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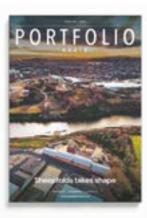
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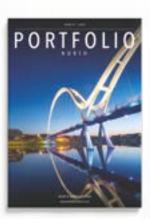
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# Contributors Round up



## Recipes Terry Laybourne

As the owner of 21 Hospitality Group (21HG), Terry has his roots in the North East and has worked here for more than 35 years. His Newcastle-based restaurant group includes 21, The Broad Chare and St Vincent on Newcastle's Quayside; also Café 21, Saltwater Fish Co, and Porterhouse within the Fenwick department store. He also operates a Café 21 from Fenwick in York and has a bistro at The Lakes Distillery, in Cumbria.

He was the first chef in the region to bring a much-coveted Michelin Star to Newcastle shortly after he opened 21 Queen Street on Newcastle's Quayside.

In 1998, Terry was awarded a 'Catey' (celebrating the best in the UK hospitality sector) for Independent Restaurateur of the Year. Awarded an MBE in 1998 for services to the restaurant and tourism industries, Terry began his training in some of Europe's finest hotels, returning to the region to spend eight years as lead chef, building a formidable reputation for the Fishermans Lodge restaurant in Jesmond Dene. Newcastle.

It was in 1988 that he and a his small team went solo to establish 21 Queen Street which has evolved into the much larger 21HG. In 2006 Terry was awarded a life time achievement award at the Northern Hospitality Awards.

Terry has been a member of the Academy of Culinary Arts since 1998.



### Travel Geoff Moore

After joining the Merchant Navy at 18 then entering the superyacht industry in 2007, Geoff has had the privilege of travelling to all four corners of the globe as a crew member on board some of the yachting industry's most prestigious vessels. Fast forward 20 years, whilst the days of transporting and looking after celebrity guests are behind him, he now runs West Nautical from its global headquarters in Newcastle upon Tyne.

They offer a range of nautical services, with a special focus on curating and organising unforgettable luxury superyacht holidays to the world's finest destinations.



#### Business Wayne Halton

Wayne has worked in the North East for more than 35 years both as a newspaper journalist and a senior PR practitioner. Before moving into PR and launching his own successful consultancy, he worked in the news room at The Journal and was Business Editor at The Northern Echo.

His experience stands him in good stead to provide insightful and honest articles about issues affecting the regional economy and business environment. He will chew the fat and sit toe-to-toe with some of the biggest names and rising stars in the North East business world.

As a specialist in B2B communications, he will conduct a new series titled Big Business Interviews, highlighting and humanising successful business owners in the region. This long-form interview will be published in every forthcoming issue of Portfolio

Wayne will also be responsible for managing a range of new editorial columns where business people candidly share insights and observations that have helped shape them and their business journeys.



### Wine David Harker

David's interest in wine began in the early 1980s in Dennhofer's restaurant in Durham, after learning that there was more than two types of grape. David was curious about the different wine grapes in use and that he could make informed choices about which wines to try if he knew more about the varieties

Following several wine qualifications, David's hobby became his profession when he took on the ownership of Newcastle Wine School. The Wine School runs wine tastings, wine courses, private events and wine tours for customers in Newcastle and across the North East.

Since leaving school at sixteen, David's life has followed many paths including a spell in local government, three years at Newcastle University, accountancy training and Chief Executive of Durham County Cricket Club.

# A new chapter

#### Editor's notes from Cassie Moyse

#### My last editor's notes. No, I'm not going anywhere – but instead welcoming a new member of the team to take good care of Portfolio North's editorial.



Cassie Moyse Director, Portfolio North

I am delighted to welcome Jessica Laing as editor of Portfolio North's North East and Yorkshire editions. Jessica is a trusted editor and writer, with over a decade of experience in the world of publishing, journalism and PR, and has already created some fantastic articles with our clients for this issue.

Not only will her appointment allow us to grow, but also help us continue providing a great service to our clients and support us in our mission to make Portfolio North a front-running title across the North East and Yorkshire, through unique and engaging written content.

As well as working closely with new and existing clients to create insightful and impactful articles around their business, Jessica will also focus on developing the magazine's independent editorial from both a business and luxury lifestyle perspective.

Our priority is to deliver engaging, honest and educational content and be a credible, go-to source for local news from the North East and Yorkshire within their respective publications.

We're dedicated to creating content which is relevant and reliable - and brings personality to business news. Our lifestyle features are aspirational, but relatable, for our readership of professional people. Importantly, we want to work with brands and organisations which align with our readers' and our own core values.

Having a skilled individual within the business who will concentrate on strategizing, creating and delivering quality and exclusive articles will allow us to attract even more of the right readers, maintain and grow our integrity and provide the foundations of our business. After all, first and foremost, we are a news publication.

I know Jessica will do a fantastic job and while she focuses on our editorial vision, I will be given more time to concentrate on nurturing and expanding client partnerships, our business strategy and developing and improving our various services.

We are committed to expanding our offering in the most effective and exciting ways possible for our clients. Currently, we provide opportunities for businesses to grow their presence via our publications and inserts, contract publishing and digital coverage. We even provide a PR platform on our website, ensuring clients' biggest breaking news and must-read stories in the North East and Yorkshire get the coverage they deserve - and quick.

Alongside all this, we also now offer a dedicated news app, which is home to exclusive content especially for our subscribers and offers lots of opportunity for clients to promote themselves and their services in new ways.

As we all know, good things can often take time, so keep your eyes peeled and ears open for future updates as we work hard to develop, improve and grow the app over the coming weeks and months, with the help of our new team.

In addition to our publication and online opportunities, we remain committed to bringing you the best networking events, wine tasting dinners and more and we look forward to inviting you along to some of them very soon.

Credibility, relevance, readability and aspiration are our key pillars and remain our core values - and we hope that they shine through this issue and all the issues that follow. Happy reading and, as always, thank you for your support.

# News from across the North East

#### Rooms with a view in the most sought after city

Buyers will soon be able to snap up homes in one of the North East's most prestigious and sought after locations. Its road and rail links, leisure and social facilities and its UNESCO World Heritage site status make Durham one of the most desirable places in the region to live.

And now Miller Homes North East's new Bishops Walk development, at Bent House Lane, will enable buyers of all budgets to put down roots in the historic city. Not only will the project create 235 homes ranging from bungalows to five bed properties, but the site is just a short walk from the city centre and overlooks the Cathedral. Designed to provide a mix of homes, the Bishops Walk scheme will comprise homes ranging from single to two and a half storeys.

Properties will also offer two to five bedrooms with bungalows and multigenerational homes creating a vibrant community and 59 of the properties will be a combination of affordable rent and discounted market sale. Landscaping has



also been integral to the design process with plenty of natural planting and the use of a mix of materials, including render and stone, to reflect the surrounding area. It is expected the first buyers will be able to move onto the site in spring 2024 and Patrick Arkle, managing director at Miller Homes North East, said the development

"offers an unrivalled opportunity" in terms of location. "It's a fantastic site which will appeal to so many people on so many levels," he said. "Whether you are moving to Bishops Walk to bring up your family, for work reasons, to retire, or simply because you love Durham, you could not choose a better spot."

#### Channel 4 announces support for three emerging northern writers

Three emerging screenwriters from the North of England have been awarded Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards 2023 to support their development. Each of the writers wins a £3000 bursary and a package of money-can't-buy opportunities, including nine-month placements with independent production companies where they will develop original scripts, and mentoring with industry professionals.

The Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards were founded in 2014 as part of the Northern Writers' Awards. They are funded by Channel 4 and produced by New Writing North, the writing development agency for the North of England. The Northern Writers' Awards are England's largest and longestrunning writer development programme, supported by Northumbria University, Arts Council England and a range of partners.

The Channel 4 Writing for Television Awards 2023 winners were announced



on 21st September at The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle, at a celebration hosted with North East Screen, the North East's regional screen agency which develops and nurtures homegrown talent including writers, producers and directors. The event was attended by writers and industry professionals from television and audio and included a showcase of new writing talent from across the North.

# Government delegates discuss the future of decarbonisation and Net Zero on Tees Valley



The North East of England Process Industry Cluster (NEPIC) were recently joined by five HM Treasury representatives as they visited Tees Valley to discover more about the challenges that industry is facing on the ground. The day included a tour of the Wilton International site and roundtable talks with regional industry giants including Mitsubishi Chemical Group, ConocoPhillips, Alpek, px Group, SABIC, Navigator Terminals, Sembcorp, Wood

and Kellas Midstream. The meeting comes following another visit from the Department for Business and Trade earlier this year, which enabled the government officials to understand the attractions for overseas companies to invest on Teesside.

Currently, the North East process sector is still decarbonising by de-industrialising with facilities closing due to internationally high energy prices. During the visit, it was emphasised how there is a need to reverse this trend by attracting international investment to access decarbonisation via CCS and hydrogen for the potential for Teesside's chemical industry to grow using decarbonisation as a lever.

Throughout the discussion NEPIC's CEO, Philip Aldridge warned: "The government must play its part with industry friendly policies that are clear, match the USA's IRA and the EU's Green Deal financial incentives, and are simple to understand."

# The Tempus launches afternoon tea in its Alice in Wonderland themed restaurant

The Tempus' new pastry chef Catherine Smith creates a new afternoon tea experience at the new hotel, inspired by her experience at The Ritz and Betty's Cookery School.

The Doxford Group has announced the launch of its exquisite new afternoon tea experience at The Tempus, inspired by local influences and prepared using ingredients sourced from Northumberland and the Borders. The finest mini cakes, scones and delicate finger sandwiches will be served in the Orangery and paired with tea, prosecco and champagne. Prepared by The Tempus' new pastry chef, Catherine Smith, she brings her wealth of experience from esteemed establishments, including The Ritz and Betty's Cookery School.

Carefully designing the brand-new menu, Catherine draws inspiration from the region's rich culinary heritage, to create an offering that encapsulates the essence of the North. Guests can indulge in a selection of sweet treats include Choux, Brown Sugar Craquelin, Toffee Apple Mousse, and Lemon and Orange Macaron. Sweet scones are made using apples picked from the Charlton Hall Estate, whilst the savoury option offers Northumbrian Nettle Cheese and Chive. The selection of delicate finger sandwiches include salmon and cream cheese, ham and wholegrain mustard and



hummus, sundried tomato and rocket.

The Tempus, which opened its doors in May 2023, is home to 15 sumptuous guest bedrooms and suites, and offers a ground-floor bar and restaurant. Boasting interiors inspired by Alice in Wonderland,

The Tempus has created a beautiful setting with outstanding views within its location of the 550-acre country estate in

Northumberland. In addition to afternoon tea, the restaurant at The Tempus offers an all-day dining experience day serving breakfast, light lunch, dinner menu, and Sunday lunches.

The Tempus' new afternoon tea will be served every Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 2:30pm - 4:45pm.

#### Government Minister Highlights Vital Role of North East's Cyber Community as Aspire CyberFest 2023 Hailed as a Monumental Success for the Region

Government Minister for Cyber, Viscount Camrose, made history by addressing the North East's leading cyber security conference, Aspire CyberFest 2023. This marks the first time a Government minister has addressed the conference.

Aspire CyberFest, organised by Aspire Technology Solutions and CyberNorth, is the flagship event in CyberNorth's #CyberFest programme.

Bringing together over 350 business leaders and tech experts from the region, the conference provided a comprehensive program aimed at helping companies enhance their security measures and defend against the ever-evolving threat landscape.

CyberFest is the North East's month long cyber security festival, featuring a range of event throughout September. Organisers expressed their delight at the collaboration and impact the festival has had on the region's cyber security landscape, with over a thousand representatives from businesses, governance, industry, academia and schools participating in events across the region throughout September.



Before addressing the audience at Aspire CyberFest, the Minister met with regional cyber security leaders to discuss the challenges being faced, and the potential to grow the cyber and digital sector to unlock new jobs and investment across the region.

During his speech, Viscount Camrose pointed out the vital role played by the

North East's cyber cluster, CyberNorth, and local tech companies, such as Aspire, in fuelling the growth of the region's cyber sector, before laying out the government's plans to develop technologies with greater security, and the focus on international collaboration to develop a world-leading cyber sector in the UK.

# Swinburne Maddison helps bring first padel facility to the North East

One of the region's leading law firms has put the North East on the map with its behind-the-scenes legal work at Infinite Durham, a multi-activity park at Belmont Business Park on the outskirts of Durham city, which is to become home to the first indoor, dedicated padel facility in the North East - the fastest growing sport in the world.

In getting the legal work required to complete the deal over the line, Durham-based Swinburne Maddison LLP undertook a range of legal matters on behalf of the managing director of the Infinite Durham complex, Austin Carney. The area designated for the new padel courts were in use as indoor football pitches located within the six-acre site at Infinite Durham.

Terms have now been agreed with an operator, True Padel Ltd, for a 15-year, full repairing and insuring lease covering an area of 32,579 sq ft. True Padel will convert the space into nine padel courts with a café bar that will serve alcohol and refreshments.

Commenting on the deal, partner and head of the commercial property team, Victoria Walton, said:

"We are delighted to have been able to assist Austin, a longstanding client, with

his next exciting new leisure development, which will see Soccarena renting out space to house the new padel facility.

"Thanks to the breadth and depth of our commercial teams, we were able to conclude this deal in a relatively short time frame after our first meeting, providing practical solutions to various aspects of the transaction. We were able to showcase our agility when the scope of the matter changed. Solicitor Diane Hall and I undertook the work surrounding the lease and additional support was provided by the corporate team.

"The Soccarena facility is a huge success. It is a very popular venue with families from across the North East region and we wish Austin and his team continuing success with the introduction of padel to his leisure portfolio."





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# LITT recruitment group and a Newcastle venue rally together in support of Hadrian School

Newcastle upon Tyne witnessed an extraordinary gathering of compassion and community spirit on the 7th of September at Newcastle's show bar - Purple Peacock. The air was filled with excitement as local businesses and supporters came together for a charitable cause, with the aim of making a positive impact in the lives of those in need.

Attendees were treated to a delightful evening of entertainment, including live music, captivating performances, and delectable cuisine. Laughter, applause, and expressions of joy filled the room, creating an ambiance of shared happiness and fulfillment.

Dunja, Director of LITT recruitment group said: "This remarkable event,

in support of Hadrian School, not only showcased the generosity of the community but also demonstrated the power of unity in creating meaningful change. The generosity on display throughout the evening was truly inspiring. The collective efforts of the attendees resulted in an impressive £3000 raised, all of which will directly benefit the students at Hadrian School."

The Purple Peacock served as the perfect backdrop for this heartwarming charity event. The atmosphere was electric with an incredible 1920s-themed show, as attendees mingled, networked, and forged new connections, all while making a difference in the lives of the students at Hadrian School.

Hadrian School, a Newcastle-based institution catering to children with special educational needs, received the full support of the event.

The event was punctuated by heartfelt speeches from representatives of Hadrian School, who shared stories of triumph, resilience, and the importance of supporting such vital institutions within our community. The impact on the students at Hadrian School will be immeasurable, providing them with enhanced resources, opportunities, and support to thrive in their educational journey.











# Yorkshire Commercial Property Lunch

Portfolio North's Yorkshire arm recently partnered with Together, Schofield Sweeney and Bradley Hall to host a knowledge and networking lunch in the heart of Leeds.

Attended by 70 guests including investors, property developers and commercial landlords, the event included talks from Daniel Bates of Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture, Tom Wheldon of HBD and Claire Kent of Leeds City Council. The focus of the event was the positive regeneration of Yorkshire, as businesses work to create a better place to live, work and play. Sign up to our mailing list to receive exclusive invitations to upcoming events in the North East and Yorkshire.











#### Award-winning brand communications agency Gardiner Richardson revived cool Britannia at its 25th anniversary party.

Almost 200 of the agency's clients, employees and partners past and present packed Generator Studios in Newcastle which was transformed by a giant tipi tent festooned with fairy lights, DJ, horsebox bar and the obligatory oversized deckchair for festival style photos.

Lucy Gardiner, Director, said: "So many people have helped us get to our quarter century and it was great to get together with so many of them tonight. Whether we're building a successful business,

facing tough times or responding to a creative brief - it's better done together. It's how we'll thrive for the next 25."

Since 1998, Gardiner Richardson has worked around the world and closer to home bringing brands to life through design, PR, social media and content creation. The agency's clients have included Newcastle Building Society, Ringtons, Egger Global, Northumbria University and Newcastle City Council."





















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# North East business festival a huge success

A North East business festival made a successful return in October, with over one thousand guests attending events across Sunderland.













Sunderland Business Festival, which was back for a third year, ran from October 10 - 12, with footballer turned successful entrepreneur Gary Neville headlining the event.

The former Manchester United and England fullback took part in a fire-side chat on Wednesday, October 11.

The three day festival included expert presentations, panel discussions, on the sofa chats, networking, workshops and more. Organisations which took part in the events include Tombola, Fulwell 73, Sunderland AFC, British Esports and Ocado Retail, alongside leaders from key Sunderland organisations.

The festival was organised by Sunderland Business Partnership, a collective of organisations - large and small - all with an interest in the city's development, creating opportunities for members to collaborate and grow, which in turn helps Sunderland to be a more dynamic destination for business.

