger buffet or the hot baps buffet for 120 guests
- 2 nights accommodation in the Luxury Suite BB this includes the night prior to your wedding for you and 3 bridesmaids, tapas and bubbly.
- Return stay for your 1st anniversary dinner, bed and breakfast in suite

*Additional day time guests would be £67.50 per head children under 12 will be £30.00
Additional Evening guests would be £15.00 per head*





It's Such a Perfect Day

In this Northern Insight special wedding feature we showcase some of the region's finest venues, bridalwear stockists and accessory suppliers.





Michelle Jones

Photograph: Victoria Sponge Photography

WHY WOULDN'T YOU HIRE A WEDDING PLANNER?

By Michelle Jones, Wedding Planner

A wedding day is one of the most significant days of our lives, it is also the first day of our married life.

It is one of the biggest financial outlays within our lifetime; the average wedding budget in 2018 was £30k, now that's a lot of sausage rolls! Wedding planning sounds fun and exciting but is a monumental emotive project management challenge to boot. We live in an era where we are considerably time poor and faced with high expectations, daily each element of our lives adds increasing pressure and stress; then we throw a wedding into the mix.

In our day to day activities without much thought we help ourselves by employing experts to carry out tasks to achieve the best possible outcome and save us valuable time, money, effort and many sleepless nights; from hiring a solicitor to a window cleaner. Some tasks have significant purpose, others have less importance however, we trust the skilled and knowledgeable expert to help us with these tasks, for example, if we wish to move house we use the services of an Estate Agent, Solicitor and Mortgage Advisor; to fix our cars we rely on a mechanic; when the kitchen tap won't stop dripping we call a plumber. There is a scenario for most areas of our lives even for menial tasks where we pass the responsibility to others for ease, peace of mind, time saving, budget management, security etc. etc.

A wedding; it costs thousands upon thousands of pounds, for one day, ONE DAY! We all forget it is such a brief moment in time whilst in the same breath is one of the most important commitments and combined celebration that we endeavor to make. One day; a house we get to keep forever or sell on, a car we have for a good few years even a holiday lasts longer but with a wedding we get one opportunity (hopefully the marriage

lasts much longer) to make the event the most incredible experience for ourselves and of course our expectant guests. This project is like no other; it is steeped in emotion. Most betrothed couples have no experience of event management or knowledge of the market (barring this in mind a considerable amount of event companies will not touch weddings, they even shudder at the thought). The market is saturated with choice, ideas and inspiration with no indication of the good, the bad or the ugly. Guidance, well there is plenty at hand from our immediate loving family to our oldest closest friends, but they want their say, they have their own opinions, their own ideas, their own desires and we soon find out everyone is a wedding planner, even your window cleaner.

So, what about this risky operation, for several months you are going to eat, sleep and live weddings either frazzled or in bliss but that is where you have a choice. We want to radiate love and happiness on our wedding day, don't we? We have already learnt hiring a skilled expert is hugely beneficial and understand the positive impact they make in our lives. A wedding planner designs, cultivates and manages your wedding, creating a day you didn't even realise you wanted or thought you could possibly achieve; they take your dreams and make them sparkle; they listen and look after your best interests, your time, your wellbeing, your needs, wants and desires ensuring the journey is this most outstanding adventure for you and your loved ones; they safeguard your finances providing you with the highest-quality suppliers and services; a wedding planner protects your wedding day, the first day of your married life by providing you with the most exquisite experience and incredible magical memories.

Northumberland & Tyne Valley

Matfen Hall

Step through the lobby and across to the Great Hall where a sweeping staircase will take you down to the large, warm hearth where you will exchange vows in the perfect setting for the most intimate part of your wedding day. Afterwards move onto the private Dutch Garden for a convivial reception and then drift into the new Terrace Room when the dinner bell rings for wedding dishes of quality and taste.

Address: Matfen,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE20 0RH
Tel: 01661 886500
www.matfenhall.com

Langley Castle

A venue which really does have it all. Fairytale setting, medieval grandeur, outstanding attention to detail, food of the highest order and service to match.

Address: Langley on Tyne, Hexham,
Northumberland, NE47 5LU
Tel: 01434 688888
www.langleycastle.co.uk

Slaley Hall

A wonderful Edwardian mansion full of charm and character which specialises in designing and delivering individual weddings with the utmost personal service. Key features include a personal wedding planner, two beautiful bridal suites and wedding fayres throughout the year

Address: Slaley Hall, Hexham, NE47 0BX
Tel: 01434 673350
www.slaleyhallhotel.com

Derwent Manor Hotel

Beautiful 20 acre grounds provide a great backdrop to your big day. The venue houses 5 unique banqueting suites all licensed for solemnisation with civil ceremonies more than welcome.

Address: Derwent Manor,
Allensford, DH8 9BB
Tel: 01207 592000
www.bestwestern.co.uk

Ellingham Hall

Ellingham is an impossibly beautiful venue, bursting with elegance and character. Boasting sumptuous rooms and exquisite grounds, it is a magical destination for weddings and celebrations. Offering exclusive use so that your event belongs only to you, the Hall is a perfect example of old world charm interwoven with modern day luxury.

Address: Chathill, NE67 5EY
Telephone: 01665 568118
www.ellingham-hall.co.uk

The Coquetvale Hotel

Combines grandeur and elegance with a fantastic location and a Civil Wedding License allows them to manage your day from beginning to end.

Silver, gold and platinum packages available.
Address: Station Road, Rothbury,
Northumberland, NE65 7QH
Tel: 01669 622900
www.coquetvale.co.uk

Macdonald Linden Hall Golf and Country Club

Acres of lush green countryside provide a stunning backdrop for your photographs at this perfect country house setting. The self contained Shropshire Suite, licensed for Civil Wedding ceremonies, comes complete with its own sun terrace and comfortably seats up to 250 guests.

Address: Longhorsley, Morpeth, NE65 8XF
Tel: 01670 500000
www.macdonaldhotels.co.uk

Eshott Hall

A handsomely proportioned Georgian mansion house with carefully tended gardens and parkland creating a picture perfect backdrop for your special day. Featured in The Telegraphs guide to the best UK wedding venues.

Address: Eshott, Morpeth, NE65 9EN
Tel: 01670 787454
www.eshotthall.co.uk

Horton Grange

A privately owned, intimate Grade II listed Country House Hotel set in the heart of Northumberland. Available for private, exclusive hire with a wide range of other packages also available.

Address: Berwick Hill Road,
Newcastle upon Tyne, NE13 6BU
Tel: 01661 860686
www.hortongrange.co.uk

St.Mary's Inn

A relaxed, informal Northumberland pub all about warmth and generosity. The venue prides itself on getting to know Brides and Grooms to be to help them design their perfect day.

Address: St.Mary's Lane, St.Mary's Park,
Morpeth, NE61 6BL
Tel: 01670 293293
www.st.marysinn.co.uk





A WEDDING THAT'S YOU

From small and intimate affairs to the grand and lavish, we're proud that The Holiday Inn Washington is a stunning, adaptable space that can cater for both. Just let our experienced wedding coordinators know what will make your perfect day and let them take care of the rest.

Packages start from £1,500.

- Wedding showcase Thursday 11th July 2019 between 5-7pm •
- Free Entry and a glass of fizz on arrival •



HOLIDAY INN WASHINGTON
Emerson Road, Washington,
Tyne and Wear, NE37 1LB
Tel: 0191 4189400

Email: events@hiwashingtonhotel.co.uk
www.hiwashingtonhotel.co.uk

 **Holiday Inn**
AN IHG® HOTEL



Newcastle & Gateshead



The Caledonian Hotel

Fantastic value venue in the heart of Jesmond with petite, elegant and grand packages all available.

Address: Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2AT
Tel: 0191 2817881

Jesmond Dene House

Set in an enviable location, almost in the country yet still in the city this independent hotel is a treat. Brides can enjoy the glamour and style of the newly refurbished Great Hall Reception Room and Bar Area.

Address: Jesmond Dene Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 2EY
Tel: 0191 2123000

www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk

The Mansion House

A distinctive Victorian Manor House, the official residence of the Lord Mayor of Newcastle. The venue can comfortably seat up to a maximum of 82 guests and up to 130 guests in the evening.

Address: Fernwood Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 1TJ
Tel: 0191 2810863

www.newcastle.gov.uk

Hilton Newcastle Gateshead

Situated in a glorious location overlooking the famous Tyne Bridge the Hotel is ideal for everything from a lavish celebration to a more intimate party for family and close friends.

Address: Bottle Bank, Gateshead
Tel: 0191 4909700

www.hilton.com/Hotels/Newcastle

Eslington Villa

A beautiful venue with a country house theme set in two acres of landscape gardens, awarded an AA Rosette for its standard of food and priding itself on friendly and professional service.

Address: 8 Station Road, Low Fell, Gateshead, NE9 6DR
Tel: 0191 4876017

www.eslingtonvilla.co.uk

The Vermont Hotel

Combining 1930s grandeur with contemporary elegance and luxury, this is a five star Wedding venue. The stunning Ballroom was once the County of Northumberland Council Chambers, while the Sky Lounge and Garden, with its 360 viewpoint, affords the most stunning views of the City.

Address: Castle Garth, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1RQ
Tel: 0191 2331010

www.vermont-hotel.com

The County Hotel

One of Newcastle's original hotels dating back to 1874 and located directly opposite the Central Station. This landmark venue prides itself on creating perfect wedding days.

Address: Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5DF
Tel: 0191 7316670

www.countyhotel.co.uk

The Assembly Rooms

Dating back to 1776 with stunning period features this venue is an impressive setting for your wedding. Rooms can accommodate from 2 to 550 people for day or evening weddings.

Address: Fenkle Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5XU
Tel: 0191 2328695

www.assemblyrooms.co.uk

The Royal Station Hotel

A magnificent wedding venue with sweeping staircases and ornate chandeliers which are picture perfect, with the Collingwood and Victoria suites offering the same period glamour to ensure a stunning backdrop to your special day.

Address: Neville Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 5DH
Tel: 0191 2320781

www.thecairncollection.co.uk





Situated 'on' Littlehaven beach you can saunter barefoot from your function suite directly onto the sand.

Whether you desire a wedding of lavish opulence and grandeur, an extravagant party with a marquee and many guests or an intimate gathering of close family and friends we provide the ideal function suite to compliment your day!

Marrying at The Little Haven Hotel

You may marry in the hotel providing one venue for your entire day, all our function suites are licenced.

Marquees

The most impressive way to invite the seaside to your wedding. Erected to enhance our Riverside Suite. Utterly fabulous and

available with midnight starry ceiling and or chandeliers.

Boardwalk Conservatory

With breath taking panoramic view – There's no view quite like this one!
Seating for up to 120 guests for reception

Harbour Suite

Situated on our 1st floor boasting private bar and triple aspect views of both the sea and river. Seating up to 110 guests for reception

Riverside Suite

With two huge feature mirrors to reflect the most tranquil and magnificent view of the sea

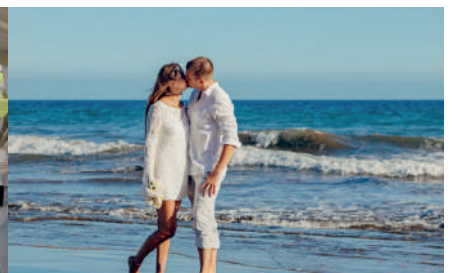
Step from the suite onto a private terrace and then directly onto the sand
Seating up to 60 guests for reception

South Shields Suite

Most bijoux of our Suites popular for wedding ceremonies. Ideal for an intimate affair.
Seating up to 40 guests for reception

Wedding Breakfasts are silver served and our attentive team will ensure the happy couple and all guests are captivated by The Little Haven experience.

This stylish and purpose built hotel has 62 bedrooms and 3 impressive Penthouse Suites.



Country Durham & Teeside



Redworth Hall Hotel

Encompassed within 26 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds and woodlands, the hotel boasts a blissful tranquillity whilst being easily accessible from the A1. With the atmospheric Great Hall and modern Prince Bishop Suite to choose from the venue is also licensed to conduct weddings and civil partnership ceremonies. Address: Surtees Road, Newton Aycliffe, DL5 6NL
Tel: 01388 770600

www.thecairncollection.co.uk

Seaham Hall Hotel

Situated amidst 37 acres of beautiful landscaped gardens in a striking cliff top location this immaculately restored Georgian country house has provided an enchanting backdrop for some fine weddings and ceremonies including the marriage of the great romantic poet, Lord Byron.

Address: Lord Byron's Walk, Seaham, County Durham, SR7 7AG
Tel: 0191 5161400

www.seaham-hall.co.uk



Rockliffe Hall

Boasting beautiful bedrooms, secluded grounds, award winning food, a world class spa, championship 18 hole golf course and sublime service Rockliffe Hall is the only AA rated 5 red star resort in the North and a great choice for couples aspiring to have the ultimate 5 star wedding.

Address: Hurworth-on-Tees, Darlington, DL2 2DU
Tel: 01325 729999

www.rockliffehall.com

Ramside Hall

One of the most sought after wedding venues in County Durham with a huge range of function suites available to cater for ceremonies and receptions of all sizes. Address: Carrville, Durham, DH1 1TD

Tel: 0191 3865282

www.ramsidehallhotel.co.uk



Hardwick Hall

Surrounded by the stunning Hardwick Country Park the hotel is steeped in charm and character. It has four magnificent wedding suites available all offering great variety and a license to accommodate civil ceremonies at the venue. Address: Sedgfield, TS21 2EH

Tel: 01740 620253

www.hardwickhallhotel.co.uk

Wynyard Hall

A truly special venue boasting a beautiful 12th century Chapel, magnificent State rooms and luxury accommodation. Surrounded by breathtaking views of private parkland it provides a picture perfect backdrop for photographs.

Address: Wynyard Hall, Tees Valley, TS22 5NF

Tel: 01740 644811

www.wynyardhall.co.uk

The Holiday Inn Washington

An appealing venue in which to mark the ceremony and ensuing celebrations. Conveniently located on the outskirts of the town, the attractive grounds make for a pleasant backdrop for your photographs. Convenient road links make the hotel easy to find and there is plentiful free parking for guests and preferential bedroom rates are available for those travelling from further afield.

Address: Emerson Road, Washington, NE37 1LB

Telephone: 0871 9429084

www.holidayinn.com/HolidayInn/Washington



Is Your Smile Ready For The Big Day?

Wedding checklist

- ✓ Dress
- ✓ Cake
- ✓ Venue
- ✓ Photographer
- ✗ Perfect smile



THE COSMETIC
DENTAL CLINIC

www.thecosmeticdentalclinic.com

Durham: 0191 375 0191

Newcastle: 0191 260 3688

7 Old Elvet, Durham, DH1 3HL

2 Old Eldon Square, Newcastle, NE1 7JG

Bridalwear



The Wedding Dress Company

Situated in the centre of the historical village of Corbridge, a twenty minute drive from Newcastle upon Tyne and around 40 minutes from Carlisle.

A beautiful and stylish wedding dress boutique in soft creams and greys with French style furniture and deep luxurious carpet for you to sink your feet into, it is a little piece of bridal heaven.

Address: 1 Tynedale Mews, Market Place, Corbridge, Northumberland, NE45 5NH

Tel : 01434 634444

www.theweddingdresscompany.co.uk

Happily Ever After

A relaxed & friendly approach ensures all "brides to be" receive first class treatment tailored to suit their individual requirements. Bridal gowns for all budgets starting from as little as £299, up to £2500, are available to try on in store with sizes ranging from 8 - 24 (available to order from 4 - 34) offering something for everyone.

Address: 101 Parkgate, Darlington, DL1 1RZ

Tel: 01325 952820

www.happilyeverafter-bridal.co.uk

Miasposa Bridal

A luxurious bridal boutique in Newcastle offering brides of the North East the very best bridal designer gowns, bridesmaid dresses and accessories.

Address: 18 Blandford Square, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 4HZ

Telephone: 0191 2211688

www.weddingdressesnewcastle.co.uk

Menswear



Woven

A company who pride themselves on suit hire services from weddings to proms. They have teamed up with Ultimate Formal hire to offer a contemporary tailoring service. All hires include a one hour consultation.

Address: Elvet Bridge, Durham, DH1 3AA

Telephone: 0191 3741002

www.wovendurham.co.uk

Alan Jackman

Offering full wedding and formal hire services for men with over 20 years experience and great personal service. An outstanding range of garments are available including tallcoats, frock coats and morning and dinner suits.

Address: 39-41 Coutts Road, Walkergate, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 4RB

Telephone: 0191 2659676

www.alanjackman.co.uk

Jewellers



Dytham Jewellers

Award winning jewellers offering traditional craftsmanship and outstanding workmanship. Designing and handmaking wedding rings a speciality.

Address: 15 Front Street, Whitley Bay, NE25 8AQ
Telephone: 0191 2531043

www.dythamjewellery.co.uk

Whickham Jewellers

Established in 2001 by Stephen Smith who has over 30 years of experience as a jeweller and goldsmith. They specialise in bespoke engagement and wedding rings and virtually all aspects of the jewellery trade.

Address: Bishops Court, Rectory Lane, Whickham, NE16 4PA

Telephone: 0191 4200144

www.whickhamjewellers.co.uk

Williamson Brown

Widely regarded as one of the best bespoke jewellers in the North East, Williamson Brown features an exclusive and inspired range of quality fine jewellery including a wide range of leading British and European designers.

Address: 20a Clayton Road, Jesmond, NE2 4RP
Telephone: 0191 2818273

www.williamsonbrown.com



ST MARY'S LANE, ST. MARY'S PARK,
MORPETH, NORTHUMBERLAND, NE61 6BL

ST. MARY'S
INN

01670293293
HELLO@STMARYSINN.CO.UK

The Best of the Rest



NK Ceromnies

Headed up by Nancy Kniveton and providing unique and bespoke wedding and naming celebrations for couples in the North East.