Rob Lawson, chair of Sunderland Business Partnership, said: "Sunderland Business Festival was an amazing opportunity for businesses and individuals alike to hear from great speakers, network and share ambitions for the future of Sunderland.

"The festival has gone from strength to strength since the first event in 2021 and the Sunderland Business Partnership are proud to have delivered this showcase for the city."

The festival also showcased some of Sunderland's great venues, including The Fire Station's Auditorium, the Stadium of Light, The Yard, Pop Recs, Mackie's Corner and the cutting-edge National Esports Performance Campus.

Patrick Melia, chief executive of headline sponsor of the festival Sunderland City Council, said: "It is amazing to see such levels of development and investment coming to the city of Sunderland.

"The Business Festival was a brilliant opportunity to showcase our changing city to a business audience from across the North East and show off the many ways in which the city is positively contributing to the regional economy too."

Sunderland Business Festival was sponsored by Sunderland City Council, the University of Sunderland, BDN, Sunderland College and Creo Comms, alongside associate sponsor Portfolio North. Professor Lawrence Bellamy, Academic Dean for the Faculty of Business, Law and Tourism at the University of Sunderland, said: "The transformation that is happening in Sunderland is truly remarkable and there's still so much more to come.

"The festival really highlighted the reasons to be very positive about the future of the city, the career opportunities on offer to our students when they leave university and we are proud to be at the heart of that."

To learn more about the Sunderland Business Partnership, visit the website www.sunderlandbusinesspartnership.co.uk

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### Sunderland Business Festival breakfast launch in association with Portfolio North

#### Sunderland Business Festival 2023 officially launched with a VIP breakfast event at The Yard.

The event - ran in association with Portfolio North - featured a panel of senior business figures from the city and was hosted by Nevil Tynemouth.

Panellists included Lawrence
Bellamy, Academic Dean of Faculty
for Business, Law and Tourism at the
University of Sunderland; Toni Rhodes,
Principal of Sunderland College;
David Pattison, Business Investment
Manager at Sunderland City Council;
Neil Guthrie, Development Director
Residential at Sunderland City Council;
and Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive of

Sunderland BID. The panel discussed the changing physical and business landscape in the city, with topics including skills, homes, business priorities, events, and retail and leisure.

The festival, which ran from 10 - 12 October, was organised by Sunderland Business Partnership, a collective of organisations - large and small - all with an interest in the city's development, creating opportunities for members to collaborate and grow, which in turn helps Sunderland to be a more dynamic destination for business.

To learn more about the Sunderland Business Partnership, visit the website <a href="https://www.sunderlandbusinesspartnership.co.uk">www.sunderlandbusinesspartnership.co.uk</a>















#### Footballer turned successful entrepreneur Gary Neville was the headline speaker at Sunderland Business Festival 2023.

The former Manchester United and England fullback took part in a fire-side chat on Wednesday, October 11, as part of the three-day festival.

Gary discussed his business career and how the leadership skills that led him to being captain of one of the biggest clubs in the world helped him become one of the UK's most high profile business people.

During a glittering 20-year career working under the inimitable Sir Alex Ferguson, Gary was acknowledged as one of the greatest footballers of his generation. Now working for Sky Sports, he is one of the nation's favourite pundits - and an extremely successful businessman.

Having started out as a property developer while playing for United in his early 20s, Gary has continued with an entrepreneurial passion, building a business empire with a portfolio that spans property, hospitality, education, media and sport.

His Stock Exchange Hotel is one of the top hotels in Manchester; his University (UA92), is disrupting a traditional model; his £400m St Michael's project is one of the landmark property developments in Manchester City Centre; and he will appearing as guest star on the upcoming series of Dragons' Den.

Speaking ahead of the event, Gary said: "I'm hugely passionate about the North. All the businesses I run are based here, and I believe we've got a thriving business community and I'm really pleased to be part of a brilliant line-up of events in a Northern city that demonstrates such ambition and vision."

Sunderland Business Festival, which was running for a third successive year, aims to inspire enterprises from across the region, with a host of engaging speeches and sessions from high-profile business leaders

In Conversation with Gary Neville was sponsored by award-winning architecture and engineering firm Building Design Northern (BDN).

Rick Marsden, Managing Director at BDN, said: "BDN are proud to have supported Sunderland Business Festival. As a Wearside based business, it is excellent to see initiatives, like Sunderland Business Festival, to celebrate the excellence of the businesses in the North and inspire the next generation of professionals."

Sunderland Business Festival was sponsored by Sunderland City Council, the University of Sunderland, BDN, Sunderland College and Creo Comms, alongside associate sponsor Portfolio North.

For more information about the Sunderland Business Partnership, visit: www.sunderlandbusinesspartnership.co.uk

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## Eco Festival comes to Sunderland City Centre

#### A festival of sustainability took place in Sunderland in October.

Delivered in partnership by Sunderland City Council, Climate Action North and supported by Sunderland BID, Sunderland Business Partnership and Sunderland Culture, EcoFest Sunderland happened over two days.

The first event for local businesses took place in City Hall on Thursday, October 12 and was followed by a fun day in Sunderland Museum and Winter Gardens on Saturday, October 14 for residents and families. The second edition of EcoFest Sunderland aimed to help the city achieve its goal of becoming a carbon neutral city by 2040.

Thursday's programme of events for Sunderland companies - which was part of the three-day Sunderland Business Festival - included sessions from climate science to Carbon footprinting advice and tips on first steps towards greener ways of working.

Speakers including Sunderland AFC's Chief Operating Officer and Knight Frank's Assistant General Manager participated in a Climate Action North 'Net Zero Matters' session.

Saturday's event saw families and residents partaking in a range of fun activities at the Museum & Winter Gardens while also learning more about the environment and sustainable living. The free day included arts and crafts activities with textiles and recycled materials as well as an eco-trail around the Winter Gardens. There was also stalls and stands with information and activities on local growing, cycling and walking, recycling and waste and energy efficiency support. Outside in Mowbray Park, guided Nature Walks looking at biodiversity also took place with Climate Action North as well as

active travel e-bike sessions.

Cllr Graeme Miller, leader of Sunderland City Council, said: "We are thrilled the EcoFest Sunderland event returned for a second year.

"We must all act now if we are to rise to the challenge of fighting climate change and events such as this will be key to encouraging and supporting our businesses and residents as well as shining a light on the work we all need to put in to help achieve net zero."

Sharon Lashley, founder of Climate Action North East, said: "We're thrilled to partner with the City Council for EcoFest Sunderland."

Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive of Sunderland BID, said: "Sunderland is home to so many inspirational businesses that take such pride in making it a better, greener city and this is evidenced by the success of schemes such as Refill Sunderland which launched in 2022 to reduce plastic waste and keep our oceans clean."

Steve Davison, Chief Operating Officer at Sunderland AFC, said: "Sunderland AFC wants to have a leading impact on our joint ambitions to cut carbon emissions and reduce climate change. Throughout our organisation, we have a series of measures and programmes in place - and planned - that will contribute to a more sustainable future for the Club and the environment.

"We are a Club that thrives on working with partners, supporters, neighbours, local councils and other stakeholders, and we understand the important role we play in the community. We were excited to share with others at this year's Sunderland Business Festival and EcoFest."

For more information on EcoFest Sunderland, visit: www.mysunderland.co.uk/ecofest









# Sunderland AFC offer insight into the business of football

Sunderland AFC once again offered a unique insight into what it takes to run a football club in the modern game.







Taking place as part of Sunderland Business Festival, Chief Operating Officer Steve Davison and Sporting Director Kristjaan Speakman hosted a talk-in at the Stadium of Light on Tuesday, October 10.

The evening event offered attendees the chance to hear from SAFC's senior leadership team as the club looks to build on a successful 2022/23 season in the Championship, as well as learning more about work behind the scenes to build a sustainable club – from a planned solar farm to secure greener energy; to summer concerts which have seen global superstars descend on the Stadium of Light – as well as the club's response to a Government-led White Paper that seeks to reform club football governance.

It provided the opportunity for attendees to participate in an energetic and insightful discussion with Steve and Kristjaan, giving a unique glimpse into the off-the-pitch world of football.

Sunderland Business Festival ran for the third time from 10 - 12 October, with the aim of inspiring enterprises from across the region, with a host of engaging speeches and sessions from high-profile business leaders. Speaking ahead of the event, Steve said: "It's great to be a part of the Sunderland Business Festival again as the event continues to evolve. As a football club that's deeply engrained within the city, we are hugely supportive of the event and are delighted to be a part of it."

The festival is organised by Sunderland Business Partnership, a collective of organisations - large and small - all with an interest in the city's development, creating opportunities for members to collaborate and grow, which in turn helps Sunderland to be a more dynamic destination for business.

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# Transforming Matchday Experiences

# WOODSmith Construction Group Transforms Riverside Stadium Hospitality

WOODSmith Construction Group has rewritten the playbook on matchday experiences by transforming Riverside Stadium into one of the best hospitality venues in the league.

For Teesside, Middlesbrough Football Club has held a timeless source of pride, and the matchday experience has been elevated to new heights thanks to the commercial team at WOODSmith Construction Group.

From 'The Archery' to the 'Legends Lounge', the 'Hardwick Bar' to the 'Fenton Club', the transformation of each hospitality suite echoes the club's history while also igniting a new era of inspiration.

These projects are personal for WOODSmith's Managing Director, Gary Wood, who is a lifelong fan of the club. "I'm truly proud to have been chosen to oversee these projects for Middlesbrough FC, my boyhood club." Wood said.

"Knowing many friends and family who are part of the club, this is undoubtedly one of WOODSmith's standout achievements. I want to express my appreciation for the opportunity and give credit to everyone involved for their hard work and dedication."

"Thank you to our reliable subcontractors at RTS Joinery, Grieg Flooring, and SE Decorators, whose brilliant craftsmanship contributed to the success of these projects. And to CORE Systems for their invaluable role in visualising the designs through CGIs and floor plans."

Led by WOODSmith Construction Group, and designed by Styled Interior Design, this collaboration has given rise to extraordinary spaces. Each suite balances innovation and tradition and promises an elevated match-day experience.

#### The Archery

The Archery is the epitome of elegance, glamour, and heritage. This expansive hospitality space, which can accommodate up to 60 guests, is a nod to MFC's historical roots. The WOODSmith team has successfully created an exclusive matchday experience that is remembered long after the final whistle.

The transformation included a bespoke curved bar, panelling, vinyl floor tiles, and luxury restrooms. The Archery is the perfect place to enjoy the match, entertain clients, or celebrate a special occasion.

#### Legend's Lounge

In the heart of the stadium, you'll find the Legends Lounge. WOODSmith's challenge was to create an industrial hotspot that echoed the excitement of the game. The result? An inviting space that captures Teesside's steel legacy through concrete-style tables and steel mesh ceiling tiles.

The industrial vibe doesn't overshadow the group feel, as self-serve beer taps and movable food stations encourage interaction among football fans. The place to be to watch the game and enjoy a cold one with friends.

#### **Hardwick Bar**

The Hardwick Bar is a reimagined fan zone, with its array of vibrant colours and an energetic atmosphere.

Despite a tight 4-week schedule, WOODSmith's team dismantled the old to make way for the new. It's a space where fans gather to celebrate victories, console losses, and create unforgettable memories.

#### **Fenton Club**

Micky Fenton's legacy lives on in the Fenton Club, a hospitality suite inspired by the grace of gentlemen's clubs. With luxury carpet tiles underfoot and panelling on the walls, the ambiance speaks of refined relaxation. Bronze antique-style radiators pay homage to tradition.

Despite time constraints and a modest budget, WOODSmith's team transformed the space into an inviting space, capturing the essence of MFC's past.

WOODSmith's construction team won this summer's new projects following their successful renovation of The Styled Suite in 2022. Their impressive renovation of the hospitality venue and accompanying boxes was a hit with MFC and even more popular with the fans. WOODSmith's work on The Styled Suite has resulted in remarkable growth, increasing revenue by 27%, season card sales by 36%, the number of guests by 10%, and bar sales by 58%. These figures highlight the commercial attractiveness that The Styled Suite has brought to Middlesbrough Football Club.

And now, in 2023, WOODSmith has continued to impress with their careful planning, meticulous execution, and deep understanding of construction. Each new hospitality suite resonates with the spirit of the club and its fans. Whether it's the dual-purpose elegance of The Archery, the industrial appeal of the Legends Lounge, the vibrant energy of the Hardwick Bar, or the refined tradition of the Fenton Club, WOODSmith's work is a celebration of football, construction, and design.

WOODSmith Construction Group is a leading construction company with a reputation for excellence, offering residential, commercial, and public sector work. No matter the size or scope of your project, they can work with you to take it from concept to reality.

Get in touch on 01287 221461 or visit woodsmithgroup.com to find out more.



# Transforming properties

and Building Communities Alex Kirtley acknowledges she is a reluctant PR ambassador for the family business - but there is no doubting her passion.

As MD of Kirtley Co, Alex - and her sister Toni - recently invested in a rebrand and embarked on a fresh approach to marketing to reflect the changes taking place across the business, founded by her father 40 years ago.

Kirtley Co. is something of a hybrid - commercial landlord, property developer and business owner. It offers a range of property services including restorations, and renovations across Sunderland, Teesside, Durham and the wider North East.

It's the owner and landlord of the iconic Mackie's Corner - one of the flagship projects in Sunderland's ongoing transformation. An eclectic mix of popular local businesses now occupy the space including delicatessen Fat Unicorn, menswear specialists Master Debonair, Bou-chique and The Black Door Hairdressing.

The firm also owns and operates flexible workspaces in Middlesbrough, industrial and self-storage space in Peterlee, Sunderland, Leechmere, Deptford and Southwick.

"We've tended to quietly go about our business," she said. "But the investment and changes in our property portfolio

There's huge regeneration underway in Sunderland and Tees Valley, which we are proud to be playing a part of by offering high quality commercial and serviced work space during a time of transformation

meant we needed to alter things and be more proactive with our marketing. And so, we have the new branding, website and partnership with Portfolio North."

She added: "We're going through an exciting time at Kirtley Co., as we continue to be a dynamic business which adapts to the needs of the market and business operators. There's huge regeneration underway in Sunderland and Tees Valley, which we are proud to be playing a part of by offering high quality commercial and serviced work space during a time of transformation across both counties."

The company has invested heavily in renovating Queen's Court - now Kirtley

Co. Middlesbrough - a building situated just a short walk from Middlesbrough town centre. She and the team are busy marketing easy-in, easy-out flexible workspaces ranging from 110sq ft to 1500 sq ft.

Alex said: "We pride ourselves on connecting great people, great businesses and great places using our experience and knowledge in property to advise and support the businesses which create a home in our spaces. We get to know our tenants and their business aims and vision so that we can support them in achieving their goals and create the perfect place to start or grow their business

"It's a new era for Kirtley Co. We've said goodbye to our last caravan storage customer in Peterlee to make room for a new client and have redeveloped our spaces."

She's still a little hesitant when it comes to putting herself and family out there, into the spotlight. She seems more comfortable rolling up her sleeves and getting stuff done. She's someone who understands the idea of good, old fashioned 'graft' and putting in a full shift.

At 34, Alex seems to have been grafting since her early, formative years. Even during her school years, she spent her free hours following her parents and sister around sites within the property portfolio and helping with odd jobs. She stepped into the business at 16 and has been working her way into the MD role ever since. The company is a genuine family business where everyone has a role and mucks in.



Her sister Toni, 32, handles finance and the management accounts, a vital role in the company. Her father, Henry, 63, remains busy working on projects along with her mother Jill. Both have been hands on in the business since Henry bought the first residential rental property in



Sunderland 40 years ago.

It's a cottage that has emotional meaning for the parents and is still retained within the property portfolio.

Alex's partner Paul, a mechanic for 18 years, joined the family business in 2019 and spends much of his time with maintenance matters alongside Mick, a finish joiner. Alex added: "We are lucky enough to still have George and Cliff around on site to pass on there knowledge to the next generation."

Alex, who somehow finds time to bring up three children, said: "As a firm we pride ourselves on being a family run business with proud roots in the North East of England. We live in each other's pockets and speak about the business every day. It can sometimes be hard to pull back and relax. We need to find a better work-life-balance in the coming years."

The pandemic and lockdowns proved to be a critical period for the family and business. "We had never stopped before," explained Alex. "Some of our tenants suffered and went out of business but we were incredibly fortunate. It gave us valuable time to reflect and look more closely at how we ran things

and what direction we should be going in. It has changed everything for the better."

This period allowed Kirtley Co to review and alter several things. Business rates were reviewed and in one case an annual saving of £30,000 was secured. Staffing was slimmed down, and it was acknowledged there needs to be greater use of technology and how to better utilise time.

Going forwards, Alex hopes her parents can slow down and find more time to enjoy the fruits of their hard work.

In terms of the business, there is a strong likelihood the company will become fully commercial focussed with less residential properties in the portfolio. The goal is to have all properties fully occupied within the next 18 months.