Address : 29 Fern Avenue, North Shields, NE29 0RJ

www.nkceromnies.co.uk

Janet Bennett Harpist

A professional harpist and singer whose striking gold harp and beautiful voice can give an unusual and special touch of class to your special day. Repertoire can be tailored to suit all styles with advice given for ceremonies on suitable entrance music.

www.janetbennett.co.uk

Prosecco Flow

An exciting mobile bar available to hire for your special day and offering various types of Prosecco, Fizz from the pump, draft Italian beer, bottled beers and wine to suit all tastes. Any size event can be catered for from intimate garden parties to larger celebrations.

www.proseccoflow.com

Rickerby Executive Car Services

A well established and renowned chauffeuring service. Ideally suited to all style of weddings from Registrar Weddings, simple Wedding Transfers and Church Wedding Ceremonies.

www.rickerbychauffeurcars.com

Ruby Tuesday Events

Creative wedding and event styling with a range of services offered including wedding flowers, venue dressing, planning and on the day coordination.

www.rubytuesdayevents.co.uk

Katherines Florists

With a wealth of experience Katherines can design your wedding flowers for your big day and assist with which flowers are in season and advise on colour co-ordination.

www.katherinesflorists.co.uk

AMV Live Music

An award winning live music agency based in Newcastle offering a large selection of bands, musicians and artists for hire.

www.amvlivemusic.com

Travel Bureau

Established in Gosforth in 1961 Travel Bureau is an independently owned travel specialist in multi centre tailor made luxury holidays, cruises and honeymoons. Their expert Travel Concierges help create a holiday tailored to your exact wishes from start to finish.

www.travelb.co.uk



Photography & Video



Scarlett Butterfly Media

Offering a full range of high quality professional videography and photography services including stunning, cinematic wedding films to create the perfect memory for your special day. Telephone: 0191 2687330

www.scarlettbutterflymedia.co.uk

Joss Guest Photography

A female wedding photographer based in Morpeth having recently relocated to the region. Joss aims to create light, romantic and fun memories of your day and capture the big moments.

www.jossguestphotography.co.uk



ENCHANTED WEDDINGS IN THE SECRET GARDEN



JESMOND DENE HOUSE

NEWCASTLE - UPON - TYNE

Jesmond Dene House Jesmond Dene Road Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 2EY 0191 212 3000 www.jesmonddenehouse.co.uk

WEDDINGS AND SO MUCH MORE AT LANGLEY CASTLE

Northern Insight meets Margaret Livingstone Evans, Executive General Manager, Langley Castle Hotel.

What size weddings can Langley Castle cater for?

Langley Castle can cater for 100 guests for a wedding breakfast and 160 for evening wedding event. Exclusive use of castle evening event enables 180 guests to enjoy our beautiful 14th century castle.

Tell us about your range of facilities.

We are a traditional castle built in 1350.

9 bedrooms located in the castle itself many with their own window alcove seats set into seven foot thick walls.

Our Castle view bedrooms and suites are located a short distance from the main castle with a beautiful vista of the castle as a back drop.

Our guests enjoy a daily 'Battlement tour' which includes a visit to the rooftop of the castle whilst enjoying a 45 minute entertaining history of the castle itself.

Spa bath, sunken baths, a feature walk in shower built into the castle walls itself and a steam room are just some of the extra facilities found in some of our Castle bedrooms.

Tell us about your weddings team.

Our wedding team here at the Castle are one of the strongest teams I have worked with. Between we have had the pleasure of looking after 1000's of weddings and events ensuring that we can always offer professional advice when needed.

What should you expect from a Castle wedding?

As you approach and when you enter Langley Castle you are immediately transported into our majestic and magical Castle world ensuring the 'Wow' factor time and time again. When you choose one of our Exclusive Use packages you are indeed King and Queen of your own Castle for the day.

A Castle wedding ensures both the bridal party and the guests alike have a 'Once in a Lifetime' experience, never to be forgotten.

What wedding packages do you offer?

Langley Castle offers Wedding Packages for 2 for those who wish to create a beautiful memory just for themselves.



We offer our Magical Stuart Suite for Wedding Breakfasts and Evening events. You can even have the Castle for your very own 'Special Day' when you take one of our Exclusive use packages.

Can you get married at Langley Castle?

We offer a variety of rooms and places to host your civil ceremony. We have our Josephine Room, Our Stuart Suite, Drawing Room (for intimate ceremonies) as well as our beautiful outside area with the Castle as the backdrop for your ceremony.

What has been your most unusual weddings request?

We hosted a 'Jousting Event' horses et al working alongside Our Game of Thrones themed weddings which are spectacular. Some of our Bride and Grooms choose to have the feel of 'Game of Thrones' just by choosing the Castle for their wedding.

What has been the Castle's most memorable moment?

Langley Castle was the creator of 'Northumberland Day' which promotes everything great about the county.

What makes Langley Castle unique?

Northumberland boasts many beautiful castles but Langley is the only Castle Hotel in Northumberland where you can enjoy an overnight stay in a Castle room as well as dinner in our sumptuous 'Josephine' 2 rosette restaurant.



What are you currently working on?

We are currently working with 'Gary Fildes' the creator of 'Kielder Observatory' on our 'Gastronomy Evening' combining food and astronomy to feed the interest of enthusiastic astronomers.

We are currently offering 10% off weddings which take place before the 31st March 2020. This offer applies to new bookings only. Telephone us on 01434 688888 for your champagne show round. www.langleycastle.co.uk

Langley Castle Wedding Open Weekend

(NORTHUMBERLAND)

Saturday 18th & Sunday 19th May

Doors open at 12.00pm until 3.00pm



If you are looking for your dream wedding venue, come and talk with a member of the Langley Castle team. We will be happy to discuss your requirements and let you explore the public rooms and private bedrooms.

Any wedding bookings, reserved on the day and with the deposit paid within 7 days, will receive a 10% discount on their final wedding account for new bookings only when quoting N12019

T: 01434 688888 **E:** weddings@langleycastle.com

HIDDEN GEM ON YOUR DOORSTEP!



Eslington Villa still remains a bit of a hidden gem for couples looking for a special place to hold their wedding in the North East.

The hotel is privately owned and ran by Nicky Tucker and offers a unique blend of friendly and personal attention. Set in two acres of beautiful gardens in a quiet leafy district of Low Fell, the hotel retains many original features from its Victorian past, combined with tasteful and sympathetic contemporary additions.

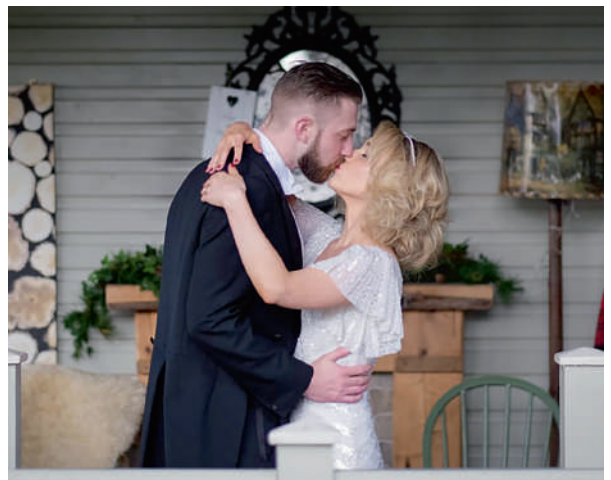
No two bedrooms are the same, they have eighteen individually decorated rooms all designed with your comfort and wellbeing in mind. As each room is different there is something to suit everyone and all tastes, from the old fashioned charm and luxury of a four poster bed to stylish and more modern décor, our rooms have it all.

The award-winning restaurant is at the very heart of Eslington Villa. They have a real passion for producing outstanding food with an emphasis on the highest quality local and seasonal produce. They believe in letting the food speak for itself taking a simple, classic approach to cooking - along with a few innovative and modern touches.

If you're looking for a relaxed and more informal venue for your wedding reception, Eslington Villa is the perfect place for you to celebrate your happy day. We now have a licence to hold civil ceremonies so you can both marry and celebrate your wedding here.

From a small intimate evening reception, to a full day at the hotel including wedding breakfast, evening buffet, accommodation for guests and even a marquee in the garden, we will help you to plan the event that is right for you. The private gardens offer a fantastic backdrop for your photographs and the hotel can offer exclusive use for your special day.

Visit www.eslingtonvilla.co.uk to download a wedding pack.
Eslington Villa 8 Station Road Low Fell Gateshead NE9 6DR.
0191 487 6017 www.eslingtonvilla.co.uk





JESMOND DENE HOUSE

NEWCASTLE – UPON – TYNE



THE SECRET GARDEN AT JESMOND DENE HOUSE

Now officially open for a season of summer celebrations...

Hosting garden parties for both business and pleasure, The Secret Garden is an oasis in the middle of the city. Sip on a cold drink from the private outdoor bar and enjoy a Jesmond Dene House style BBQ feast, whilst taking in the tranquil surroundings of the Dene.

Perfect for Weddings, Anniversaries, Christenings, Birthdays, Corporate Events and BBQ's - book your summer soirée now!



Join
in the
Party

SUMMER GIN GARDEN PARTY WITH HEPPLER GIN

Join us in the Secret Garden on 9th June for a Summer Garden Party hosted by Hepple Gin and Marlish Water. Sip on stylish G&T's and Gin Cocktails with paired Canapés whilst learning more about the spirit of Gin from the distillery owner.

Cost: £26pp

Includes two drinks and paired canapés

Live music throughout!

2-5.30pm



ANT'S SATURDAY NIGHT TAKEAWAY

Customers queuing for their fish and chips at an award-winning fish and chip restaurant were delighted to meet one of the region's best loved TV celebrities.

The Harbour View Fish and Chip Restaurant in Seaton Sluice received a visit from Ant Mcpartlin and his family for their Saturday night takeaway.

The restaurant, voted the fourth best in the UK by Trip Advisor regularly has queues of people waiting for their food but the added bonus of seeing Ant pleased both the takeaway queue and those sitting enjoying their meals inside the packed restaurant.

Manager Waseem Mir was pleased that the TV star had chosen Harbour View for his tea.

"He was lovely and took the time to chat to our customers while he was waiting for his cod and chips. We're delighted that he decided to visit us with his family."



DURHAM CRICKET LAUNCH DIGITAL PARTNERSHIP WITH SAGE WEALTH MANAGEMENT

Durham Cricket is delighted to announce Sage Wealth Management as a partner for the 2019 season.

The financial planning specialists, who have three north-based offices at Chester-le-Street, Alnwick and Hexham, have signed a one-year-deal with the club.

Durham will work closely with SWM on a range of digital initiatives, sponsoring the club's brand-new monthly documentary and podcast series, Durham's weekly newsletter and our Player of the Month competition.

Sage Wealth Management's branding will also feature around the Emirates Riverside bowl with their logo displayed prominently on the club's iconic old scoreboard.

Durham Cricket, Sales Director, Tom Seymour, said: "We're delighted to have partnered with SWM and are extremely excited to see the relationship develop as we continue to work together on a range of digital projects during 2019.

"We're working hard to produce excellent content for our supporters and the sponsorship has ensured that we continue to be one of the leading cricket digital brands."



EXACT REPLICA FLIGHT SIMULATOR PROVES A HIT

An exact replica 1:1 scale simulator of the Boeing 737-800 NG is now available to book in Newcastle and the world class machine has received a great reception from amateurs and professionals since its opening in Newburn in February this year.

Importantly, all of the components within the simulator are made to the exact scale and functionality of the real aircraft bringing the highest level immersion simulator available on the fixed-based market, to the North East.

The complete 220 degree field of view wrap around screen gives the highest level of realism available. The company behind the project - The 737 Experience - is led by aviation enthusiast Anth Fitches who has been delighted by its popularity in the early stages of the business.

He enthused, "We wanted to bring an affordable but highly realistic experience to the region for anyone interested in experiencing sitting in the cockpit and through loads of hard work we've managed to achieve it."

NEWCASTLE AIRPORT LAUNCHES NEW INBOUND TOURISM WEBSITE

Newcastle International has launched a new inbound tourism website for the North East – which aims to increase the number of visitors to the region.

As part of an innovative strategy, which has been a year in the making, the website will target thousands of extra tourists from across Europe and beyond - with the aim of boosting the regional economy.

The ground-breaking project will showcase all of the North East's best destinations and attractions through the newly-developed platform and a range of high-quality digital marketing activities.

The website features a detailed page for each area of the region, and follows the themes of 'uncover', 'explore' and 'experience'. It is packed with high-quality videos, written content and photographs and will be translated into a number of different languages.

Future developments under consideration are bookable product for many of the local tourism attractions, as well as interactive mapping of the region.



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SET SAIL FOR THE SHIP INN, WYLAM

We've arrived at that point in the year where my wife Lisa and I begin to put a little thought into our weekend activities. With the kids off doing their own thing, the football season drawing to a close and my golf swing still very much a "work in progress" – we start to ponder how best to make the most of the extra time and sunshine.

One pearl of an idea was to hop on a train somewhere and stop off for a spot of lunch somewhere we'd never tried before. I'm so glad we did.

Wylam is a charming little village in Northumberland, etched on the map as the birthplace of railway pioneer George Stephenson and in more recent years, by the popular brewery which bears its name.

Only 10 miles west of Newcastle, the village is easily reachable by train although you might not be able to catch the steam locomotive of yesteryear which is such an emblem of the community.

After stopping off at a couple of cracking local hostelrys, we headed for the Ship Inn – a proper British pub serving fresh food hearty and wholesome.

The pub's interior is cosy and characterful with an array of taps showing a selection of the good stuff on keg and cask. For a pub with such great beer choice we were surprised to also find an extensive wine list. Glorious sunshine outside heralded the start of "Rose drinking season" so we kicked off with a lovely Pinot Grigio blush which combined strawberry & cream flavours with delicate sweetness and crisp acidity.

There was much to enthuse over on the foodie front too. Whilst snacking on a couple of homemade scotch eggs, we looked over a menu brimming with choice.

All dishes at the Ship Inn are served as small plates which can be shared around the table. Dishes are split up into three different categories – meat, fish, vegetable – with three recommended per person

although you're free to order as many as you like for a full tapas-style feast.

Dishes champion the freshest local ingredients and are all cooked to order, served as and when they are ready.

Kicking off with the meat category, Lisa chose the Northumbrian burger with smoked bacon, mordon blue cheese and caramelised onion whilst I opted for mutton faggots with spring greens and rosemary gravy.

Joining this, came the smoked cod's roe with grilled flat bread as well as the beer cured salmon – a real standout – with seaweed pickled cucumbers and salad cream.

Completing the pretty picture was a veggie-friendly chickpea, sweet potato & spinach curry and some "proper" homemade triple-cooked chips with garlic mayo.

This was an inventive menu, with many quirky little dishes and we both agreed that the tapas-led concept was a welcome departure from typical pub grub.

Puddings looked equally divine and whilst we tried to exercise some restraint, we couldn't leave without sampling the rhubarb & blood orange pavlova with clotted cream, not to mention an epic cheeseboard featuring Doddington's Admiral Collingwood.

The Ship Inn has carved out a fine local reputation yet from this visit is deserving of wider acclaim. We were so impressed, we've even earmarked a date for our next visit.

Weekend's never looked so good!

For more information, visit www.theshipinnwylam.co.uk



Paul and Kelly Johnson



THE PERFECT WAY TO START THE DAY

By Michael Grahamslaw

Horton Grange Country House Hotel continue their commitment to being a destination venue with a sterling breakfast menu also available to non-residents.

The handsome Horton Grange Country House Hotel is well positioned for commuters with easy transport links to the A1 and Newcastle and is also perfect for those who prefer meeting away from the hustle & bustle of the city centre. The hotel stands in close proximity to Newcastle Airport which also makes it a great option for meeting those travelling from out of town.

With ample free parking on site, the hotel is easily accessible so I decided to meet my son Jack for a spot of deadline day breakfast. Now talk about starting the day off right.

After a warm reception, we were shown to a window table with pleasant views across the hotel's sun-dappled lawns. Breakfast is served in the tastefully-appointed breakfast room with a

selection of continental goodies on the buffet.

This includes a choice of fruit juices – five to be precise, orange, grapefruit, cranberry, apple and pineapple – not to mention a range of cereals. Guests are also given the choice of freshly-baked mini Danish pastries and preserves including strawberry jam, marmalade and honey.

We also tucked into a basket of fresh toast- white or wholemeal – and a piping hot pot of tea and coffee respectively.

Horton Grange Country House Hotel has swerved a cooked buffet in favour of a selection of cooked-to-order dishes which ensures everything is freshly prepared. Its menu offers plenty of choice and also offers a vegetarian option with quorn sausages.

The full "Horton Grange Breakfast" looked

inviting as did the Eggs Benedict whilst those with a sweet tooth can enjoy pancakes or toasted teacakes with a choice of toppings.

Jack however chose the Eggs Royale – smoked salmon and poached egg atop a toasted muffin with gloopy Hollandaise sauce.

The new health-conscious yours truly opted for a plate of smoked salmon, smartly presented with lemon wedge and chives and showered with pepper. Delicious!

Throughout our meal, the service was slick and attentive meaning we were free to leave and resume our day without delay.

For those looking for a quality breakfast experience, look no further than Horton Grange Country House Hotel.

For more information, visit www.hortongrange.co.uk



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A WORLD OF FLAVOUR

By Michael Grahamslaw

Hot on the heels of last month's "Best of Jesmond" feature, we re-visited one of the area's standout restaurants.