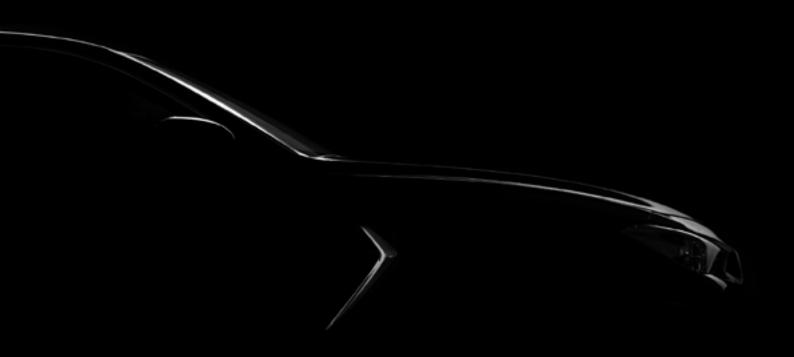
There's a fresh commitment to marketing now and perhaps in the coming years Alex, alongside sister Toni, will be more confident being in the spotlight and speaking up about the successes of tenants and the family business.

For more information, visit kirtleyco.uk



### Luxury travel.

# Blueline Executive





# Property experts partner-up to support holiday homeowners amid booming market

The UK's largest independent holiday home management firm has announced an exclusive partnership with the North's leading estate agency to bring a new service offering to support buyers and sellers of holiday homes.

The most recent Statista Market Outlook revealed that 15 million people used a holiday rental in the UK in 2022, with experts predicting that this will likely exceed 16.5 million this year and 16.67 million by 2027.

Host & Stay has joined forces with leading property specialist Bradley Hall to provide customers with new avenues to market properties to potential investors.

The strategic partnership will see Bradley Hall's clients receive expert analysis on the viability of holiday homes and help them better market properties.

Host & Stay prides itself on 'making it more affordable for holiday owners to manage and rent out their properties, while enjoying a greater return on investments' and believes the partnership with Bradley Hall will provide a major boost to the sector.

Dale Smith, CEO of Host & Stay, said: "At Host & Stay, I'm thrilled about our collaboration with Bradley Hall, as we strive to offer people invaluable insights into holiday home investments.

"Our forecasts, expert analysis, and exclusive packages are designed to simplify the holiday home rental journey for both sellers and buyers. It's an exciting time to invest."

According to experts at Bradley Hall, this has already had a positive impact on the firm, with the business receiving an increase in let related enquiries over the past 12 months. And with the new Host & Stay partnership set to go live this month, the company has high hopes for the new service.

Angus Todd, director of Bradley Hall Alnwick, said: "We've seen a real trend in people purchasing homes that they can let for income while using them as a second home for a proportion of the year. This partnership with Host & Stay will help us to capitalise on that.

"By combining our local expertise with Host & Stay's proficiency in the holiday home and short let market, we are confident that we will create a real win-win situation for property owners seeking to tap into new investment opportunities across the North of England.

"It's a really exciting deal for everyone involved." The two companies are hosting a series of events at Bradley Hall's Alnwick and Gosforth branches over the coming months, offering buyers and sellers a chance to speak to Bradley Hall's expert estate agency teams, Host & Stay reps and interior designers from Styled Interiors.

Angus added: "Whether you're an experienced investor looking to streamline operations or someone simply exploring the idea of getting into the industry, these events will really help open your eyes to the support and opportunities available.

"With demand in the UK showing no signs of slowing down, there's never been a better time to invest in holiday homes and short term let properties in the North of England, so I'd encourage anyone interested in exploring the market to come and see what it's all about."

For more information, call 01665 605605



# Two key appointments at leading North East property firm

Full-service property firm, Bradley Hall, has appointed two members of staff to exciting new positions. Joseph l'Anson has been appointed Director of Bradley Hall Teesside, while Katie Kinchella has been appointed as residential lettings manager.



l'Anson, who studied estate management at Northumbria University, first joined Bradley Hall as a graduate surveyor in June 2013.

Since then, he has gone on to climb the ranks, going from chartered surveyor to associate director, and is now set to take on his biggest role to date. He said: "I am incredibly proud to have been appointed as the new director of Bradley Hall Teesside.

"As someone who has lived and studied in the region my whole life, I have seen first-hand how the area has been transformed over the past decade.

"Traditionally, the region's engineering, energy and chemicals industries have been the area's economic bedrock, and while that remains the case today, significant developments such as Teesworks and TeesAMP are heralding the beginning of a new dawn for the area.

"Already, we've seen BP, SeAH and SABIC invest heavily in the green industries of tomorrow and this is having a huge knock-on effect for the wider region, with demand for quality housing and workspace naturally increasing as a result.

"In fact, each and every week our team are receiving calls from businesses and people seeking to relocate to Tees Valley, so I'm extremely excited to have been appointed to head up our Teesside operation as we continue to increase our presence in the region."

Bradley Hall opened its first Teesside office in 2021 with the aim of 'helping attract businesses to the area and market homes for local people.'

Joseph added: "It's been just over two years since the opening of our first, dedicated Tees Valley office and it's great to see how well the team has done to lay the foundations for growth and going above and beyond to service existing clients.

"As a Teessider myself, it is very exciting to see the fantastic work being done across Tees Valley to help reposition the region as a real Northern Powerhouse punching well above its weight and Bradley Hall and I are proud to be helping to fly the flag for the area."

Katie Kinchella has been appointed to oversee a new service aimed at streamlining the way landlords manage their portfolios. Aimed at revolutionising the way portfolios are managed, the new Residential Lettings and Management service is specially tailored to landlords who own residential properties and are required to comply with strict legislation.

Traditionally, landlords with properties in multiple areas would have had to deal with multiple offices, however the service streamlines the process by providing a single, dedicated team who can manage the entire process from start to finish.

The service will also see the Bradley Hall team help with tenant acquisition, marketing properties, rent collection, maintenance and repairs and compliance and financials, taking away almost all of the complexities of the process of letting and managing properties.

Katie Kinchella, residential lettings manager at Bradley Hall, said: "We are excited to finally announce the launch of our combined Residential Lettings and Management service.

"Designed for landlords, with the support of our dedicated and knowledgeable team, our goal is to empower landlords by simplifying their day-to-day tasks and allowing them to focus on what they do best in making strategic investment decisions.

"The feedback we've received thus far has been great and we are confident that the service will provide a huge boost to the region's landlords."

bradleyhall.co.uk

24:2023

# Streamlined planning to further power up Port...

A new super-efficient planning process has been created to aid an ongoing development at one of the North's fastest growing ports.



South Tyneside Council has worked closely with Port of Tyne management to develop a new planning protocol designed to remove unnecessary barriers or speedbumps from the approval process and help drive development at the facility.

The upgrade removes a number of traditionally time-consuming steps in the planning process and enables Port of Tyne to quickly capitalise on the rapidly-growing offshore wind sector, for which the location is gaining a well-deserved reputation for delivery.

Cllr Tracey Dixon, leader of South Tyneside Council, said: "We are a planningfriendly borough and by initiating this protocol, we're making it easier for our current businesses at the Port to develop and grow and also enhancing our ability to attract new businesses looking for a soft landing in a new location to South Tyneside.

"The opportunities presented by the rapidly expanding offshore wind sector are immeasurable and given our unique location to the Dogger Bank project, we're in prime position to take advantage. This new planning protocol will prove vital in our ability to continue attracting the cream of the offshore wind crop."

The protocol covers the area classed as Port 'operational' land, which constitutes most of the Ports land holding on the south bank of the Tyne. The regulations reduce the Port's requirement for consultation, instead working closely with South Tyneside Council to address any concerns or on-site issues.

Victoria Beattie, Head of Estates from Port of Tyne, said: "The Port and South Tyneside Council enjoy a fantastic working relationship and together we can achieve great things.

"The protocol will provide assurance to new businesses locating on the Port that their requirements will be delt with in a timely, efficient way and it will provide a fantastic addition to our ever-expanding armoury to attract new renewables companies to the Port, creating highly-skilled new jobs in a rapidly expanding sector.

"These are exciting times for Port of Tyne and South Tyneside."

Wind and solar energy made up a record high of global electricity generation last year, with renewables generating 12% of global electricity in 2022. South Tyneside's location, proud maritime history and traditional engineering skills see it ideally suited to become a European hub for offshore wind.

The Port has already welcomed
Dogger Bank Wind Farm Operations and
Maintenance Base and Equinor to the
borough in recent years, both of which have
hit the ground running.

The opening of the state-of-the-art hub on the former McNulty's shipyard site in South Shields will create over 400 long-term high-quality jobs, supporting the operations and maintenance of the world's largest offshore wind farm, just off the North East coast.

In total, over 2,000 UK jobs have already been created or supported through the Dogger Bank project since construction of the first two phases began in 2020, and South Tyneside is one of the boroughs set to benefit most from the landmark development.

Cllr Dixon added: "Offshore wind offers us a once in a lifetime opportunity and we must grab it with both hands. There is an ever-increasing need to develop new and renewable energy sources and we are perfectly placed to provide the jump off point to one of the largest offshore wind sites in the world

"South Tyneside is committed to creating job opportunities and providing the people of our borough with sustainable, exciting careers. Establishing this Protocol with the Portis a demonstration to inward investors that we're open for business and ready to welcome them to the borough."





In response to continued demand for its specialist tax services, Newcastle-based independent chartered accountancy and business advisory firm UNW has added to its pool of experienced tax practitioners with the appointment of Alastair Murray as Tax Partner.

With more than two decades of experience, predominantly looking after the personal tax affairs of business owners, Alastair's arrival further enhances the firm's senior capability and its reputation as a trusted advisor to entrepreneurs and their businesses.

Alastair joins what is already one of the largest specialist tax teams in the region, that includes private client, employment taxes and VAT specialists in addition to a corporate tax team that has a client base across a wide range of sectors and business types.



Speaking of his motivations for joining UNW, Alastair said: "I have been a long-time admirer of the firm. It has a strong reputation in the marketplace - one that it has worked hard to build. Everywhere you look at UNW there are people with vast technical knowledge and experience, and that collective expertise is unmatched in the region when viewing the proposition that we are able to offer our clients.

"One important factor in my decision to join the business, which has been confirmed in my first couple of months here, is UNW's commitment to hiring and developing talent. There's a distinctive culture of training and development throughout the firm, where highly experienced people work alongside trainees with an emphasis on passing on their skills and experience."

Steve Lant, Tax Partner at UNW said: "Alastair is a superb addition to the firm, and I was delighted when he agreed to join us. We are continuing to grow, and he has an impressive track record of helping and adding value to clients."

unw.co.uk











# Mala Art Co: Making its mark in the world of e-commerce art

In the bustling realm of online art, few brands have made as swift and impactful an entrance as Mala Art Co.

The brainchild of the trio behind Durham-based social media agency, The Social Co, and twin artists, The Rocks Brothers, Mala Art Co is taking the e-commerce art world by storm, capturing the essence of luxury art and making it accessible to the masses.

Recognising the potential of digitalising the Rocks Brothers' originals—masterpieces which often sell for thousands of pounds – The Social Co decided to join forces with the duo to offer the pieces as affordable printed canvases, complemented by bespoke floating frames.

The brand has enjoyed meteoric growth within its first 18 months, boosted by its association with influential ambassadors such as Olivia Bowen and KJG Home.

Come the end of 2023, art aficionados can witness their collection at the esteemed Ideal Home Show in London. And for an 18-month-old company to garner mentions from elite publishers like Vogue, the trajectory is evident.

The company's ambition shines brighter than ever, with plans to raise funds for an explosive 2024, targeting a threefold surge in turnover. Their retail presence is also burgeoning, with prestigious placements in retail giant, Fenwick.

Director, Phil Sutcliffe, beams with pride as he reflects on their journey: "We are extremely happy with our progress in our first 18 months of trading.

"To already have featured in online publishers such as Vogue and to be working alongside some of the most well-known home interior influencers on the planet is a credit to the work the team has put in so far, already cementing us as one of the most popular printed art companies in the UK.

"In 2024, we look to further expand our team, collaborate with more artists to bring more collections, and who knows, maybe we can see the launch of some new products. It's a very exciting time for Mala Art Co."

malaartco.co.uk @malaartco





Communications specialist Rob Webster landed on his feet just as he was facing an uncertain future. Our Business Editor highlights how Rob has seized his opportunity with the Smart Group and is driving for growth.

Good fortune comes in many shapes and guises. Just when your career looks like it's about to take a turn for the worse, a lucky break can emerge from the gloom. Rob Webster has been on a career roller coaster during the last three years. But today, the father of one can look in the rear mirror with a smile on his face as he sees a brighter journey ahead.

He's spearheading the growth of two communications businesses and is in the process of a company relocation as part of a wider expansion programme.

But back in 2020, his management ambitions took an unexpected jolt, and he was facing the prospect of redundancy. With the Covid-19 pandemic just taking a hold of the country, the blow couldn't have come at a much worse time.

The telephony communications company he worked for, Nice Network, was acquired by a larger player. His ambitions to one day be part of a management buyout team evaporated overnight.

Fortunately, Rob's strong relationships with many of his clients meant an offer quickly appeared. Smart Outdoor, specialists in digital outdoor advertising, who he had sold a telephony system to months earlier, invited him into the group to establish a telephony business.

"It was a fabulous opportunity. It's been tough, like it is for any start-up business. But we are on a journey and going in the right direction. There is no shortage of good business in the North East," explained Rob, MD of Smart Communications.

The telephony business was set up in Houghton le Spring in April 2001, during the pandemic. Today, Rob, 46, looks back in some wonder and bemusement. "It might not have been the perfect time to start a business, but we have been steadily growing," he said.

But isn't this a crowded market and haven't IT and telephony converged? Rob, who used to be an IT engineer, explained: "IT companies sell telephony



buy most don't have the skills and experience to provide the right solution. There's a couple that do it well, but most don't. Also, some of the other traditional regional players have sold out and been bought by national corporates.

"There's a niche in the market for a dedicated, experienced telecoms provider. And it's clear to me that North East companies like dealing with other North East companies, rather than corporates."

Solid customer service and great after sales care remain paramount. However, everchanging technology means there are new products and solutions coming to market. Rob believes these will help drive his growth plans.

"Starlink - Elon Musk's satellite broadband - is a gamechanger. It offers speeds and reliability never seen before. There are only two recognised resellers in the UK at the moment and we have applied to be the third. It is a real opportunity for many businesses, especially those in more rural areas where internet access and reliability is a problem," said Rob.

Starlink is a satellite internet project, and a subsidiary of aerospace company SpaceX, owned by Elon Musk. It's an alternative to optical fibre and 5G internet many of us currently use in our offices and homes. Starlink beams internet data from satellites in earth's orbit, which is then sent to local receivers. It doesn't rely on costly ground-based infrastructure near to where you work or live.

Basic kits, along with high-performance kits with a larger satellite receiver for areas with a partially obstructed signal, can be bought direct or from certain retailers. However, many people don't have the confidence or where-with-all to install properly. This is where Smart Communications and others will step in to help businesses.

Rob recently installed Starlink into the regional business premises of Parkers Chauffeurs near Newcastle International Airport, making a significant difference to reliable, speedy connectivity.

Just when Rob was getting comfortable with the direction of travel for the business, Mark and Iain Catterall, the owners of Smart Outdoor, asked Rob to also head the group's Smart Vision subsidiary.

Smart Vision has partnerships with LED manufacturers across Europe and can fabricate and sell bespoke screens for clients, to fit a range of spaces and uses. The company supplies and installs screens into multiple establishments and industries such as bars, sports bars, eateries, external and internal container parks, hotels, clubs, theatres, sporting venues, shopping centres and roadside advertising.

Rob said: "Smart Vision is a sleeping giant, a bit like Newcastle Utd has been in recent years until the takeover and Eddie Howe's arrival. We already have a great pipeline of business established by Lee, the sales director. My role will be to add processes and systems to the business and steer future strategy."

He sees better communications as a key foundation to improving the business and ensuring all employees are on the same page, fully understanding the business, its potential and ways to cross-sell services and products.

This philosophy, endorsed by the owners, is one of the reasons Smart Group is relocating from its two sites in Houghton le Spring and Felling to a single site in Boldon. It's hoped that everyone will move and be in the new site well before Christmas. Come the new year a recruitment drive for more sales staff and engineers will be launched.

"If someone has said to me in 2020, I would be in the position I am today I would have cast doubt given the position the country was in due to COVID. I've always had the ambition to run a telecommunications business myself but with Mark, Iain and the team alongside me great things are on the horizon," said Rob.

More details can be found at: smartcommunications.com

John McCabe, CEO of North East England Chamber of Commerce

#### My morning routine is...

Usually straightforward now our children are older. The day always starts with at least one cup of tea. Breakfast is usually a bagel and a banana. I'll let the cat out and have a quick look at emails and the digital version of The Journal. As I'm getting ready I'll usually have a podcast on in the background. That could be anything from The Rest is Politics or The News Agents to Parenting Hell or my favourite, Quickly Kevin Will He Score?, a podcast dedicated to football in the 90s.

#### What puts me in a good mood...

We have a very tight close family unit and nothing gives me greater pleasure than having all of the gang together. I also love running whether it's the challenge of long distance or the great community spirit of Parkrun. I rarely if ever regret a run.

#### What makes me angry...

It's very much a work in progress but the older I get the harder I try not to get angry. That said, I think there is one aspect of human behaviour that speaks volumes and it's our attitude to animals. You can tell such a lot about a person by how they treat animals and any form of cruelty makes me so mad. Also, people who chat during a film or play.