Parichat at Sohe offers up a tantalising mix of Asian fusion cooking, a light and healthy selection which was a welcome sight ahead of some pre- Easter weekend excess.

At the helm is award-winning North East chef, Parichat Somsri-Kirby who has devised a menu celebrating the tastes and textures from Japan, Thailand, Korea and beyond – all from their base on leafy Osborne Road.

Inside, the restaurant's décor is exotic and impressive. A large elliptical bar is at its centrepiece, stocked abundantly with wines and spirits. Dark and moody, the restaurant's spotlighting creates a stylish, club-like atmosphere and also boasts the cocktail menu to match.

Try the Noh Aku Aku – an Asian twist on the tiki classic with tropical fruit and rich demerara rum or the 'Destination Unknown' – a clean, herbaceous long drink, perfect for gin lovers. Either way, all are perfect for sipping on over a bowl of Prawn Crackers served with a tangy Tamarind dip.

Diners are given the choice between the ever-vibrant à la carte menu with its mix of noodles, stir fry's and curries or a new tapas selection, perfect for sharing with friends.

To kick off, I chose the Spicy Beef and Mint Salad,

featuring a typically Asian "shredded" Salad singing with flavour and freshness. My wife Lisa chose the Thai Fish Cakes, a real favourite of hers, done justice here and served with a cucumber and peanut relish.

The real highlight however proved to be my son Jack's steamed mussels, served in a deep red curry sauce with a hint of lemongrass and basil.

To complement, our waiter cracked open a light & easy Pinot Noir – allowed time to breathe in a very ornate decanter – which set the flavours off perfectly.

Next up would be a true taste of Pan-Asian cuisine. Lisa chose the Pan-Fried Fillet of Salmon with broccoli florets in a teriyaki sauce. Jack meanwhile chose the classic beef in a black bean sauce – rich and inky with a telling depth of flavour.

I opted for the traditional Pad Thai – a prevailing dish of the country, consisting of diced chicken, stir fried with noodles, egg, tamarind and tofu.

All dishes were super tasty and smartly presented. They were also nicely filling – yet not overpowering as in some cuisines.

If you're looking for the modern Pan-Asian experience, look no further than Parichat at Sohe – Jesmond's haven of exotic flavours.

CELEBRATE YOUR GRADUATION AT PEACE AND LOAF

All those years of studying have come down to this one day; Graduation!

You don a cap and gown, rally up your family and spend one of the most special days of your life so far, celebrating all that you've achieved from studying. The endless all-nighters in the library relying on caffeine and energy drinks suddenly seem worth it.

But, after the hustle and bustle of the ceremony, have you booked a special restaurant to dine and drink in afterwards? Fear not, we've got the perfect dining space to top off a perfect day.

At Peace and Loaf, Jesmond, we know just how special this day is to you and your family, which is why our carefully-crafted food and specially selected cuts of meat and fish create the ultimate dining experience for you all.

Our menus highlight the importance of using only the freshest, locally sourced produce; we offer exciting, seasonal menus that incorporate our signature dishes. Heavily inspired by traditional British cuisine with Dave's own inventive flair, the meticulously crafted dishes will excite and intrigue even the most discerning of palates.

Get things started with raw steak pie, mushroom, caper and black garlic before being served a delectable Amuse Bouche. Duck, broccoli, orange, Jamaican gingerbread and liver is sure to fire up your taste-buds and get you excited for your third and final course, but not before another surprise mini-course. To sweeten-the-deal, try our Barkham Blue, Russian honey cake with walnut; another dish to leave you talking about this meal for years to come. Dining here at Peace and Loaf is truly special and the only place you need to book for your graduation.



To celebrate in style, be sure to use your loaf and reserve your table as soon as possible, to avoid disappointment, at www.peaceandloaf.co.uk or by calling 0191 281 5 222.

THE QUAYSIDE EXCHANGE, WHATEVER THE EVENT

Did you know that May through to October is officially classed as "Wedding Season"? That's right, the bells will chime, bouquets will be thrown, and the Quayside Exchange will be filled to the brim with loved up couples and proud as punch families. We can't wait.

But, don't have us mistaken, The Quayside Exchange aren't just renowned for weddings, they're also a proud host to many a christening, prom, graduation, wake and conference. Whatever the event, The Quayside Exchange has a room or a celebration space to suit you, regardless of what you're celebrating.

They understand that, whilst weddings are known to be the most important day in your life, we have many other moments which should be celebrated too. For example, the look on your child's face as they are lifted from the water on their christening day, the smiles on the faces of teenagers dressed up in their best dresses and suits for prom, and even the reunion of families to celebrate

a milestone. Each celebration is individually tailored to your needs, so however you want to celebrate, and whatever you want to celebrate, The Quayside Exchange can make it an event to remember.

With a range of private rooms of all sizes, bespoke packages designed just for you, and a whole host of extra touches to make any event you're celebrating the best it can be, The Quayside Exchange is the perfect place for your next celebration, be it an anniversary, wedding, birthday party or otherwise!

If that wasn't appealing enough, this season we're proud to introduce a brand-new range of props and accessories, which provide a pretty, picture-perfect backdrop for your big event this spring/summer. They're guaranteed to make your event stand out... as well as providing lots of selfie opportunities for your guests, of course.



For a free tour or consultation, get in touch with The Quayside Exchange on 0191 514 4574, or visit their website: www.quaysideexchange.co.uk

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A WINNING BUSINESS LUNCH

By Michael Grahamslaw

Few venues are as impressive as Wynyard Hall. Sir John Hall's stately pile is a testament to Victorian grandeur – lovingly transformed into one of the region's most impressive country hotel & spas.

Initially designed for the Marquess of Londonderry and officially opening in 1846, the hall incorporates French & Italian marble, Spanish mahogany, stone from the family quarry and exquisite stained glass windows.

Inside, the hotel is characterised by walls bathed in regal gold, high ceilings, grand pianos and ornate corning.

Even the Northern Insight van spluttering into view couldn't lower the tone as my son Jack and I pitched up for a business lunch fit for two kings.

The hotel's "Wellington" restaurant has been doing brisk business of late with its Modern British offering and emphasis on ingredients fresh and seasonal.

Of an evening, a sumptuous a la carte offering showcases real gastronomic prowess whilst through the day, the menu is lighter and a little more relaxed with a focus primarily on seafood and poultry dishes befitting of the springtime.

Arriving early, we were received warmly by the restaurant's front-of-house manager and invited to sample a quick sharpener in the Wellington's

adjacent lounge. With van in tow, I swerved the booze in favour of a mineral water (misprint surely?!) whilst Jack enjoyed a light & easy Pinot Noir – perfectly suited to the weather outside with a feint bite of cold in the air.

We sat down in a lovely window table with views over the hotel's extensive grounds. Despite the majesty of the venue, the dining area doesn't feel stuffy, with a laid-back modern playlist creating a leisurely atmosphere.

I kicked off with the smoked mackerel paired with celery, kohlrabi and a horseradish emulsion. Kohlrabi is a vegetable I was previously unfamiliar with, which I'm told is a part of the cabbage family. Needless to say, it was fresh & super tasty which is unsurprising as Wynyard pride themselves on a true "plot-to-plate" experience with many ingredients actually grown on the estate. Now that is impressive.

Jack chose the roast lamb leg, removed from the bone and paired with Wye Valley asparagus, garden pies and Sinodun Hill – a delicate yet zesty goats cheese. Fresh mint, garden radish and cucumber

ribbons fused to create a starter of much colour and interest.

Following up, Jack chose the guinea fowl – a nice gamey poultry – which was cooked to perfection. This sat on a bed of pearl spelt and spring vegetables in a delicious tarragon sauce.

Brill – a white flaky fish of the turbot family - is not often found on the menu but is a real favourite of mine. Bread-crumbed delicately, this was perched on a pool of shellfish broth enlivened by dill and red seaweed.

With only three dishes to choose from, the hotel's lunchtime menu is concise to say the least, yet this is in the diners' favour as all are served with real attention to detail.

A salted caramel and dark chocolate tart rounded off what had been an impeccable meal before the Northern Insight boys lurched back up the A19, bellies filled and in high spirits.

Clearly, with some real culinary pedigree at the helm, Wynyard continues to serve up food befitting of its glorious surroundings. Now is there a higher compliment than that?

For more information on the Wellington restaurant, visit www.wynyardhall.co.uk/dining

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TALENTED CHEFS FROM RAMSIDE HALL AND HILTON NEWCASTLE GATESHEAD TRIUMPH IN THE GREAT NORTH MENU CHALLENGE



Great North Menu winners and judges (L to R) Michael Knox, sous chef and judge, winners Chris Donaldson, Hilton Newcastle Gateshead and Michael Parkinson, Ramside Hall with judges Terry Laybourne and Roger Crosby

Photography credit: Olivia Cowan, Newcastle College photography student.

Two talented chefs from hotels in Newcastle and County Durham have been crowned the winners of the Great North Menu Challenge 2019.

The competition, now in its seventh year, aims to find the region's best up and coming chefs and is organised by the North East Hotels Association in partnership the Chefs' Academy at Newcastle College.

Chris Donaldson, 33, from Hilton Newcastle Gateshead and Michael Parkinson, 23, representing Ramside Hall in County Durham, competed against rising culinary stars from eight other hotels in the region to be crowned joint winners of this year's competition.

Their victorious dishes will be served to more than 400 industry leaders and high-profile guests at the annual North East Hotels Association Excellence Awards in May.

Mr Donaldson, a chef de partie with more than 19 years' experience, wowed the judges to win both the main course and dessert categories. For the main, he served up a thyme-infused chicken dish accompanied by sweetcorn, textures of carrot, celeriac, parsnip and a chicken jus. This was followed by a white chocolate panna cotta with zesty raspberries, lemon shortbread and a raspberry profiterole.

Mr Parkinson, also a chef de partie, has been working in kitchens since the age of 14. He captivated the judges with a salt baked heritage beetroot and cerney goat curd starter with candied

walnuts, watercress and truffle honey.

The judging panel was led by celebrated North East chef and restaurateur Terry Laybourne, alongside competition sponsor Roger Crosby, general manager at specialist catering equipment supplier Crosby's in Newcastle and Mal Farmer, programme leader for hospitality at Newcastle College Chefs' Academy.

Terry Laybourne, head judge, said: "We saw lots of creativity, originality and personalisation throughout the competition. It was also good to see several entrants paid close attention to the brief, which isn't easy. Each dish has to look good, taste fantastic and take into consideration the fact they will be served to hundreds of guests in a banqueting format, therefore practicality in the design and execution was essential."

Both winners were presented with a £50 gift voucher to spend on professional kitchen equipment at Crosbys. Chefs representing Malmaison, Matfen Hall, Rockcliffe Hall, Houghton Grange and Hardwick Hall also competed in the final.

The annual Great North Menu Challenge is organised by the North East Hotels Association, which is the membership body representing hoteliers across the region.

Tommy Mark, general manager at the Lord Crewe Arms in Blanchland and coordinator of this year's Challenge on behalf of the North East Hotels Association, added: "The Great North Menu competition is a great way to showcase the culinary talent we have in the region. It was an exciting and tough contest and I'd like to congratulate everyone who took part, especially our winners, who now represent some of the best chef talent working in the North East today."

The North East Hotels Association was established in 1992 to represent and promote the region's hotel and hospitality industry around the UK. It is now believed to be the biggest of its kind in England, representing some of the region's best-known hotels including internationally and nationally recognised chains and leading independent hotels.

The Association launched the Excellence Awards in 2011 to recognise and celebrate the brightest and best hospitality service providers in the North East of England. The awards are now an annual highlight for hotels across the region.

The award categories include: Warmest Welcome, Support Services, Service Excellence, Cleanliness Excellence, Health and Wellness Excellence, Sales Excellence, Community Award, Rising Star, Inspirational Leader and Best Newcomer.

To find out more about the North East Hotels Association go to www.nehotels.co.uk



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KING OF THE CASTLE

By Michael Grahamslaw

Lying five miles from Darlington, Walworth Castle Hotel is perfectly placed to explore all the North East and North Yorkshire have to offer.

The grade I listed building dates all the way back to 1189 and today combines 12th century charm with modern day convenience.

The castle was initially built as a manor house for local gentry, the Hansard family, and since then has witnessed many different metamorphoses; most notably as a prisoner-of-war camp during World War Two and a girls boarding school in the 1950's.

In the eighties, the Castle was lovingly transformed into a stately country house hotel and has since carved out a stellar reputation with visitors from far and wide.

Today, the hotel offers luxury accommodation alongside high-quality dining and meeting & events facilities. My wife Lisa and I pitched up one weekend to review the experience.

The site retains many of its period features. The building's impressive, two-turreted façade stands triumphantly in your eye-line whilst a gravelled courtyard provides a further nod to the location's aristocratic past.

The theme continues inside where stained glass windows, suits of armour and grandfather clocks sit alongside more contemporary features and furnishings.

After a warm County Durham welcome, we checked out our room which was a picture of traditional

grandeur. A four-poster bed sat as its centrepiece whilst the walls were bathed in shades of regal red and cream.

Despite the classic backdrop, the room had also been touched by the brush of modernity. We were both pleased to find a Flat-screen LCD TV as standard, as was complimentary WiFi and tea & coffee making facilities.

The mod cons didn't end there either. A swish power shower completed a stylish, chrome-laden en-suite bathroom.

After kicking back with a glass of fizz for a read of the papers, we ventured down to the hotel's in-house Bar & Kitchen which offers all-day dining between 12pm and 9pm.

Aptly named "1189" as a tribute to the castle's heritage, the eatery offers an extensive menu bursting with choice.

Quality wine is also a prime consideration (no blue nun here) with a selection of globe-spanning wines cherry-picked by local suppliers, Bon Couer, who are situated just 10 miles from the castle.

Walworth Castle offers a selection of starters, main plates, burgers, sharing boards, and grill options. Traditional pub favourites like the beer battered fish & chips or roast pork belly sit alongside two person house specialities such as the 20oz chateaubriand

or the 1kg Tomahawk steak.

Somewhat spoilt for choice, Lisa kicked off with the sea salt & black pepper calamari with tomato & parmesan relish – a resounding hit. I chose the curry spiced scallops with cauliflower puree and granny smith apple.

Following on, Lisa opted for the suitably-hearty Shepherd's pie comprising roast lamb rump with rosemary and creamed cabbage.

I continued in a similar vein with the chicken tikka masala. This was a fragrant, freshly-prepared take on the old microwavable favourite which came served with onion bhaji, coconut and coriander rice and garlic naan bread.

All in all: tasty, smile-inducing food which ticked all the boxes for us.

Totally replete, we returned to our suite in fine spirits ahead of a restful eight hours sleep beneath the four posts of the bed.

The following morning, we breakfasted royally on all of our cooked & continental favourites before packing up and heading on home.

Within touching distance of the A1, Walworth Castle is a perfect getaway location within easy reach. Ideal for a spot of lunch or dinner or for a mini-break with a real slice of history.

For more information, visit www.walworthcastle.co.uk

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The JC Events team with some of their props

JC EVENTS GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

It's amazing what goes on behind closed doors.

In a little corner of South Shields there's an unassuming warehouse, which from the outside has nothing to distinguish it from its counterparts.

But open the doors and you'll find yourself in an Aladdin's Cave – a world where you rub shoulders with full size lions and zebras, with exotic lighting and tableware, with elegant Roman columns and giant mirrors.

Welcome to the world of JC Events, the company run and masterminded by experienced events organiser, Jacqui Chapman.

Jacqui recently opened the doors to her amazing collections of props, which previously had only been used to accommodate the eclectic needs of her vast client base.

But now she has added another string to her bow, by recognising the potential for hiring out her catalogue to other events companies, party and

wedding planners.

Of course this is the newest – and the smallest – part of what JC Events offers, a company which continues to grow and now has a nationally acclaimed reputation.

Clients include everyone from Greggs to Lookers, from the NHS to Tesco Underwriting, while also supporting North East charities such as the Alan Shearer Foundation and Children North East.

Conferences, exhibition stands, themed dinners, balls – there's a never ending list of work which comes through the doors of the office at Trinity Green, which sees the team heading out to cities and towns across the country on a regular basis.

It's the ability to be original, proactive and creative which Jacqui believes is at the heart of the company's success – coupled with a big dose of generosity.

"It's a combination of our expertise, our ability to come up with really creative and innovative solutions and our reputation which has helped us keep our existing clients but also continually win new business," said Jacqui.

Along with providing a whole range of audio visual services, JC Events also has its own manufacturing arm which makes props or bespoke staging and exhibition shells to fit clients' specifications.

"What clients seem to appreciate is that we can look after every aspect of their requirements so they don't need to go anywhere else, plus they like the fact we will always go the extra mile," said Jacqui.

"We are aware that we operate in a very competitive market so it's important that not only must we have a reputation for delivering but for also exceeding our clients' expectations."