#### Values I try to live and work by...

Fairness and respect. I turned 50 last year and it was the first time a landmark birthday has really made me stop and think. My conclusion was the pursuit of perfection is almost always counterproductive. Being aware of my own many short-comings and learning to accept them has helped me in so many different ways.



#### Bad habits I try to break...

Eating too many foam bananas and overthinking.

#### My sources of joy are...

My family's security and happiness. Also, I'm lucky to be in a job I genuinely love so for as long as I have this privilege, I want to give it everything I've got.

#### I relax and destress by...

Sitting in the garden with a good book and a glass of something nice.

#### What most people don't know about me?

I have trypophobia. It's an aversion to irregular patterns and clusters of holes or lumps. It sounds ridiculous but honestly if you have it, you'll know exactly what I mean. Just the sight of the top of a box of straws or a slice of pomegranate can make my teeth itch.

#### If I didn't do my current job, I'd like to be...

Manager of Liverpool Football Club or James Bond.

North East England Chamber of Commerce is the biggest business representative organisation in the region. necc.co.uk





# Jon Leighton, Director at Land Digital, talks the future of business and what downtime means to him

#### What kind of services does Land Digital offer?

We're a digital agency specialising in the development of software solutions for various businesses and organisations. Our range services encompass all stages of the development cycle, from initial discovery to the scaling of your digital product or service. Our mission is to help our clients create new and innovative solutions to their digital business challenges, enabling them to meet their growth goals and stand out from the crowd.

#### What are you working on now?

As we settle in to the last few months of the year, we're busy firming up plans with all our clients for 2024. It's set to be another busy year for us and we have lots of great projects in the pipeline. We're also moving offices in the next couple of months, too, which is an exciting step for us. It's an inviting and dynamic space, with a cool meeting room and even a clock tower. We're looking forward to welcoming clients through its doors soon.

#### What does a typical working week look like for you?

Each week serves up variety, which is nice. Wherever possible, I try to have most of my online meetings in the morning, which allows my afternoons to be spent either out and about meeting clients or powering through my to-do list with some music on.

#### Describe your career journey so far...

It's been varied. I worked in education before moving over to digital and I even ran my own pub when I was in my twenties. I've always wanted to run my own business and had a range of enterprises throughout college, but I didn't plan on building a digital agency until later on in life. When I was at school, Windows 3.1 had only just been released, so nobody, not even me, could have predicted I'd end up working in today's fast-paced digital world.

#### How do you spend your time when you're not running a business?

I like to spend a good amount of time outdoors. I try to do a lot of walking at the weekends. I'm training for a 100km next year, so whenever I get the chance to stretch my legs, I do. Aside from that, I try my best to relax and unwind, as well as read, as much as possible – it's important.

#### landdigital.agency

# North East commercial property continues to buck trends

Continued investment flooding into the North East's key cities and industrial hubs is leading to increased demand for commercial property.



That is according to Bradley Hall, a fullservice property agency with seven offices stretching from Alnwick to Tees Valley.

Over the past 12 months, the company's commercial teams have seen lettings and sales of office, industrial and leisure property 'increase significantly.' Analysis by the firm of the latest North East market data by CoStar also shows that, despite challenging conditions across the industry, the region continues to outperform the national average, showcasing its 'resilience and potential.'

Key to this, according to the data gathered by the world leader in real estate information, has been the multitude of Grade A office and industrial developments currently being developed across the region.

Developments include HMRC's commitment to build a 460,000sq ft regional hub at Pilgrim's Quarter; the £400million International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) adjacent to Nissan; Maker & Faber, the £100million Legal & General-backed Grade A office scheme at Riverside Sunderland; and the ongoing development of Durham's Millburngate.

Richard Rafique, Managing Director -Commercial at Bradley Hall, said: "Cranes seem to have dominated the skylines of our key cities throughout the past year and long may it continue. "From Strawberry Place to Riverside Sunderland, Millburn Gate and TeesAMP, the North East is undergoing a regeneration programme not seen in generations and we have certainly bore witness to that.

"Over the past 12 months, we've seen industrial sales, investment opportunities and office sales and lettings all increase significantly, despite the many challenges facing the sector.

"And with more spades set to break ground and more cranes set to pepper our city skylines over the next 12 months, we're wholly confident that while the national picture may be cloudy, the bountiful opportunities for businesses and investors looking to capitalise on the North East's resurgence are clear for all to see."

One of the sector's hardest hit by the cost-of-living crisis and still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic however is the hospitality sector, yet this has done little to dampen the spirits of investors.

Buoyed by the development of a new Dakota Hotel on the former St Ann's Wharf building on Newcastle's Quayside - brokered by Bradley Hall -, the sale of the freehold of the Hotel Indigo in Newcastle for £13.8 million to KE Hotels and the opening of the new Holiday Inn at Riverside Sunderland, and Rafique believes there is still a lot of reasons

to remain positive about the sector's fortunes

"We were delighted to work with Dakota on the acquisition of what is a prime site on Newcastle's Quayside this month, but that is just one of the many success stories from the sector over the past year," he added.

"As well as brokering multiple deals for The Inn Collection Group, we've also secured multiple lettings underneath the Holiday Inn at Riverside Sunderland and we've seen new bars open up in Durham and Newcastle.

"So, while the sector may still be recovering from the ills of the pandemic, it's clear that it has done little to deter investment.

"In fact, the ever-going transformation of our city skylines, combined with an increase in the number of businesses relocating to the region, means there could still be plenty more deals to follow over the coming months ahead as more and more people look to the North East as a desirable place to live and work."

bradleyhall.co.uk



# Businesses should give the gift of Sunderland...

Sunderland BID has always been at the core of trailblazing initiatives across the city centre, from introducing Sunderland's celebrated Restaurant Week to its app with its ever-changing AR trail.

It was back in 2020 however that arguably one of its most game changing schemes was introduced - and one that continues to go from strength to strength. Sunderland Gift Card was the creation of the BID, aimed at encouraging people to give recipients choice and support the local economy at the same time.

The scheme has been a huge success, with more than 200 businesses - from high street names to independent operators - all signed up to accept the cards.

With Christmas just around the corner, the BID is also now keen to flag up to companies and organisations which are thinking of ways to reward their staff to consider the gift card - which comes with a whole host of extra benefits.

Thanks to the Government's trivial benefits scheme, a company can give their staff a non-cash reward of up to £50 with no tax or national insurance implications.

The limit is also per gift rather than per year, so that anyone who wants to give a thank you to an employee for a job well done or for any other reason can do without any fear of penalisation.

The Sunderland Gift Card falls into this noncash reward category, making it a great choice for businesses across Wearside - and beyond - to use it as a token of appreciation. It's a scheme that a number of companies took advantage of last year and Sharon Appleby, Chief Executive of Sunderland BID is hoping that even more will buy the cards this time round.

"There are so many advantages of giving someone a Sunderland Gift Card," she said.

"Firstly you're giving someone a choice so they can spend it on something that they really want. If you have a number of employees it's virtually impossible to give a gift that everyone will want, so it makes sense to let them pick something for themselves.

"At the same time this is a brilliant way of supporting local businesses and the local economy by spending the cards in Sunderland."

There's no shortage of choices for recipients - from retailers in the Bridges through to restaurants and even hotels.

For businesses cards given out during the festive season are often spent in the early months of the new year - a welcome income stream at a time of year when spending is notoriously low.

For more information, visit <u>sunderlandgiftcard.com</u>, email giftcard@sunderlandbid.co.uk or call 0191 722 1002



#### Matrimonial vs non-matrimonial assets

Many people do not realise that during a divorce, the family courts in England and Wales can distinguish between 'matrimonial' and 'non-matrimonial' assets.

This can add a layer of complexity to financial proceedings, because they may be treated differently when the financial pot is divided.

#### What is the difference between matrimonial and non-matrimonial assets?

'Matrimonial assets' are financial assets that spouses have obtained and built up during a marriage, which can, and should, be divided between them on divorce. This can include the family home, savings and investments, pensions and business interests, to name a few. It does not necessarily matter who accumulated the wealth - the general position is that the assets gained during the marriage also belong to your spouse and so they shall be entitled to a share.

'Non-matrimonial assets', on the other hand, are assets which have not been acquired from matrimonial endeavour. Instead, they may have been obtained before the marriage or after separation, or may have been acquired unilaterally, such as inheritance or gifts from a spouse. The exception to this is the family home which is, in principle, often shared equally between the parties regardless of whether it was purchased by one spouse before the marriage.

It is important to bear in mind that often, non-matrimonial assets should remain separate from matrimonial wealth to preserve their 'non-matrimonial' status. Any assets which have been mingled or entangled with joint assets may be more likely to be considered as matrimonial, regardless of their source. While the starting point for matrimonial assets is they should be shared, non-matrimonial assets are unlikely to be divided on divorce, unless one spouse can validate a claim based on 'need'.

#### In what circumstances may nonmatrimonial assets be taken into account?

The first step when considering finances is the exchange of 'full and frank' disclosure of financial information, to include both matrimonial and non-matrimonial assets. Once the assets and their values have been determined, parties can assess whether a fair financial outcome can be achieved in the first instance, out of the matrimonial assets alone.

It becomes more complicated when there is not enough in the matrimonial pot to meet both spouse's needs. Where there is a shortfall, the court has a wide discretion to invade non-matrimonial assets in order to meet those needs.

It is not routinely the case that nonmatrimonial assets would be shared equally in such circumstances - rather, the spouse in a weaker financial position would be awarded a proportion based on their need

Therefore, whilst it is often the case that non-matrimonial assets are excluded from settlements, this is not guaranteed. Each case will be considered on its own facts and assessed based on fairness and need.

#### How to protect non-matrimonial assets

Drawing up a nuptial agreement may be an effective way to try and protect non-matrimonial assets in the event of a divorce. A nuptial agreement is a formal agreement between spouses that sets out the division of assets if the relationship later comes to an end. Such agreements can be signed before marriage (prenuptial agreement) or after marriage (postnuptial agreements).

Although not strictly legally binding in English courts, often they will carry significant weight, provided certain criteria is met. The terms of a nuptial agreement can include provisions specifically relating to non-matrimonial assets, to determine how they should be divided if spouses later separate.

The division of assets on divorce can be complex. The general principle is that matrimonial assets will be shared, whereas non-matrimonial assets will not be. However, this isn't set in stone. If one party's needs cannot be met from their share of matrimonial assets alone, the court can, and will, invade non-matrimonial assets. While it is impossible to prepare for every outcome, seeking specialist advice early on can help you to understand how your assets might be treated by a court on divorce and avoid any surprises down the line.

For confidential, trusted advice about settling finances during a divorce, contact Emily Cannell on ecannell@mincoffs. co.uk, or visit mincoffs.co.uk/services/family-law

# Straight talking, hard working and forward thinking. Since 1948.



# A Q&A with NWR Hygiene's Chris Lowery

#### What inspired you to start a hygiene company and the services you offer?

Being a North-East based entrepreneur, I wanted to offer businesses needing washroom solutions a local solution with exceptional customer service. As most of the existing hygiene companies are nationals, I believed there was a gap in the market for a more regionalised solution.

## What innovative products or technologies does NWR Hygiene use to maintain and enhance commercial washroom standards?

I'm a bit of a gadget man and a lover of new tech! If a new tech-driven product is brought to the hygiene market, we will look at how this can be utilised for the benefit of our customers. For example, we have products such as Aura, which removes all odours from toilet areas using only UV light. No chemicals, no harsh products - just UV and much better from an environmental perspective.

### In recent years, there has been an increased focus on hygiene in all settings. How has your business contributed to improving bathroom hygiene?

Simple really. We have listened to what our customers have told us they want and need. Consumers expect higher hygiene standards in washrooms these days, and we look to meet those needs.

### Can you share any environmentally friendly or sustainable practices NWR Hygiene follows when designing or maintaining washrooms?

We are constantly reviewing our carbon footprint and impact on the environment. We look to use lower carbon footprint products and use items that are 100% recyclable. All our customers' waste is zero landfill, and we are moving towards a fleet of electric vehicles.

#### What are the most common challenges faced by washroom companies and how do you address them?

We find that many hygiene companies offer a like-for-like service. Our model is different in that, having listened to the customers' needs, we provide products and services that will remove odours from the washroom area instead of attempting to mask odours.

## You pride yourself on supplying tailored solutions; how do you adapt your hygiene solutions and services to meet clients' specific needs?

Our starting point with any customer is that no one is the same. We offer a free site survey as standard and take the time to discuss products which smell better and are designed to use less energy.

North East Entrepreneur Chris
Lowery is the founder of commercial
washroom services company NWR
Hygiene. Established over 15 years
ago and based in a recently restored
historic building in Stanley, County
Durham, the business has gone
from strength to strength, supplying
hospitality, retail, education,
manufacturing and sporting sectors
with quality washroom solutions.

We had the pleasure of speaking to Chris about the inspiration behind the brand, the use of innovative technologies and implementing expansion plans.



#### Are there any notable projects or installations you have been involved in that you would like to highlight?

We have recently won the contract for Ramside Estates, and we have had customers such as Wynyard Hall recently re-contract due to our exceptionally high service levels. We do like to give back where we can, and we have recently started donating female sanitary products to the West End Foodbank.

#### You have been hugely successful in the North East. What factors do you attribute to this success?

It's simple, really. We have a great sales and service team, which goes over and above to keep our customers happy. People buy from people ultimately, so we do everything possible to deliver a first-class service.

# With North East success firmly under your belt, you are looking to expand into West Yorkshire. What was behind your decision to expand operations into this region?

We have a great Area Manager, Rakhee Soni, who has worked in this geographical area for a while. Rakhee delivers excellent customer service; through her commitment, hard work and dedication, our customer base has grown significantly. On the back of our success with sales expansion, we have recruited more service team members to ensure that we are fulfilling our obligations.

#### How do you plan to differentiate your commercial hygiene services from other regional providers?

We have local people on the ground who know the area. We offer tried and trusted means of communication with no call centres. If a customer has any service issues, this can be dealt with by the service team via a direct mobile telephone number.

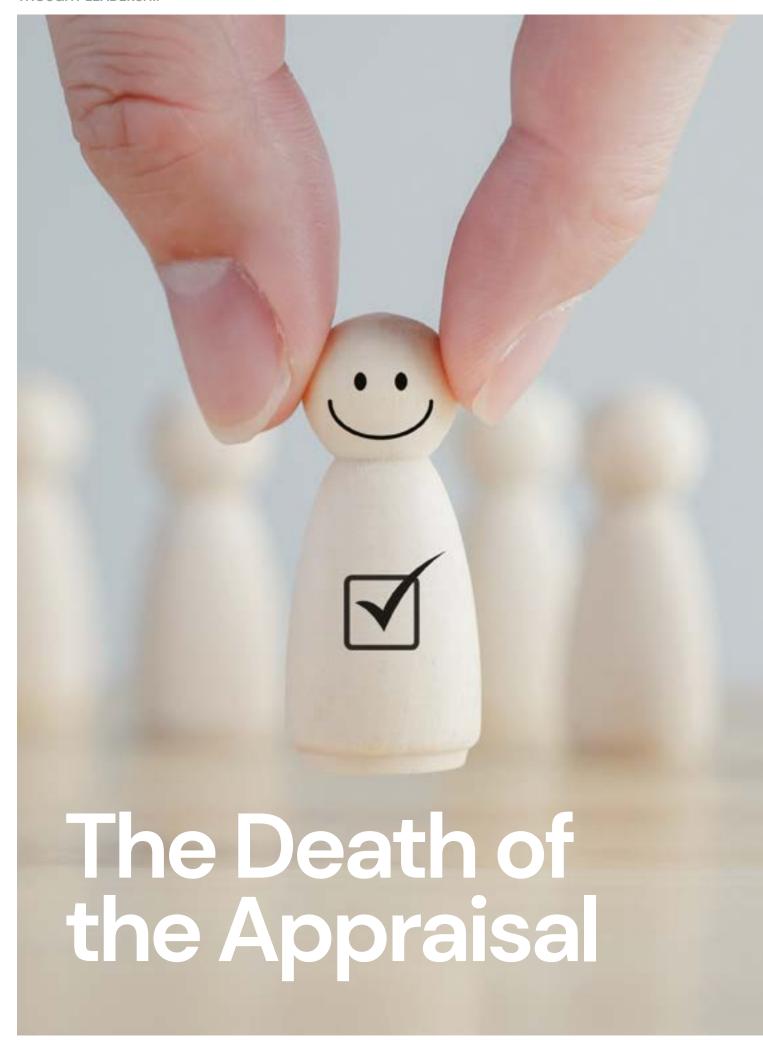
#### How does this expansion align with your long-term growth strategy and vision for the future of NWR Hygiene?

We are committed to a sustainable growth strategy that doesn't compromise quality. We want to continue providing our new and existing customers with unparalleled customer care underpinned by implementing new technological products.

#### And finally, when you're not inspecting and improving washrooms, how do you relax?

I play golf as much as I can and enjoy listening to a wide range of music. Even at this age, I still have a penchant for Pete Tong, takes me back to my Ibiza days!