For further information visit www.jc-events.co.uk



DURHAM CRICKET T20 BLAST 2019 FIXTURES

Friday, July 19:

Durham Cricket v Northants Steelbacks

Wednesday, July 31:

Durham Cricket v Leicestershire Foxes

Friday, August 2:

Durham Cricket v Lancashire Lightning

Sunday, August 11:

Durham Cricket v Notts Outlaws

Thursday, August 15:

Durham Cricket v Worcestershire Rapids

Friday, August 23:

Durham Cricket v Yorkshire Vikings

Tuesday, August 27:

Durham Cricket v Birmingham Bears

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sachins

Bob's Dad's Secret Chicken Curry

Ingredients

3 medium chopped onions
2 mild green chillies
3 medium chicken breasts
Tin chopped tomatoes
2 large potatoes
Tub natural yoghurt
Coriander stalks
Vegetable oil
Fresh ginger
Salt
Haldi
Chilli powder
Garam masala
Dry fenugreek
Tomato purée

Cooking method

- Warm 2 table spoons of oil
- Once hot add chopped onions
- Keep stirring until onions become translucent
- Add finely chopped green chillies, ginger and salt
- Add a teaspoon of haldi, keep stirring
- Add half a tea spoon of chilli powder and garam masala
- Once all spices have been stirred add chopped tomatoes
- Add diced potatoes, once 50% cooked add diced chicken
- Add some crushed dry fenugreek once chicken is cooked
- Add a table spoon of tomato purée
- Add half a tub of yoghurt
- Garnish with some fresh chopped coriander and ginger



sachins

Mama Arora's Curry

Ingredients

4 chicken breasts*
2 large onions
Tin chopped tomatoes
Garlic & ginger paste
Fresh coriander
Haldi
Chilli powder
Garam masala
Salt
Channa masala
Dry fenugreek
Cumin powder
Coriander powder
Chilli flakes
Ground fennel seeds
Tomato purée

Cooking method

- Finely chop two onions
- Warm two table spoons of vegetable oil in a pan
- Once hot add the onions
- Keep stirring until they are golden brown
- Add a table spoon of garlic ginger paste (equal amounts of garlic and ginger puréed with a touch of water)
- Then add the tomatoes, keep stirring and try and mash the tomatoes up so you get a nice thick masala, at this point add some salt to taste, I would put a pinch or two of salt
- You may need to add some water at this point, might be worth adding about 250ml
- Add 1 tea spoon of haldi and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of chilli powder and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of garam masala and mix into masala
- Add 1 tea spoon of channa masala and mix into masala
- Now add a pinch of chilli flakes, pinch of fennel powder and a pinch of coriander powder
- Add your diced chicken and keep stirring until the chicken has cooked
- Once it's cooked add a small handful of dry fenugreek, remember to rub it together and crush it into the masala.
- Add a tea spoon of tomato purée and mix into the dish
- Finally add some chopped coriander to the dish

*This recipe can be used for beef, lamb, fish or even vegetables





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IF YOU DON'T LOVE WHAT YOU DO, WHAT'S THE POINT?

Entrepreneur Olivia Lockey is owner of Northumberland's luxury wedding venue and glamping site, Northside Farm in Horsley.

Successfully running a family-run business and juggling being a mother of three girls, she believes that if you don't love what you do, work hard at changing it until you do.

Whether it is changing your job or changing your mind-set about the job you do, it's important to love it and be happy to do it otherwise what is the point? We spend around one third of our lives at work which is a scary thought so why waste that time doing something you hate? I'm not sure about you but I find it so easy to spot someone who hates what they are doing or loves what they are doing - you can see it on a person's face, in their actions, attitude and body language.

Have you ever been in a restaurant where you feel like the waiter doesn't want to be there, you feel slightly on edge as you daren't ask for mustard as you don't want to be an inconvenience you can feel the atmosphere a mile off, the body language, the sighs and the way they plonk the dish on the table, they are counting down the seconds until they can leave. This person is really not loving what they are doing and is certainly not happy, the impression you get as a paying customer is that you are not welcome, it is not a pleasant place to be and chances are, you won't go back.

However, if you had walked into that same restaurant and were greeted with a smile and

shown to your table, you feel nothing is a problem. You feel valued as a customer and you more than likely will leave a tip, which in turn will make the waiter who seems to really enjoy their job feel appreciated.

It's a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Being realistic you are never really going to love every element of your business and all the things that need to be done. I for one dread the VAT return and I don't half moan about it! To be fair, who gets excited about dealing with HMRC?

For me, it is not about loving every aspect of your business it's about loving what you do and that it makes you happy because this will reflect in how you do your job to your clients.

I am very grateful for the staff that I have because they love their job too. We get to share our good days and not so good days and if we get a difficult customer then we deal with it professionally and laugh it off afterwards - we never let this trickle down to affect our clients.

Not being a 'morning person', by the time I have taken the kids to school and done some day to day chores, I get into the office, make myself a cup of tea and look around and honestly feel proud of what we have achieved and lucky that I get to come to work and do a job that I created and honestly love to do, and that for me makes me very happy.



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STARTMEDUK TO HELP NORTH EAST'S TEENAGERS MEDICAL FUTURE

First of Application Preparation Courses Announced

An organisation is investing in the future of the UK's ongoing health by launching its services to schools in the North East, in a bid to help budding doctors and medics for the region get a great start to their career.

And the first course, focusing on application preparation, has just been announced by StartMedUK.

Last year, The Guardian reported that there were six times more medical students from London as from the North East. In fact only 245 students from the North East started medical and dentistry degrees last year compared to 1585 from London. Based on figures like these, StartMedUK was born.

StartMedUK is the brain child of Dr Michael Shenouda and Dr Ryan Dias, who studied his medical degree at Newcastle University. Dr Dias, who is also responsible for a number of leadership programs delivered in the NHS following an illustrious medical career, said:

"StartMedUK chose to target the North East because of these low numbers accessing the opportunity to enter a medical career from the region. We know that there is talent, ability and also great medical schools right here in the North East. StartMedUK aims to break down the barriers

and increase those stats in its very first year of delivery in the region."

The company works with schools and students to enable teenagers in how to find out how to be a doctor and what that entails, supporting applications, planning for interviews at medical schools and understanding processes.

The students are supported by a team of clinicians, recent graduates, current students and education experts increasing the chance of securing a much fought after place in the medical school of choice.

The pair set up the company following their own experiences, both in trying to start their career, and then in what they understood as their careers progressed.

Dr Ryan continued: "The StartMedUK courses are designed for individuals to enter or for schools to offer to their students. The courses are designed to help the doctors of tomorrow in the North East start their successful career path as early as possible. Our specialised and enthusiastic team give the best preparation possible so offers are secured from top choice medical schools.

"Many parents have started to access our service for their children direct, and schools in particular are keen to be part of the process now, as it gives

the students extra motivation to work hard to get better grades, all of which impact positively on both the student's future and on a school's reputation or Ofsted reports."

The company offer four learning options which can be undertaken separately or as a combined course. A recent success story is a sixth form student who attended her school seminar day and took up the StartMedUK personal statement review to perfect her application. She received interviews for every application and is now studying at Nottingham University.

She said: "I am grateful for all the help the StartMedUK team gave me in my applications to medicine school. They gave me confidence and support through a process that otherwise would have been exhausting and difficult."

Any schools, parents or individuals interested in finding out more can visit www.startmeduk.com. Any interested parties and schools receive a free consultation.

The first of the courses to be run in the North East will be in Newcastle on the 20th July 2019 and is the perfect starting place for anyone considering an application to study medicine at University.

For more information please email enquiries@startmeduk.com



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WHAT IS THE BEST TREATMENT FOR BACK PAIN?



Claire Hawes

By Claire Hawes, Director and Osteopath

With 80% of adults experiencing low back pain within their lifetime, this will impact on their ability to work leading to sickness absence and loss in earnings.

Back pain is a pertinent subject with a lot of information available and often leaving people at a loss as to what their best options are when experiencing this type of pain.

My first recommendation is to have your back pain assessed by a professional who is fully trained and qualified to diagnose conditions of the lower back. This could be an osteopath, physiotherapist or a chiropractor (MSK practitioner) in the first instance. Yes, this is often only available as a private consultation, but it is money well spent when you consider the pain you are experiencing or the disability it is creating in your life. Your GP will be able to see you, however in the <10minute consultations you get, they do not have the time to fully assess your condition, only to rule out serious pathology and prescribe analgesia.

Once you have seen a back pain specialist such as osteopath, physiotherapist or chiropractor, they will be able to refer you for scans (privately) if needed, or write to your GP if they feel further

investigations are required. However, the majority of back pain, even severe back pain has a mechanical cause which will not be resolved quickly with just medication, and surgical options further down the line often lead to more problems.

Evidence is strong for movement not bed rest for back pain, so even though you may be struggling, if your practitioner recommends movement this should be done and managed within your limits. Physical therapy provided by MSK practitioners is recommended by the NHS and is even part of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) Guidelines for back pain and sciatica – suggesting that mobilisation and hands on manipulation has evidence to support its use (NG59 (2018) paragraph 1.2.7). Hot and cold compresses are also very effective – seek professional advice as to which would benefit you most.

Alongside your MSK therapy sessions, you should also be advised to take part in Pilates or a movement-based rehab programme to allow

full healing and rehabilitation – this will also help prevent future episodes of back pain. You need your core muscles to support your lower back and unfortunately our western lifestyles are not conducive to having strong cores with sedentary work, sedentary rest and sedentary play a major contributing factor to our pain problems.

This all requires a shift in the minds of the general population, away from the pill popping and passive attempts to help ourselves into a more empowered and active participation in the recovery of back pain. Our busy lives are often the excuse not to fit in a weekly Pilates class, however, have you considered the time lost to poor productivity because your back is hurting? How much better would you enjoy your weekends if you did not have back pain stopping you? When it comes to back pain you have got to be proactive in your recovery. Listen to the advice of your MSK practitioner and take control of your body.