For more information about NWR Hygiene, contact Chris Lowery on 01207 505275 or visit <a href="mailto:nwrhygienegroup.co.uk">nwrhygienegroup.co.uk</a>



# Exclusively for Portfolio North, Ian P Buckingham, thought leading author and CIPD's People Management magazine's HRFixer, shares his thoughts on a thorny issue for business leaders

Times are tough. Any business founder or forward- thinking CEO will tell you that cultivating, expanding and then sustaining a business brings many challenges. These are amplified during periods of perpetual pressure. But why does the simple act of plugging employees into the core goals of the business present as a dark and troublesome chore, just when you need your team to step up?

It's tricky assigning goals to people for many reasons. With five generations working together, many employees resent alignment, authority and accountability and especially don't like to be told what to do. Yet decent performance has very little to do with a good "telling to".

The golden thread connecting business goals to individual objectives really should be what entices employees to go the extra mile, the stuff that could make the critical difference to the business. But why do employees hate appraisals? And why does the very concept of a performance review or process give so many managers sleepless nights?

Well, the simple answer is: they're not skilled or confident enough to operate the process properly. The competencies required are seldom cultivated or taught and the process becomes laden with negativity, especially when employees don't have the same skin in the game as their line managers looking to set their goals.

As recently as last year, a major global consultancy firm claimed that over half the business leaders they consulted were considering abandoning their performance review process completely. When pushed, they gave reasons like:

- 1. "It's not worth the time needed to fill out the forms"
- 2. "The process leads to divisive and negative conversations that undermine morale"
- 3. "Younger employees especially, struggle with any hint of authority"

As a consequence, some high-profile organisations are experimenting with letting performance reviews slide.

While it may be trendy to bash appraisals, is it fair or even wise to undermine the process? In my view, it's madness, especially now. So let me (briefly) debunk the excuses:

#### 1. Time:

It's no surprise to me that the same leaders who blame process and can't find the time often complain how hard it is to attract and retain employees or to cultivate a performance culture. Their behaviour is clearly the challenge, not the forms. What is more important than focus and encouragement, improvement and adjustment?

Their leaders need to re-frame the process; ensure every employee has clear and evolving goals and objectives and that they review them regularly with their line manager in short, focused sessions rather than treating it as an annual chore.

#### 2. Negativity:

Feedback and coaching skills don't come naturally to most. If your process is driving cynicism, you're not doing it right. Consider training or leadership coaching based on simple principles.

#### 3. Authority:

Again, positioning is key and this reaction suggests that your line managers need some development support. Accountability is a non-negotiable for all employees and if communicated appropriately, it should be a source of recognition and appreciation, a positive that bonds and inspires.

Companies don't exist solely for the benefits of their employees. Their purpose is to deliver the vision and objectives of the organisation. Hopefully their goals are balanced enough to include social and colleague metrics and will predominantly be linked to all-important customer and shareholder satisfaction. Even third-sector institutions get how important balance is. The needs of colleagues, owners, customers and other stakeholders shouldn't be mutually exclusive and won't be seen that way, if the leaders are doing their job well.

The performance management system is a critical people process. It should help create and then cultivate the golden thread between corporate vision and employee contracts to drive performance, recognition and reward. So it's not only unwise to ignore PM. It's dangerously irresponsible.

We've recently helped one of the region's largest building organisations reconstruct their leadership development programme on the back of their approach to performance management. They've won awards for the resulting process. Their directors credit the resulting behaviour as the primary reason for their counter-cyclical positive performance as a business

So if you're tempted by the dark lure of the cynical chatter, try concentrating on re-engineering the way your leaders engage with others about their performance instead. As their highly-rated HRD is fond of saying: "it ain't what you do but the way that you do it". How are your results?



lan is the Strategy Partner and Consultancy lead of Mosaic Partners, a leading-edge people development agency based in the North East, helping clients across sectors make the most of their leadership challenges and opportunities.

I have two pieces of advice that I've been given over the years: 1) Surround yourself with people who are better than you, and 2) It's only when you know your own limitations that you can have confidence in your own abilities.

A CEO and leader I once worked with said that he would always prefer to be two laps ahead of everyone else if/when the wheels came off, as he would then have time to put them back on and still be ahead. That has stuck with me ever since and is a principal that we have built our business on. Too many startups and potential entrepreneurs look for perfection too early instead of just getting started and learning as they go.



Richard Shell
The Doxford Group



Dale Smith
The SDDE Group

# The best piece of business advice you've been given

66 Carefully consider what you do and always strive to always have a positive impact. Whether it's in our work to develop and build brands and campaigns, or through the way we value our relationships with clients, suppliers and our team, it's great advice that has always stuck with me.

Two pieces of advice stick out for me – both of which have had an impact on my career journey. The first is become really good at one thing - and one thing only - then promote the hell out of it. The second is look for the learning in every experience that comes your way.

"

**Darren Richardson** Gardener Richardson





**Steven Rawlington** Samuel Knight

66 Don't make perfect the enemy of good. I've found this advice useful throughout my career when it comes to decision-making decisions. Situations are rarely black and white in business and delaying too long on a decision, while you look for the perfect set of data and/or all the nuances to make it, is rarely helpful.

A career mentor once told me it's ok to slow down – especially when you're climbing the career ladder. When I was younger, I pushed myself to the point of complete burnout. Later, I learned that he meant that I could still advance my career, but on my own terms. This advice empowered me to be much more selective about which projects to accept, resulting in me becoming a better and happier leader.

"



Jason Wainwright Muckle LLP Elaine Stroud Entrepreneurs' Forum



You can't do everything yourself. In order to curate a successful environment that will nurture innovation and growth, I had to accept that as one person I couldn't undertake every role to the level required and needed to let go. Instead, hiring strategically within the leadership team would facilitate a collaborative workplace that in-turn allowed me to nurture avenues that align with my strengths. Therefore, within recruitment rounds, linked to this to the concept of hiring slow and firing fast to ensure teams are enhanced and not restricted.

"





I have two pieces of advice that I've been given over the years. Surround yourself with people who are better than you, and it's only when you know your own limitations that you can have confidence in your own abilities.



66 Knowledge is power is a great piece of advice that can be used in many contexts. Understanding your customers' business and where you can add value. Knowing what motivates your customers and employees and how to utilise that to get the best results. Foreseeing changes to market conditions and knowing how you can adapt your plan to mitigate risks and create opportunities.





**Gill Hunter** Square One Law

Richard Rafique Bradley Hall





# HR Teams need to be trained better to deal with whistleblowing matters

A 'speak up' culture may be building across businesses and organisations but there is a worrying lack of awareness and training on how to deal with whistleblowing matters.

Organisations are running the risk of reporting managers not understanding how to respond when an incident of wrongdoing is raised, and investigations not being carried out in a fair and transparent way, according to some new UK research.

In light of the new findings, HR managers and directors are being encouraged to review their whistleblowing processes to boost awareness and build greater trust among employees.

The whistleblowing survey, conducted by an independent third party, was commissioned by Sunderland-based Safecall – a specialist whistleblowing services provider. The report and findings allow HR practitioners to benchmark their public, private and third sector organisations against their peers.

Joanna Lewis, MD at Safecall, said: "What is notable from this survey is that, while the systems to enable speaking up are improving and becoming more robust, much more can be done to ensure people are prepared when a report of wrongdoing comes in.

"It's a positive sign that we are seeing more organisations taking whistleblowing seriously, but it's concerning that less than half the respondents are reporting that staff are regularly trained on how to deal with whistleblowing matters and how to investigate them."

A majority of respondents - some 88.4% - have a whistleblowing policy in place, while 11.6% do not. This is a marked improvement on the 2022 survey when 17% said they did not have a whistleblowing policy in place. While there is no legal requirement for a whistleblowing policy, under the Corporate Governance Code, if a listed company does not have one in place then senior management must be able to explain why this is the case.

There are sound business reasons to have a whistleblowing policy in place - notably, to aid management in defence of a corporate liability charge, should wrongdoing be suggested. It is actively encouraged by The Bribery Act 2010 and recommended in government guidance for all employers.

Most organisations provide a range of whistleblowing channels to report wrongdoing through, such as email, telephone, voicemail, the internet and mobile. However, more than 25% of respondents do not offer a telephone hotline to their employees.

A lack of hotline provision hinders employee accessibility to make a report. Joanna Lewis, added: "You are 50% more likely to get a report of bullying, harassment, victimisation or racism via a hotline call than via a web portal. That's because reporters are more likely to discuss emotional issues via a hotline service. There is value in a conversation that you simply cannot get in say, a voicemail or a web report." She added that whistleblowers feel more comfortable being named when they use a hotline, which should enable a more thorough investigation.

The report also indicated an increase in the number of organisations opting for an external whistleblowing services provider. Joanna Lewis explained: "We are seeing a noticeable shift towards using independent whistleblowing providers as more organisations are becoming aware of the value of an external service when encouraging their employees to speak up."

The report reveals that training and promotion of whistleblowing processes in the workplace appear to be areas where improvements can be made:

- Some 53% of respondents don't do continuous training and may feel that an induction or one-off training course is enough
- Around 18% don't train their staff in whistleblowing processes at all.

Safecall recommends that regular training refreshers are required. The more training that is provided, the more likely employees are to feel empowered and confident in their whistleblowing process.

Joanna Lewis concludes: "This survey's findings highlight a real opportunity for companies and organisations to review their whistleblowing processes, promote them better to their employees and ensure their confidential reporting hotlines and procedures are robust and independent.

For more information, visit safecall.co.uk



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Following a difficult couple of years, Portland Consulting Engineers is bouncing back, led by its strong leadership team. Our Business Editor interviewed MD Lee Barr, celebrating 10 years at the helm, to see how the company is boxing clever and driving growth.

The pandemic prompted many companies and business people to review their operations and reflect on whether they were still fit for purpose.

Gateshead-based Portland Consulting Engineers and MD Lee Barr saw the opportunity to take stock, reflect and refocus the business.

"Covid hit us and the sector fairly hard," explained Lee. "We were busier than ever, but margins and turnover fell. There was pressure on costs across the board. Overheads went up dramatically. The supply chain grew slower, along with the approach of clients to risk and project progress.

"Lockdowns posed significant challenges for us. And while the technology was there to allow our team to work remotely from home, this still raised issues due to the collaborative nature of our work.

"It was a difficult time, but thanks to the strong bonds between the team, they were able to pull each other through. As soon as guidance allowed, a managed transition was put in place for most of the team to return to the office."

As a former amateur boxer, Lee is used to taking a few blows. His strength of character, along with the support of his management team, helped him steer the business through the pandemic. It's a matter of personal pride that throughout the lockdown period no jobs were lost, and nobody was placed on furlough.

"It's fair to say we'd lost a bit of vision just prior to covid hitting. The impact of the pandemic brought many things to a head," said Lee. "Towards the end of the pandemic, I thought it might be time to get back to basics. Whenever I need time to think, I go to the family caravan in Amble. It's where I can reflect and look at things more clearly."

With Portland's continuous growth over the years prior to the pandemic, it was inevitable that not enough management time had been put against developing the business. Everyone was flat out supporting clients. "It was a time to re-group," said Lee. "We had to respond to changes in the market and expectations. Sometimes you must take a backward step before taking some forward steps. We are not precious at Portland. We knew we had to change and adapt, adopting new ways and a different management style while also retaining the family feel and close relationships that exist within Portland."

Lee recognised he needed to be more 'on the business' rather than 'in the business.' He also realised that it was time to re-establish Portland's vision and core values, which would solidify the company's identity within the minds of all the staff.

From 2021 onwards, Lee, with the management team, undertook an office-wide consultation, involving all the staff. He said: "The process brought us all together. The staff were critical in developing and establishing an agreed vision and set of values."

Lee also identified another weakness that needed addressing. "We didn't do enough forward thinking. We needed to identify risks earlier," he said.

More recently, Lee set about developing the company's business plan, providing an ambitious framework to drive Portland's growth over the next four years. The management team and external consultants were heavily involved.

"We looked at every aspect of the business. We reviewed our finance department, how we were marketing ourselves, our internal training systems, resource planning - everything. Being more efficient is a massive requirement for us, as well as improving our response times," said Lee. "We also listened to the industry, partners and clients."

Changes have included a new project management system, along with new accounts / finance software. There have also been structure changes in management and across the teams.

Portland's structure has undergone a variety of changes over the years as

staff numbers have continued to increase - currently 20-strong. Lee is keen to maintain the ethos within Portland, where loyalty and hard work are rewarded. In 2019 Mark Quigley and Stephen Hunter became shareholders in the company.

To keep pace with the evolution and subsequent growth of the company over the years, the management team has been strengthened with the addition of office manager Allison Donnelly and adding Sharon Shaw to head up Portland's marketing and business development operations. In May this year, a new position of operations manager was created and filled by Alan Maskell which has had an instant positive impact.

Today, the company is in a strong position with the processes and systems in place to manage growth and, more importantly, a strong management team and motivated staff to drive the business forwards. For Lee, it's an especially satisfying position as he celebrates 10 years at the helm of Portland.

He explained: "It's been a great decade working at Portland, watching the company grow into something unrecognisable from where we started. I've been lucky enough to have worked alongside some fantastic people and made some great friendships over the years. Friendships both within the company and with colleagues in the industry."

One person he particularly wants to thank, and praise is his immediate predecessor and Portland's founding MD, John Hardy. He was the first person to give Lee a job straight out of school and with his support, guidance and encouragement has always acted as a mentor. Following Lee's appointment as MD, John continued to work with Portland for a further year on a part-time consultancy basis, proving to be an unrivalled source of guidance and industry knowledge.

"John recognised my potential very early on," said Lee. "I moved from being a senior technician to become a structural engineer. He encouraged me to embark on a different journey. He saw the impact I was having, the clients I was bringing in and promoted me to associate and then director. More latterly, he developed a plan to leave the business and wanted me to take over."

Alongside the support of John, Lee also benefitted from a supportive management team, including director Mark Grant, who remains within the company. In addition, Lee inherited a business with a talented supporting team. Alongside Mark Grant remains Mark Quigley, who joined the business as an apprentice and is now a senior structural technician.

Lee's first year as MD was a successful one, as the construction industry enjoyed a significant upswing in activity. Portland's revenue increased by 25% and six new members joined the team. Portland

secured various multi-million-pound schemes within the North East and beyond, working for some of the UK's largest Registered Social Landlords.

Several notable schemes from this first year at the helm included work on a hydrotherapy pool for the Percy Hedley Foundation, education centres for Askham Bryan College in Middlesbrough and York, and a number of extra care schemes from the Redcare Framework.

This was followed by year-onyear growth with Portland achieving a milestone in 2017 when the company broke through the £1 million turnover barrier for the year. The business continued to grow with revenues reaching £1.5m in 2022.

Lee took the company into new sectors, moving away from predominantly industrial and housing clients to also include commercial, hotels and colleges. The diversification strategy secured the growth in fees. Portland's growth was also based on long-term client relationships which include Karbon Homes, Thirteen, Housing 21, UK Land Estates, and Dysart.

Portland has also secured industry recognition over the years. The first significant award won during Lee's period as MD was for work on Birtley Boxing Club, which won the RICS North East Renaissance Award and the RICS National Grand Final.

This was particularly satisfying for Lee who not only comes from Birtley but is a former middle-weight boxer and boxing enthusiast. His brother, Gary, who is a senior structural technician at Portland, boxed for England. Lee is reluctant to talk much about his days in the ring but says he won more fights than he lost. Most recently the company enjoyed success with work on the Freeman Hospital Day Treatment Centre, which has won awards from the Institution of Structural Engineers (Northern Counties) and from Constructing Excellence in the North East.

During the last decade, one of the hardest adjustments for Lee has been the cultural shift from being a director to becoming MD and having to take a more strategic view of the business. "It was a steep learning curve initially, and that's where John Hardy's guidance was so helpful," said Lee. "I had to shift my mindset from the hands-on, day-to-day approach of an engineer to taking a more helicopter view of matters."

He admits to initially feeling everything was his responsibility. It was a burden he gradually managed to shake off as he developed a strong management team to share responsibilities. He freed up time to focus on responsibilities which best suited his skillset.

In his role as MD, Lee has become more aware of the role Portland has in improving the places in which they operate. Social value activity has always played a major part in the business, with



the most recent business plan committing the company to spend at least one percent of annual turnover to benefit the local community.

One area of particular interest to Lee, one which was a passion of the founder John Hardy, is to inspire the next generation of civil and structural engineers, ensuring they have the skills and knowledge needed in an everchanging industry. Portland maintains an active presence at school and college careers fairs throughout the North East. The company regularly welcomes students to attend work experience



placements within the design office.

The company also has a long-standing partnership with the Lord's Taverners charity, which uses specialised cricket programmes to support young people with disabilities.

Team-building and social activities are also an important part of company culture. In July, this year a team took part in a sponsored 'Hike up Helvellyn' - in aid of 'Daft as a Brush' Cancer Care Trust. More than £5,000 was raised for this regional charity.

Another company tradition is Portland's Easter Reception, which started

in 2007 and has grown to become a key date in the North East construction industry calendar. Every Maundy Thursday, the Easter Reception is held in one of Newcastle's bars to celebrate the anniversary of Portland's founding and to thank colleagues and clients for their continued support.

Elsewhere, Portland is taking a lead on one of the key challenges facing the construction industry - the drive to reduce emissions to create a more sustainable future. Steps include changes made to the design office to reduce emissions, while the team are undergoing a programme of

CPD courses designed to strengthen their knowledge of lower carbon materials and methods of construction. With the help of SmartCarbon, Portland has developed a plan, committing the company to become a net-zero carbon consultancy by 2035.

On his 10th anniversary, Lee is confident about the future and believes Portland is well structured, with the right skilled team to adapt and respond to industry challenges.

portlandconsulting.co.uk

# 5 recruitment trends worth taking notice of

By Jessica Laing



The recruitment landscape is shifting faster than ever, with many candidates looking beyond payslips and standard benefits when searching of their next role. Litt Recruitment explores some of the biggest trends shaping the industry right now - and why employers should take notice if they want to secure today's top talent.



#### Hybrid working

It's been over three years since the pandemic began and while changes to how we travel and socialise have returned to normal, changes to how we work remain firmly in place.

Today, hybrid working - or "flexible working" - is no longer a perk. For the vast majority of job-seekers, it's an expectation - and often a dealbreaker when it comes to deciding whether to apply or accept a role.

More and more, candidates are looking for flexible working arrangements that allow them to achieve greater work-life balance - a wellbeing demand that has soared postpandemic. For some, this means a mix of office and at-home working. For others, this means having the freedom to work remotely permanently, or as often as they wish.

Despite debates productivity levels and trust between employers and employees at home compared to within the workplace, hybrid working remains one of this year's biggest recruitment trends - and businesses must take notice and cater to the demand if they wish to fill their recruitment gap not only short-term, but long-term as well.

"Although not a viable or indeed perfect solution for all businesses or employees, it seems hybrid working is here to stay," says John Rooney, Recruitment Director at Litt Recruitment (pictured left).

#### Trust and communication between employers and employees are paramount

"The key to success in this area, however, is effective management and engagement with hybrid and remote staff. Many times, businesses try and implement hybrid working, only to see it fail as they haven't fully invested in how to manage the remote teams in a different way. Trust and communication between employers and employees are paramount."

#### The arrival of Gen Z

The newest generation to enter the workforce, Gen Z (born between 1997 and 2012) are making their mark in the world of recruitment. Ambitious, tech-savvy and armed with the latest skills to grow businesses big and small, the benefits of hiring candidates in this age bracket are multifold. Attracting them, however, has its

Unsurprisingly, statistics show that they are the biggest social media-users alive today - with many Gen Z workers looking to platforms like Instagram, LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter) first to scope out new roles, communicate with recruiters and gauge a company's culture, ethics and offering. For businesses on the hunt to secure today's bright young minds, a strong online presence is key

In comparison to their millennial and boomer counterparts, Gen Z are also joining companies with greater social awareness - which, in turn, is shaping their decisions around where they work Recent statistics suggest issues such as racial diversity, gender equality, prejudice around the LGBTQ+ community and sustainability are close to their hearts.

To catch the eyes of the best Gen Z talent, today, employers need to demonstrate a tangible appreciation and sensitivity to such topics not only through their recruitment process, but also their workplace culture and policies. An equal, accepting, eco-minded and social valuesdriven working environment needs to be evident and on offer from the get-go.

By being mindful of this generation's shift in perspective and adapting their hiring strategy accordingly, companies can better position themselves in the eyes of today's most promising Gen Z candidates.





#### Virtual recruiting

It's no surprise that in today's digital age, the use of automation, AI and social media in recruitment is on the rise. Today, a growing number of businesses are looking towards online tools to help streamline and better their recruitment process, making it easier, more efficient and more attractive applicants.

Human resources management systems (HRMS) are now being used to help organise CVs, send timely automated responses to applicants and schedule interviews.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is being used to aid and enhance candidate screening, helping to comb through answers to interview questions for key words and phrases, along with must-have skills, desirable experience and specific qualifications.

Chatbots are being introduced to career pages on company websites to help guide job-seekers to specific roles, answer any queries they might have about a vacancy, the company or its recruitment process, as well as offering pre-screening questions to help businesses identity potential candidates.

Even virtual (video) applications and job adverts are becoming more and more popular.

Not only does this new way of recruiting appeal and speak to today's younger, tech-savvy job-hunters, it also puts businesses under a more desirable light in the eyes of the candidate, showing creativity, efficiency and a willingness to move with the times.

"Being flexible with technology and the options it provides us for speeding up and managing the hiring process can be vital in securing the best talent," says John.

"Although face-to-face interviews can still be needed and, in fact, are in many cases still the preference, the use of technology can give us options to progress the recruitment journey to a stage in-person recruiting is needed."

#### **Employer branding**

In today's competitive job market, having a strong brand identity - especially online - is becoming more and more vital to catching the attention of, and securing, the talent businesses want and need.

Because job-hunters are now looking to social media platforms more and more for deeper insights into what a company stands for and what it can offer them, to stand out from the crowd, businesses need to ensure they're promoting themselves in the best light and in the best places.

Creating unique and insightful content on a range of platforms around topics such as company culture, values and vision, ways of working, perks of the job and behind-the-scenes activities is key - helping to increase user engagement and better connect with candidates, build reputation and sell a company's offerings.

"All organisations have a brand, but how they showcase that online and differentiate themselves from their competitors can be vital in attracting the best talent," says John.

"The perception and reputation of a company outside of its own front door is so important in today's market."

Being flexible with technology and the options it provides us for speeding up and managing the hiring process can be vital in securing the best talent.

#### Wellbeing benefits

In a post-pandemic world in which mental health, work-life balance and greater flexibility are hot topics, when it comes to perks, more and more individuals are looking beyond standard end-of-year bonuses and annual office parties in their search for a new role.

Today, there is a greater demand for wellbeing-related benefits that give something back - most of which have nothing to do with financial gain.

These include access to wellness programmes, counselling services and fitness classes, enhanced parental, sick and bereavement leave, paid wellbeing days, unlimited annual leave and free medical assessments and more.

By re-evaluating and expanding their offering in areas such as these where possible, companies will stand themselves in good stead when recruiting.

In the eyes of the job-hunter, if a company shows value and a tangible commitment to the wellbeing of its employees, the more likely they are to apply for a role there. Therefore, investing in non-financial benefits is one of the most effective strategies today in attracting – and keeping – skilled workers on your team.

"Although salary can still be a huge factor for anyone when choosing their next role, the extra benefits offered can often be a deciding factor when multiple similar offers are being considered," says John.

"How you position your benefits can also lead to a much higher level of initial interest in terms of both quality and quantity of applicants, so it's important businesses think outside the box and be mindful of what's really important to today's applicants."

littrecruitment.com



# As the UK marked National Manufacturing Day last month, city chiefs in Sunderland had plenty of reasons shout about its success.

Situated at the beating heart of Europe's automotive and advanced manufacturing industry; the city is home to the nation's largest car producer and exporter; and has a growing cluster of businesses making everything from protective clothing to car parts.

With a rich industrial heritage that has earned Sunderland people the moniker 'Mackems', in recognition of their ability to make everything from glass to ships, today, the city is best known for its prowess as a capital of car making. Its notoriety as a manufacturing powerhouse in this exciting industry is unsurprising, as home to Nissan UK, an award-winning plant that exports 80% of its vehicles overseas. The firm has grown from humble beginnings in Sunderland in the 1980s to one of the main driving forces behind the global move towards electric cars, with the launch of Nissan and AESC's 36Zero EV Hub, a £1 billion flagship development in Sunderland, that will create a world-first EV manufacturing ecosystem.

Centred around the carmaker's record-breaking Sunderland plant, Nissan EV36Zero will supercharge the company's drive to carbon neutrality and establish a new 360-degree solution for zero-emission motoring. The transformational project has been launched with an initial £1bn investment by Nissan, partner AESC which is a global player in world-leading battery technology, and Sunderland City Council, building on AESC's existing

1.9 GWh battery plant in Sunderland, producing lithium-ion batteries for 60,000 vehicles annually. It is now developing a new 109,000 sq m Gigafactory on the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) at a cost of more than £450 million, creating 750 highly skilled jobs. This will initially have a capacity of 9GWh, rising to 25GWh by 2030 and eventually 35GWh.

Comprised of three interconnected initiatives, Nissan EV36Zero brings together electric vehicles, renewable energy and battery production, setting a blueprint for the future of the automotive industry.

Councillor Graeme Miller, leader of Sunderland City Council, said: "This is game-changing. And it's happening in Sunderland. Not only are we manufacturing the cars, we are building a new ground-breaking eco-system in Sunderland that is enabling us to build next generation cars in a more sustainable way. We are pioneering innovation - setting new standards for automotive manufacturers to follow."

And the innovation that is being put into practice by Nissan and AESC is only part of a larger picture. As Sunderland City Council drives forward its Smart City agenda, which will bring about huge benefits for business through the deployment of leading-edge connectivity across the city, there will be countless ways in which manufacturers will benefit.

A pioneering 5G Connected and Automated Logistics (5G CAL) pilot, powered by Sunderland's connectivity, recently succeeded in its mission to prove the potential of next generation technology in overcoming barriers for a more efficient future for last mile logistics.

Becoming the first in the UK to prove the delivery of zero emission automated logistics, the 5G CAL pilot kicked off a series of projects to develop the technology and establish a testbed for connected and automated logistics in the city. From this innovation, that could be transformational for business, to using connectivity and IoT to drive efficiencies, the possibilities of using tech to transform processes are significant and will support a drive across Sunderland towards a low carbon future.

It is unsurprising then that with an increasingly dynamic cluster of businesses calling Sunderland home, more companies are seeing the appeal of creating a Wearside HQ. Hyperdrive Innovation just one of the city's success stories. The company designs, develops and manufactures lithium-ion battery systems for clients such as JCB and Hitachi Rail. It relocated to Sunderland in 2014 to be at the centre of the emerging electrification cluster and now employs 65 highly skilled design and engineering staff from its city base. With a standardised design, the company's modular product range provides a flexible and scalable battery energy storage solution. R&D is

core to the business, which holds patents covering battery pack design, battery management systems and assembly methodology. Through the Advanced Propulsion Centre, it has been working with Nissan and Newcastle University on a high-density battery project.

In 2021, Hyperdrive won the coveted Queen's Award for Innovation. In the same year it was acquired by USA firm Turntide Technologies, along with other leading EV component manufacturers in the region, BorgWarner and Avid.

Hyperdrive is continuing to invest in the development of technologies that will reduce emissions in the road freight, rail, marine and aerospace sectors. And the company is located just a stone's throw from a nationally significant development site, that is establishing itself as the destination of choice for automotive and advanced manufacturing.

A partnership between Sunderland City Council and South Tyneside Council, the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) is at the heart of the North East's automotive industry, standing on the doorstep of Nissan UK. Within an hour's drive from major road, rail, sea and air links, IAMP is already home to tier one auto suppliers, with AESC's new UK battery manufacturing facility currently being developed on site.

"IAMP has been a huge success story, capitalising on the blend of assets that have made Nissan so successful in the region," said ClIr Miller.

"The proposition was always very clear, and the market responded. And we're now building on that with further schemes to support further industrial development." Cllr Miller is referring to the regeneration of brownfield sites like Hillthorn Business Park, which will deliver circa 582,000 sq ft of the highest quality industrial buildings in a prime Washington location. The £60 million development, led by Legal & General, will create ten new buildings expected to create over 1,600 new jobs upon completion.

Hillthorn complements the International Advanced Manufacturing Park (IAMP) and Turbine Business Park, which is also the chosen location of a range of advanced manufacturing businesses. Collectively, the sites position Sunderland at the heart of advanced manufacturing in the UK.

'The city is well-established in this field, and, when you prove you can support businesses to scale in the way that Nissan and the supply chain have done, it creates a level of magnetism that reaps rewards," added Cllr Miller. That magnetism has seen investment pour into places like the Port of Sunderland. The municipally owned asset is now home to a world-first end-of-life tyre recycling plant spearheaded by Norwegian Government backed Wastefront AS, a company helping manufacture low carbon aviation fuel, as well as Quantafuel, a plastic recycling plant breaking waste plastics down chemically to produce oil used in the production of virgin-grade recycled plastic.

"The city is well positioned for developments like this. We have skilled people and a rich talent pool; excellent connectivity and relatively low property costs," said Cllr Miller.

"And there is a collaborative and supportive business community here,

which is also key to success and is something we are keen to continue to build on."

The North East Automotive Alliance (NEAA) is an industry-led automotive cluster, established to support the economic sustainable growth and competitiveness of the automotive sector in the North East of England. Sunderland played host to its annual Expo on National Manufacturing Day, and it is just one of the organisations that is building upon the region's significant capabilities.

The city is also home - on behalf of the North East - to one of the UK Government's Driving the Electric Revolution Industrialisation Centres. The Centres are the brainchild of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), aiming to make the UK globally recognised as the centre of excellence in power electronics, machines and drives (PEMD) manufacturing processes.

"There is so much happening in Sunderland - it's a real focal point for businesses that are manufacturing goods for use in the domestic market and overseas, and we're rightly proud of that," said Cllr Miller.

"We are a city of makers - a showcase to other parts of the country and a place that had plenty of reasons to celebrate National Manufacturing Day more than most, with thousands of our residents playing a direct part in the success of the incredible businesses that call Sunderland home.

"And if the current developments ongoing across the city are anything to go by, we will continue to do so for generations to come."







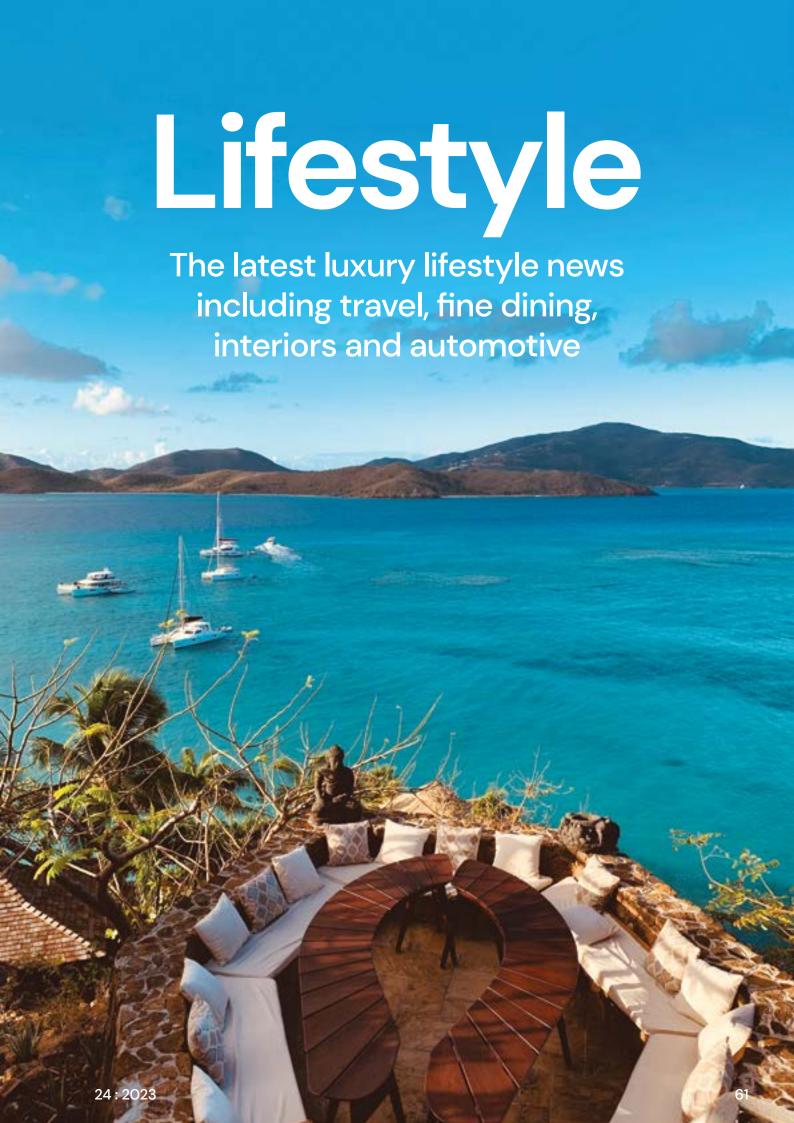
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# Fly with the Falcons

# North East England's only professional rugby team are heading to Catalan country in the new year – and you could be with them.

A limited number of spaces are available to travel on the official team charter flight as Newcastle Falcons take on Perpignan, aiming to build on the early-season momentum which has seen them winning their opening two games of the campaign.

The EPCR Challenge Cup clash takes place on Sunday January 21, with picturesque Perpignan in the south of France welcoming Newcastle supporters for the first time in 20 years.Located on the Mediterranean coast at the foot of the Pyrenees, Perpignan's famously passionate supporters will ensure this is a sporting spectacle not to be missed.

Fly out with the team on their official charter from Newcastle Airport on Saturday January 20, using the day to explore everything Perpignan has to offer and enjoying its vibrant bar and restaurant scene before Sunday's rugby action.

The return charter departs for Tyneside post-match on Sunday January 21, with the Falcons continuing their proud tradition of doing battle on French soil. Newcastle's past two visits to France have seen victories at Biarritz and Castres, while the trip to European giants Toulon back in 2018 delivered a famous victory which will live long in the memory for the sea of Falcons supporters who travelled over to the Riviera.