Claire Hawes is an osteopath who assesses and treats clients at Back to Balance, Newcastle Business Park. She qualified with Masters in Osteopathy in 2011, after a 10 year career as a registered mental health nurse. Her testimonials speak for themselves, visit www.back-to-balance.co.uk, or call 01914661441 for further information or to book an appointment.

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TIME TO BE POSITIVE...

Now that Easter is over, it's time to ditch any remains of sugary Easter eggs and focus on looking good for the summer.

That negative feeling about the way you look needs to be turned in to a positive, here are some ideas:

Negative into positive

Negative - I need to lose at least a stone for my summer holiday, I will never do it, it's too late.

Positive - No its not! There are still 10 weeks until the middle of July, pull back on a few unhealthy food habits each day and if you lose just over 1lb a week, there is your 14lbs.

Negative - I eat very health food but still cant lose weight, why should i bother?

Positive - You may think you eat well but there is a big difference between eating healthily and eating to lose weight. Cut out any refined sugar and processed food, start eating what the body was designed to eat eg lean meats, fish, vegetables, fruits, eggs and drink 2-3 litres of water everyday, this way you will see big changes which will certainly have been worth the bother!

Negative - I do not have time to train.

Positive - We can all find time to train if you are focused and want it badly enough. Strength exercises such as squats, lunges, press ups, stomach/core exercises can all be done in your home. As can running on the spot or on a mini trampoline. No excuses, we can all find 20 mins per day. Remember you can't out train a bad diet, therefore make sure your food is 100% on track.

Negative - 1 glass of wine per night, is around 55,000 calories a year.

Positive - Even if you keep everything else the same but just remove that daily glass of wine you will drop around 4lbs by July.



David Fairlamb

Negative - I feel tired, lethargic and heavy. I'm really going to struggle in the heat abroad.

Positive - Starting regular exercise of any sort will instantly make you feel better about yourself. Add the fact your eating better and cutting down on alcohol consumption, will turn that lethargic and tired feeling into fitter, stronger and more energized. The reduction in body fat and new mindset will definitely help you deal with the heat much better.

Negative - I'm too embarrassed to go to a fitness class, I need to lose some weight first.

Positive - You are defeating the objective, the whole point of going to a fitness class is to make a difference, to the way you look and feel. The quicker you make a start, the quicker the results will happen. Lives can be turned around in a matter of weeks, all you have to do is believe, form new habits and be consistent.

DAVID'S SUMMING UP

Remember you can't out train a bad diet. Losing weight is 80% your food intake, therefore, if you want to look good this summer, cut out those unhealthy daily food habits which you know are affecting your waistline.

NEWCASTLE FALCONS STRIKE LANDMARK PARTNERSHIP WITH NUFFIELD HEALTH



(Left to Right) Mark Wilson, Stacey Brunton, sales & services manager for Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital, Tane Takulua, Matthew Lamb, hospital director at Nuffield Health Newcastle and Tom Penny.

This is the first time the hospital has partnered with a Premiership rugby side to provide health and wellbeing support, which will give Falcons players and staff access to a range of clinical services and medical expertise.

Explaining the significance of the partnership, Stacey Brunton, sales & services manager for Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital, said: "As an ethical, not-for-profit health and wellbeing provider, we are dedicated to improving people's lives through our hospitals and gyms.

"We also strive to play an active part in promoting the importance of health and wellbeing awareness in our local communities. Newcastle Falcons share the same ethos and we are delighted to be working with them.

"Through working together we are not only able to provide the players with access to exceptional healthcare services, it also enables us to engage with fans and the local community to promote health awareness and make a difference to everyone."

Rachel Scurfield, lead doctor for Newcastle Falcons, said: "Nuffield Health delivers an excellent service with top-class facilities. They are very accommodating with urgent requests, allowing us to manage the players efficiently. It is very convenient and they are a pleasure to work with."

Newcastle Falcons are delighted to announce that Nuffield Health Hospital in Newcastle is now the Club's official healthcare partner.

The new alliance between the region's Gallagher Premiership rugby side and Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital follows on from a successful partnership between the Falcons and Nuffield's

Fitness & Wellbeing Gym in Gosforth.

Part of a leading not-for-profit healthcare organisation, Nuffield Health Newcastle Hospital in Jesmond has been providing outstanding private healthcare to people in the North East for more than 40 years through its first-class medical facilities and exceptional standards of care.

For more information on Nuffield Health Hospital, please visit www.nuffieldhealth.com/hospitals/newcastle-upon-tyne

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ENTRIES OPEN FOR WARDHADAWAY SUMMER OF TOUCH

Entries are now open for the Wardhadaway Summer of Touch, with the eight-week league running every Wednesday night from May 29 onwards at Kingston Park Stadium.

Teams of six, including two females, can be drawn from squads of any size, playing weekly fixtures at Kingston Park culminating in finals night, where they will play for the cup, shield, plate and bowl.

A fun and friendly variation of rugby suitable for men and women of all abilities, touch rugby offers an outlet to improve fitness, have a great time exercising as a group and enjoy a regular social gathering with friends.

Played in a fun atmosphere with music playing, and food and drink offers in the Tap & Tackle bar, entry for the eight-week season is priced at £260 per team.

Included in the entry fee is an end-of-tournament meal on finals night, with entry open to clubs, businesses and wider groups of family and friends.

This year also sees the return of the Beach touch rugby festival at Longsands Beach at Tynemouth on August 3.

Senior Community Officer Gavin Beasley said 'We had nearly 300 people take part across the eight weeks last year and we would like to say a huge thank you to Wardhadaway who are once again supporting the touch rugby competition. It's great to see people of all abilities getting involved on a Wednesday evening and meeting new people or spending some social time with people they work with.'

For more information on the taster session, or to book a team into the Wardhadaway Summer of Touch, email gavin.beasley@newcastle-falcons.co.uk



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End of Season Awards 18/ 19

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COMMENT WITH... Barry Speker

barry.speker@sintons.co.uk



The innovative, imaginative and delicious production of 'From Shore to Shore' played to packed restaurants in Newcastle, during a national tour. The play, written by Mary Cooper and M W Sun, is a drama in English, Mandarin and Cantonese with live music. It tells three stories of three interwoven lives and the complex journeys from China to the UK - featuring drama, pathos, love and loss, struggle and survival.

The play is presented in a restaurant setting and followed by a delicious Chinese meal, joined by the actors and company.

I was honoured by South Mountain and the Chinese Healthy Living Centre to welcome Newcastle's Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress to the performance and lunch at Brunswick Church. The event was greatly appreciated and enjoyed by all.

The much awaited new series of Line of Duty proved to be a violent offer and something of a challenge. The depiction of AC12 gave the impression of 'bent coppers' being literally to a penny. While waiting to see who has already gone over to the 'other side', many people may have needed subtitles or a glossary to follow the dialogue smattered with acronyms.

What with AFO UCO OCG ANPR SFC PACE DCC and FI this needed full concentration. One must hope that someone in the police cast will avoid being shot, garrotted or dismissed to appear in the next series.

On my last trip to China five years ago, the sight of the vast new Beijing airport was amazing. It included an entire second giant terminal already fully built to provide for future expansion.

Surprising then to hear that Beijing is now constructing a second international airport 46kms to the South of Tian'anmen Square.

While we still debate and agonise over one new runway in London, the new Beijing Daxing International Airport to Open in September will have seven runways. There will be parking bays for 80 planes. The aim is to provide for 620,000 flights and 100 million passengers each year. That is almost double the population of the whole UK annually through one airport.

The good news is that the terminal was designed by British architects Zaha Hadid. This probably did not include detail of the carbon footprint. Don't forget to turn off your TV standby light.

There are plenty of awards to be won, what with Oscars, BAFTAs, Tonies, Oliviers, Golden Globes but one less well known award has been in the news. In 2000 the Barry Award was named after comedian and Australian national treasure Barry Humphries to be presented at the Melbourne International Comedy Festival for the best show. Former winners include Ross Noble and the Mighty Boosh.

Humphries, 85, has attracted criticism for comments on transgender people and referring to gender-reassignment surgery as 'self-mutilation'. He also described Caitlin Jenner as a 'publicity-seeking rat-bag'. He claims that the comments were made when in character as Dame Edna. Humphries is now a victim to political correctness (What? In Australia?), as the festival is renaming the award.

Is this an opportunity for me to use the Barry award elsewhere? I may ask Dame Edna.

Credit to Israel on its attempt to achieve a soft landing on the Moon. Success would have made Israel only the fourth (and very much the smallest) country to achieve it after the Soviet Union, the USA and China. A late engine glitch resulted in a crash landing at 310mph, but still achieving a \$1m award from Google Lunar Xprize.

The probe was called Beresheet which is the Hebrew first word in the Bible meaning 'In the Beginning'. Work has already begun on Beresheet 2.

“

...the comments were made when in character as Dame Edna. Humphries is now a victim to political correctness (What? In Australia?)...

”





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