New head coach Alex Codling joined the Falcons from French club Oyonnax in the summer and knows first hand the level of atmosphere and sporting challenge which lies in wait for his side over in Perpignan.

"French rugby fans turn up in big numbers and bring a huge amount of passion," said Codling, whose Oyonnax side were the runaway title winners in last season's Pro D2. "They've got the smoke flares, the flags and they're not shy of letting the referee know what they think.

"It's an exciting challenge for us from a rugby perspective, and our supporters will definitely enjoy going over there and experiencing the occasion as well as everything else that Perpignan has to offer.

"It's always nice to have our supporters travelling with the team because we pride ourselves on having that close connection, and if you're thinking about booking then I'd urge you to come and enjoy the trip with us."

Return travel on the team charter is available for just £350 including all taxes, with limited availability. Supporters are advised this package does not include hotel, transfers or match tickets.

To book, email jodie.jinks@ travelcounsellors.com





# Give your skin an active boost with polynucleotides

# a pioneering new treatment from Skin and Soul Medical

Polynucleotides are having a moment in the world of advanced skincare – and for good reason.

By Jessica Laing



Now and again, a skin solution comes along that ticks all the boxes: smoothing, soothing, plumping and everything in between. That's the power of polynucleotides.

Skin & Soul Medical, a holistic private clinic with sites in Sunderland and Newcastle, has recently added polynucleotides to its extensive list of treatments, increasing its offering to those in search of healthier, glowing skin.

#### What is it?

The latest innovative in injectables, this breakthrough skin treatment showcases polynucleotides - biological molecules, derived from fragments of fish, which mirror human DNA. Unlike traditional boosters, which give short-term hydration and glow when we need it, polynucleotides go one step further by stimulating our own skin cells to self-restore.

Remarkably, they have the power to activate fibroblast and stem cell growth deep within the skin walls - helping to ramp up the skin's natural ability to repair tissue and produce natural collagen and elastin over time.

The result? Deep skin renewal that happens from the inside, promising a firmer and more youthful complexion.

#### Who can have it?

The revolutionary treatment is suitable for all skin types and works to correct a number of common skin concerns.

For mature skin, or skin that is beginning to lose elasticity or show the early signs of ageing, regular polynucleotides treatments are hugely beneficial. Wrinkle and fine line reduction is one of the biggest and most noticeable benefits and most clients start to see lifting results as early as four weeks post-treatment.

Polynucleotides improve the skin's ability to retain water, too, meaning that drier skin types, or ones prone to tightness and dullness, are given a significant moisture boost that lasts. Overall skin texture is improved, resulting in a smoother, plumper and more supple complexion.

And because polynucleotides also have an anti-inflammatory effect and increase cell turnover, those battling with irritation and

discolouration from conditions like rosacea, hyperpigmentation, acne and sun damage, are also catered for. Scars are softened over time, imperfections are reduced and redness is soothed.

#### Whereabouts can you have it?

Because it's one of the first areas of the face to show signs of ageing and lose moisture fast, polynucleotides are typically injected under the eyes, helping to tighten, de-sag and hydrate.

However, many people also opt to have polynucleotides boosters in the jawline, neck, forehead and even around the lip area.

The procedure is quick, simple and relatively pain-free. The skin is thoroughly cleansed to remove all traces of makeup, oil and debris and numbing cream is applied to the skin prior to injecting. Aftercare is minimal and most patients don't suffer with bruising or swelling.

#### How often can you have it?

For best results, most patients are recommended two sessions over the course of four weeks, depending on their age, skin type and complexion goals, however it can be offered as a one-off treatment.

In many cases, results are immediate and expected to last up to six-to-12 months before a maintenance top-up treatment is required.

Lucie Royer, founder of Skin and Soul Medical, said: "We're delighted to be able to offer this exciting and innovate treatment to our clients. Polynucleotides are becoming more and more popular in the world of injectables, helping to improve skin health from the inside out, and we can't wait to help our clients achieve long-lasting results.

"Whether you're looking to address a specific skin condition or simply better the overall look and feel of your skin, a polynucleotides treatment is the perfect solution."

To book your appointment, visit <u>skinandsoulmedical.com</u> or contact the team on 0191 4478840



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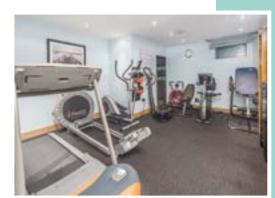




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# Shilvington The Manor House

£1,595,000

Set in just over 6 acres of private grass land, The Manor House is a stone-built detached house offering over 5,500 square feet of floor space over three levels. Shilvington is a hamlet in rural Northumberland, 5 miles south west of Morpeth. Prospective purchasers looking for a peaceful and private setting with the amenities of a large town just a short drive away need look no further. Built by the current owners, this is the first time the property has ever been marketed. It truly offers the 'best of both worlds' with Newcastle City Centre just a 13 mile drive away, the amenities of Morpeth & Ponteland within 5 & 6 miles respectively, and the peace & quiet of the countryside, with land for rural pursuits on your doorstep.



x 6



v 8



x 4

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#### Newcastle

### **Phoenix House**

#### £390,000

A New York Style loft with exposed brickwork, real wooden floors and views over the city from every window. This penthouse duplex is located on the top floors of Phoenix House, Queen Street, on Newcastle's iconic Quayside. Neighbouring establishments include renowned eateries and public houses such as Dobson and Parnell, Simla, Khai Khai, the Bridge Tavern & Aveika. Internally, the open plan kitchen/living/diner takes centre stage with high ceilings and eight arched windows offering views over the city. There is one en-suite bedroom on the same floor, with a further bedroom, shower room and study area on the floor above. On the top floor, there is an access door to perhaps one of the most extraordinary roof terraces in the City, split over two levels, almost abuts the Tyne Bridge, offering a unique outlook on some of the City's architecture.



x 2



x 2





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x 2

#### Moorsholm

### **Moorsholm View**

#### £695,000

Moorsholm View is simply stunning. A converted church located in the beautiful village of Moorsholm, this property certainly provides that rural escape. This church conversation has been meticulously executed by the owner and every detail has been carefully considered during the process. Moorsholm View is entered via a beautiful vestibule offering a handy storage space with dual access points to the main hub. Upon entering you are certainly given the wow factor. The open plan lounge, dining and kitchen area is spectacular, with a vaulted ceiling featuring original beams, a mezzanine level with oak and glass balcony, and Amtiqo flooring as well as décor that compliments the finished product, it is most certainly the place to relax.

Tees Valley 01642 265 300 wynyard@bradleyhall.co.uk



# Wynyard Burn Avenue

#### £590,000

Burn Avenue completed by Robertson Homes in 2021 is a beautifully designed home with over 2,100 square feet providing larger than average living space, private parking, generous rear garden and upgraded extras included as standard. Entering this detached home, you will be greeted with a striking double storey, galleried entrance hallway and full-length Juliette windows to the front allowing for an abundance of light, plus open plan living spaces Robertson Homes are famed for.

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# Sunderland The Square

£975,000

Bradley Hall Sunderland are delighted to welcome this prestigious seven bedroom executive detached home situated within an exclusive gated community located on the outskirts of Cleadon Village. The Square is one of the region's most sought after developments offering unparalleled luxury and elegance, benefiting from an exclusive residents only private meadow. The property provides exceptional living accommodation, set out over three storeys offering over 4,000 sq.ft of spacious and flexible living accommodation, presented to the highest of standards.



x 7



x 6



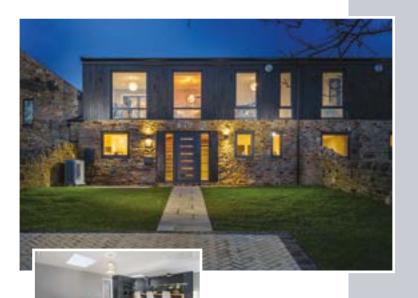


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x 4



x 4



x 2

## **Brancepeth Manor Farm**

## Aintree Lodge

#### £595,000

Bradley Hall is delighted to welcome to the market this exceptional, four-bedroom, stone-built barn conversion, softened with painted cedar panelling at first floor level, and located in the sought after Brancepeth Manor Farm Estate. Brancepeth Manor Farm was the once famous racing stables of the former Grand national winner Red Marauder and has most recently been developed into an exclusive estate of barn conversions and is rapidly becoming one of the most sought-after residential locations in County Durham. It sits close to the established village of Brancepeth with its famous Castle and well-regarded golf course and club house, as well as being only 5 miles to the west of the historic city of Durham with its famous world heritage sites, cobbled streets, eclectic mix of shops, restaurants and bars and the established university and County Hall.

Durham 0191 383 9999 durham@bradleyhall.co.uk



#### **Brancepeth Manor Farm** Haydock Lodge

#### £545,000

Bradley Hall is delighted to welcome to the market this exceptional, three-bedroom, stone-built barn conversion, softened with painted cedar panelling at first floor level, and located in the sought after Brancepeth Manor Farm Estate. Brancepeth Manor Farm was the once famous racing stables of the former Grand national winner Red Marauder and has most recently been developed into an exclusive estate of barn conversions and is rapidly becoming one of the most sought-after residential locations in County Durham. It sits close to the established village of Brancepeth with its famous Castle and well-regarded golf course and club house, as well as being only 5 miles to the west of the historic city of Durham with its famous world heritage sites, cobbled streets, eclectic mix of shops, restaurants and bars and the established university and County Hall.

**Durham** 0191 383 9999 durham@bradleyhall.co.uk









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# Hexham Acomb House

#### £2,900,000

Acomb House is a substantial yet manageable Grade II country residence set on the south-eastern periphery of the village of Acomb, in Northumberland. The home offers excellent views of the Tyne Valley, and benefits from formal gardens, grounds and mature private parkland extending to approximately 21 acres. There are outbuildings to the rear of the property, a former coach house and stables, which offers garaging, storage, functioning stables, a studio space and subject to planning could be converted into ancillary accommodation for extended family or holiday letting.



x 9



x 6





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# Durham Burn Hall

#### £735,000

Bradley Hall is delighted to welcome to the market this four bedroom, Grade II listed property, which is situated in the private gated community of Burn Hall Estate. Burn Hall which in itself is a conservation area listed by English Heritage as a Country Park and Gardens of Specific Historic Interest. As you step inside the property, you are greeted by a spacious hallway, and on the right-hand side, you'll find the well-appointed kitchen. The kitchen features a selection of sturdy wooden wall and base units, complemented by a sleek countertop. It is equipped with top-of-the-line integrated appliances, including a Stoves cooker and hob, a Neff washing machine, and a dishwasher. Additionally, there is a pantry that provides extra storage space.



x 4



x 3



x 2

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The Danish furniture brand teams up with global architects to launch a new and exclusive furniture range for its B2B contracts.

You may be familiar with the furniture brand BoConcept. It's been championing the spirit and principles of Danish design since 1952 and is the world's most global furniture retailer, with over 340 stores spanning 67 countries on six continents.

Walk into one of its retail stores worldwide and you're instantly transported into a world of expertly-crafted furniture and home accessories. However, beneath the surface of this global brand, there lies a hidden treasure - its thriving B2B contract business.

Surprisingly, many people in the North East remain largely unaware of BoConcept's presence in the B2B sector. Today, BoConcept's B2B contracts extend their reach beyond the residential market into the domains of corporate offices, luxury hotels and interior design projects.

In recent months, BoConcept has been working on an exciting new collaboration with a global architect giant to highlight the design-led focus it has within its contract department.

With a shared Danish design tradition and ambition to create beautiful-yetfunctional furniture, the brand has partnered with Copenhagen-based architects, Bjarke Ingles Group (BIG), to launchh its exclusive Nawabari collection.

Launching in October of this year, the collection's design, led by partner and Head of BIG Products, Jakob Lange (pictured right), was inspired by the Japanese art form of binding with ropes to forge close bonds.

"We were looking for a new way of expressing furniture", says Lange.

"Nawa" means rope in Japanese and the term "Nawabari" traditionally translates as stretching rope.

"We were interested in the forms that are created when a material is bound with rope and the result is these sculptural organic shapes that form the core of this furniture family."

Combining BoConcept's simplicity and elegance with BIG's future-thinking aesthetic and sense of purpose, Nawabari is designed to bring people together and transform shared spaces.

BIG is always interrogating the intersection between work, life and play, meaning these contemporary pieces are equally as showstopping in a hotel lobby and gallery as they are in a residential home or social workspace.













The Nawabari collection comprises sofas, an armchair, two coffee tables and two footstool sizes. The items can be used individually as standout pieces or grouped together to create a standalone area. The collection can also be customised to meet the specific needs of each individual project, as well as upholstered across BoConcept's fabric offering and enhanced with exclusive materials - which are not available in retail stores - to take the sensorial design to the next level.

Proving the collection's desirability, Nawabari will feature across several floors of BIG's flagship new headquarters in Nordhavn, the Port of Copenhagen, which is set to open before the end of this year. The vast industrial space, symbolic of the city's design power, features as the perfect backdrop to the new collection.

BIG founder, Bjarke Ingels, and his team of architects, urbanists and designers address the big questions of the 21st century, shaping the world around us with visionary solutions to reach a better way of living.

"BoConcept is known for creating elegant designs that are timeless and look good in any interior space," says Ingles. "This collaboration brings a new spirit of informality and fun, characteristic of BIG's disruptive approach. We are really proud to partner with Bjarke and his team on this exciting collection."

Emma Hurst (pictured above), B2B Manager at BoConcept for the North of England, comments: "BoConcept is an international player that has presence in markets all over the world and has built a team of extremely talented craftspeople and salesmen.

"Together with our creative forces at BIG, this creates a unique sort of melting pot and results in show-stopping furniture for all different types of client needs. "We're incredibly excited to launch this incredible new collection to our B2B contracts and see how the furniture will transform corporate places into extraordinary spaces."

The Nawabari collection will launch in exclusive BoConcept stores globally, including Fenwick Newcastle and Redbrick Leeds, this autumn.

To set up a trade account, or discuss BoConcept's B2B contract options, email Emma Hurst at emdi@boconcept.co.uk or call 07813597105

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In 1988 a National Children of Courage Award was made to a girl from the North East called Joanne Gillespie. Joanne, just 11 years old, had endured two major operations, fighting against a recurring brain tumour. To help other children who might be going through similar experiences, Joanne used her diary of her time in hospital and created a book.

The book titled 'Brave Heart' was published in 1989 and it received public acclaim as an inspiration to other sick children and their families. In addition to the Children of Courage Award Joanne was also presented with a North East Personality Award and was interviewed by Terry Wogan on live television. She became a national celebrity. Among those present at the North East Personality award ceremony was Robin Alexander, Community Service Chairman for Hexham Round Table. Robin, who was so inspired by Joanne's story, decided to initiate a fundraising appeal to establish recognition and reward for other children in the area with similar stories.

The fundraising was a great success and culminated with a charity dinner at the Mayfair Ballroom in Newcastle with entertainment headlined by local hero Mark Knopfler and his band Dire Straits.

A total of £35,000 was raised and as a result, it was possible to send 22 children to Disney World in Florida. Other children whose illness or injury prevented them from travelling received gifts such as computers, videos, or other equipment intended to enhance their lives. All the children attended a presentation at Tyne Tees TV studios where they received the distinctive Brave Hearts award, in those days in the shape of a Crystal Pyramid. Joanne was among the children to receive an award.

It was apparent that the original target had been exceeded beyond anyone's wildest dreams. It was decided that it was too big to remain part of Hexham Round Table and so Brave Hearts was registered as a charity in its own right and Mark Knopfler agreed to become the patron.

The charity became known as 'Brave Hearts of the North East', and after 34 years is still providing the well-deserved recognition to young people who are experiencing very difficult times. Nominations for the award are invited from residents of the North-East of England, from the Scottish borders down to include North Yorkshire and across the country to include Cumbria. To be eligible a Nominee must be between the ages 5 to 16 years old in the year the nomination is being made. To be an award winner the nominee will have displayed exceptional character and courage in overcoming their difficulties arising out of serious sickness or injury.

Every year the charity holds an award ceremony, over recent years at St James Park in Newcastle. Here the award winners and families are invited to a day of celebration, celebrating the extraordinary courage they have displayed. They each receive their Braveheart Award, now in the shape of a crystal book, recognising Joanne Gillespie's legacy. They also receive a copy of the original book, along with a special gift of their choice.

Guest celebrities are quick to volunteer their time and come along to make the day even more special. Since that first presentation almost 700 very courageous, deserving young people have received a Brave Heart Award.

All of the charities work is continued by a small trustee board of which Robin is still a member. All the trustees are volunteers, with no salaried staff, so that every penny raised goes directly to benefit the children. Helping to put a smile on their faces.

Fundraising is a major focus for the trustees, helped by fantastic volunteers and sponsors attending one of the fundraising events, taking part in the Great North Run or by making individual donations. Without these amazing supporters the charities work simply couldn't happen.

Sadly, a number of the children recognised by Brave Hearts have been so ill that they were unable to make a recovery. Joanne herself passed away in 1993. Brave Hearts of the North East seeks to continue their work in honour of her memory and to build on the inspiration she has provided to other children and to be inspired by a new generation of Brave Heart winners.

brave-hearts.com



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# Steamed Lemon Vanilla Sponge

Dan Warren, head chef at Terry Laybourne's Quayside venue, The Broad Chare, shares his recipe for a delicious lemon sponge.

By Terry Laybourne



This zesty pudding is a firm favourite at Newcastle Quayside's Broad Chare and makes a welcome reappearance to the menu each autumn.

Serves 4

#### Syrup

(this will make more than you need for this recipe, but it keeps very well for next time)

230g golden syrup

1 lemon

½ vanilla pod, split lengthways to release the seeds

- Remove the zest from the lemon in thin strips using a peeler then remove any white pith which may
- Add to a small saucepan with the golden syrup and vanilla pod
- Warm the ingredients together over a gentle heat the set aside for the flavours to infuse

#### Moulds

1 tbsp soft unsalted butter

1 tbsp plain flour

- Brush four aluminium dariole moulds with the softened butter then dust with flour, tipping out any excess which hasn't adhered to the butter
- Chill well while you prepare the sponge

#### **Sponge**

100g caster sugar

2 medium eggs

110g unsalted butter

110g self-raising flour

1 heaped tsp baking powder

Grated zest from ½ small lemon

- Scatter the sugar on to a baking tray lined with non-stick paper and place into a low oven to warm
- Whisk eggs on a mixing machine until they become white then sift in the warmed sugar
- Continue whisking until cooled
- Whisk in the soft butter a little at a time
- Sift the baking powder and self-raising flour before gently folding into eggs, being careful not to overmix
- Fold in the grated lemon zest
- Add 2 ½ tbsp of syrup to each mould then top with the sponge mixture
- Loosely cover each mould with aluminium foil before steaming for 50 minutes
- Allow to rest for five minutes before turning out into warmed pudding bowls, ensuring you capture all the lemony syrup
- Serve with a generous serving of pouring cream.













Promising unrivalled performance, state-of-the-art technology and head-turning style, in the world of luxury American pickup trucks, RAM is in a lane of its own. Durham-based dealership, Performance28, is the North East's top destination for these world-class motors

#### Fine form meets functionality

A brand that has stood for strength, power and capability for over 40 years, RAM is a leader in the pickup truck world - and, unsurprisingly, a frontrunner across the pond.

Here in the UK, they're lesser known, but the perfect choice for truck fans and adventure-seekers fans in search of functionality and reliability - without compromising on good looks, high-spec technology and speed.

There are a few models in RAM truck fleet, but the new-and-improved RAM 1500 is the speediest, safest and most luxurious of them all to date, complete with a 5.7 litre V8 Hemi engine for superior power output and unrivalled performance - wherever the roads take you.

#### What makes it special

While traditional pickup trucks are known for being on the slower, weighty side, the new RAM 1500 is lighter than ever before. Thanks to updated body work – including changes to the chassis – it's 102kg down, making it more dynamic, more comfortable to drive and easier to navigate around sharp bends and corners.

Its petrol v8 Hemi engine - which produces 390hp and 410lb ft - creates quite the roar and is complemented by a TorqueFight eight-speed torque converter automatic with low-range gearbox, along with two large exhausts. Together, they can get the RAM up to a peak of 5600rpm and up to 60mph in just over six seconds.

Whatever the speed, though, the left hand-drive RAM delivers a remarkably smooth ride - which is a real plus considering its size and weight. It delivers on all kinds of terrains and in all kinds of weather conditions, too, making it a winner for year-round cruising. Inside, you'll discover unrivalled comfort and luxury features from every angle, coupled with acres of space and an impressive load capacity.

The central storage compartment between the front seats provides ample room for driving essentials, while the 100% leather seats come with electric adjustment.

Impressive new cabin technology extends to a 12-inch Uconnect

touchscreen and Head Up Display, while cutting-edge safety technology, such as Pedestrian Emergency Braking, Forward Collision Warning with Active Braking, Blind Spot Monitoring and Rear Cross Protection, puts safety firmly in the driving seat

#### Who should buy it

Pickup trucks are, of course, built with functional, heavy-load Stateside driving in mind - but that doesn't mean they don't have a place on UK roads.

While the RAM's sheer size – particularly its two-metre width – could make parking and driving on tight country roads tricky at times, because it can carry 1000kg-plus, it's classed as a light commercial vehicle.

This means companies looking to invest in the RAM can claim the VAT back on their purchase and drivers can use the RAM as a company vehicle with very low, or no, benefit in kind tax.

RAM vehicles can also be funded using the HP balloon method, which helps keep monthly payments competitive with other mainstream UK trucks.

For every day drivers - especially dedicated truck fans - investing in the RAM 1500 means guaranteed reliability, comfort and enjoyment on the roads, with a luxurious edge inside and out you'll be proud to show off.

Towing up to 3.5 tonnes with minimal effort, it's on your side throughout life's heavy-duty moments.

#### Why Performance 28

Performance 28 is an official and fullyauthorised RAM dealer, helping to bring and showcase this world-class brand to the UK cars market.

The specialist team import RAM models via their partnership with the European distributor AEC to their site in Chester-le-Street, Durham, where they have also now invested in an authorised Dodge RAM service facility.

Here, they offer the finest aftercare and customer service, giving drivers peace of mind and helping them get the best out of their chosen models.

For more information, visit performance28.com or call 0191 389 7103



# Winter Gardening Tips with Dobbies Garden Centres

As temperatures drop and the frost settles in, Dobbies, the UK's leading garden centre, has listed out the winter jobs we can be doing to get our gardens looking their best and prepare them for a blooming 2024.

Whether you're looking to introduce colour to containers for the festive period, tidy up your garden for the new year, grow your own fruit and veg, or prepare your outdoor space for spring, Dobbies' Horticultural Director, Marcus Eyles has outlined how to get the most out of your garden this winter. Find out what gardening jobs you should be doing now and appreciate the beauty of the outdoors regardless of the season.

#### Tidy up

When it comes to tidying up our gardens in winter, Marcus says we should be mindful not to clear too much away. It can be tempting to completely get rid of all garden debris however, leaving a layer of organic matter on the surface of beds and borders and underneath hedges and trees will give wildlife a place to shelter from the elements. Stacking logs together in a pile will also provide a sanctuary for animals like hedgehogs during the colder winter months.

Another important job for during the winter months is pruning roses to ensure any harsh weather doesn't interfere too much with them. Marcus recommends taking the stems down by half to stop the wind catching plants as much over winter, and then in spring, prune back fresh new shoots which will give nice structure for the plants ready to flower next year.

Marcus says you shouldn't need to mow your lawn in winter however, you should remove and compost any fallen dead leaves as these will block air and sunlight, two things that grass needs to survive.

#### **Protect plants**

Marcus says that plant protection is one of the most important parts of your winter gardening checklist and will ensure your plants survive the season. To ensure good soil health and protect your plants' roots when temperatures drop, Marcus advises mulching well with Bloomin Amazing or Dobbies' award-winning peat free compost. Dobbies' own brand bark landscape can also be used as an extra layer of protection for plants during the colder months and is priced at just £8.99 for 100L.

Marcus says that exotic plants and varieties including Cordylines, Ceanothus and Phormiums will benefit from frost protection fleece in winter. For extra protection, Marcus advises placing tender plant varieties like Pelargoniums and Fuchsias in a sealed grow house or cold frame during the colder months.

#### Instant winter colour

Refreshing your containers and hanging baskets is a good way to give your winter garden a burst of colour and Marcus says that the Conifers, winter Heathers and Ivy will all produce a beautiful display and stand up to cold weather. In addition to these, Callunas and Ericas are great for winter pots as they're frost resistant and work well to frame your doorway all season long.

For those working with compact spaces, Marcus says Cyclamen can be planted in late autumn and works well in window boxes and balcony displays for a pop of vibrancy, proving you don't need a garden to enjoy winter colour.

For a blooming display that will flower right through until spring, Marcus suggests planting winter-flowering Violas and Pansies now in either pots, beds or borders. To ensure they don't get waterlogged, Marcus advises planting in a free draining soil and if using containers, put a layer of stones or gravel into the bottom of your pot.

#### **Grow Your Own**

Contrary to what people might think, Marcus notes that it's possible to continue growing your own produce in the winter months, but there are a few steps you should take to ensure a good crop. Herbs like Mint, Rosemary, Sage and Thyme can all be grown on a windowsill ready for use in winter dishes, and alleviate the need for a dedicated vegetable patch.

For those who have a greenhouse or sealed grow house, Marcus says it's easy to grow salad crops year-round and microgreens can be germinated in as quickly as three weeks. To combat the shorter days, supplementary lighting can be used to give produce a boost and the warmth it needs to grow.

In terms of what can be harvested in time for Christmas dinner, Marcus says kale, carrots, potatoes and spinach will be ready in late autumn and as long as preserved properly indoors, will make a tasty addition to Christmas meals.

#### Water storage

When it comes to being more sustainable in the garden, Marcus says that winter is a fantastic time to collect rainfall in water butts for use in the summer months. Any shed, greenhouse or garage can be used to collect water and conserve it for next summer as long as it has gutters and a down pipe to a drain at ground level.

Doing this will help you reduce water usage in the event of a long dry spell next summer and Marcus notes that rainwater is actually better for your plants as it has a lower pH than water from the mains.

dobbies.com







# Athlete supported by North East hospitality group

A North East athlete will be able to take up the opportunity to represent Great Britain at the 2023 World Rowing Beach Sprint Finals this autumn, thanks to the support of The Inn Collection Group and its five coastal inns in the region.

Ryan Glymond from Cramlington will cox for his country in Barletta, Italy at the end of September thanks to the northern pubco stepping up and covering the costs of his participation.

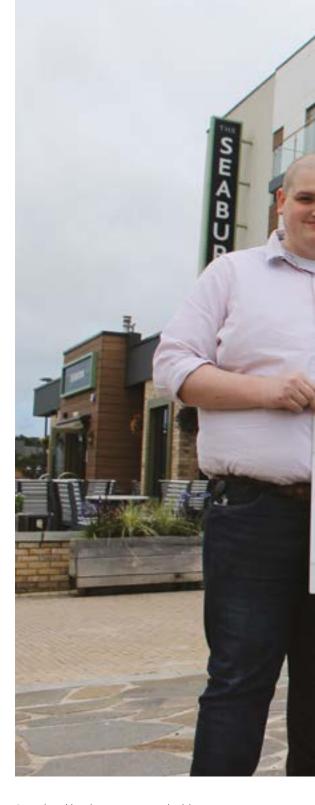
Making use of funds available via the company's Give Inn Back fund, The Bamburgh Castle Inn, The Amble Inn, The Commissionaires Quay Inn, The Tynemouth Castle Inn and The Seaburn Inn have all combined to get Ryan to the event.

Hotly tipped to become a future Olympic discipline, Beach Sprint is a relatively new rowing event, with head-tohead racing taking place in solos, mixed doubles and mixed coxed, quadruple sculls.

Raced in coastal boats, contests begin with a run from the beach to the boat, athletes then sprint row to a buoy and back before the race ends with one rower from each team sprinting to a finish line on the beach.

Ryan's talent in the Beach Sprints discipline of rowing was discovered back in 2021 when he was one of several members of the University of St Andrews Boat Club who travelled to the British Rowing Coastal Championships and excelled on their first attempts.

Since then, Ryan has been a member of the GB Beach Sprints Development



Squad and has become an invaluable character in the Beach Sprints racing scene across the country.

Glymond said: "I'd like to thank The Inn Collection Group and the five coastal inns that have gotten behind me so I can take up the opportunity to compete at this year's championships.

"Athletes are required to self-fund through sponsorship to get to the event and it has been great to find such a supportive group who very quickly said they would cover the total amount I needed to raise.

Explaining more about Beach Sprint, Glymond added: "There's such



an atmosphere about the beach sprint regattas that you don't get at flat water events because it's such a great spectator sport.

"The fans can see everything: the start and finish are in the same place; there are high rating and high-intensity sprints, all ending with a dive into the beach for a buzzer - what more could you want?!

"The most noticeable difference in beach sprints is that the cox runs and that there is so much more to steering in the beach sprint format. The course has it all: a slalom, a 180-degree turn, and a straight-line sprint back to shore, trying to catch surfing waves.

"You've got to be constantly alert to lots of variables and this means the cox can make a huge difference to the result. The donation to Glymond is part of more than £30,000 that has been granted to worthwhile causes in 2023 by inns across the north of England and North Wales during the second year of the Give Inn Back initiative. Driven by the teams at The Inn Collection Group's properties with the decision of which organisations or endeavours to support lying with them, the fund allows the group to make a real difference in its communities by being guided by the people embedded within them.

Lewis Hegarty, general manager at The Seaburn Inn said: "I know I speak for the five sites when I say that we're delighted to be supporting Ryan and making sure he is able to make the trip out to the finals to compete.

"We are all coastal sites and there is a great heritage in the north east of racing boats out of the shores, so there is a perfect fit between the beach sprint discipline and our inns. It's brilliant that through Give Inn Back, we've been able to form this relationship.

# Winter Blues Tropical Superyacht Escapes



As colder weather begins to set in across the UK, adventurers and sun-seekers alike prepare to set sail for sunnier destinations. The pristine beaches, crystal clear waters and vibrant cultures of the Caribbean, the Maldives and Dubai are the places to be when it comes to some all-important winter sun.



Whether you are simply seeking solace and to switch off from your busy life or wish to try a new way to celebrate or escape over the festive season, a luxury yacht is the way to do it. With a dedicated captain and crew, including a private chef, guiding and serving you for the duration of your trip, the service you will receive is second to none.

With thousands of options globally, and any length of break possible, from one day to as long as you would like, a luxury yacht escape offers a truly personalised and bespoke way to indulge in a vacation this winter.

Discover our top six destinations for luxury yacht charters this winter below:

#### The British Virgin Islands

The British Virgin Islands (BVIs) are a firm favourite among yachting enthusiasts new and old, thanks to their consistent trade winds, sheltered anchorages, and diverse collection of islands. Explore the surreal beauty of The Baths on Virgin Gorda, enjoy a Painkiller cocktail at the Soggy Dollar Bar on Jost Van Dyke, or partake in thrilling water sports and diving adventures. With numerous moorings, brilliant beach clubs and more, the BVIs cater to all.

#### The Bahamas

Just a stone's throw away from the vibrant city of Nassau lie the Exumas, a slice of heaven on Earth. This Bahamian archipelago boasts 365 islands and cays, each more enchanting than the last. A must-visit destination for those in search of a true taste of the Caribbean, the Exumas offer crystal-clear waters, powdery-white beaches, and underwater caves to explore. Don't forget to swim with the famous Exuma pigs at Big Major Cay, and discover the natural beauty of Thunderball Grotto, featured in James Bond films.













#### **Antigua and Barbados**

Antigua, often hailed as the sailing capital of the Caribbean, beckons with its azure waters and spirited culture. Winter brings the prestigious Antigua Sailing Week, a regatta that attracts sailors and spectators from around the world. Drop anchor at Falmouth or English Harbour, where you can explore the historic Nelson's Dockyard and indulge in delectable Caribbean cuisine. The combination of racing excitement and laid-back luxury makes Antigua and Barbuda an ideal destination for all.

#### The Maldives

This Indian Ocean jewel offers a mesmerising blend of white-sand beaches, crystal-clear waters, and overwater bungalows. Aboard your yacht, explore the atolls, snorkel with vibrant marine life, and indulge in world-class diving. The Maldives beckons with its luxury resorts, romantic sunsets, and an unparalleled sense of tranquility. Winter here means balmy temperatures, calm seas, and an unforgettable yachting experience in a tropical paradise like no other.

#### Martinique

With its volcanic landscapes, lush rainforests, and vibrant Creole culture, this French Caribbean gem offers an unforgettable experience. Explore secluded coves, anchorages, and charming harbours while enjoying French-Caribbean cuisine and world-class rum. The island's diverse activities range from hiking Mount Pelée to relaxing on pristine beaches and immersing yourself in local markets. Martinique's pleasant winter weather, steady trade winds, and warm hospitality make it a captivating yachting haven, promising a memorable escape from winter's chill.

#### Day Charters in Dubai

Day charters on a luxury yacht in Dubai offer an incomparable fusion of indulgence, adventure, and awe-inspiring vistas. With the iconic cityscape as your backdrop, enjoy personalised service, sumptuous dining, and the thrill of water sports. From the opulent interiors of your yacht to the serene Arabian Gulf, every moment exudes sophistication and relaxation. Whether for an intimate escape

or a lavish gathering, a day charter in Dubai promises a unique and unforgettable voyage through a city renowned for extravagance and innovation.

#### What would it cost?

A luxury yachting escape can be enjoyed from a minimum of approximately £5,000 per person (based on 8-12 guests sharing for one week).

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# The Pursuit of Happiness

It took a tragic life-changing event to persuade Charlotte Fenwick, founder of VIN, to follow her dream





The call came at 7.30am on the last Friday before Christmas, 2021. As Charlotte says, "you know it's not good. No one calls at that time with good news." It was Charlotte's dad with the news that her 33 year old brother Daniel had taken his own life.

For Charlotte her life is forever defined as, "the before and the after of that moment."

Up until that morning Charlotte was enjoying a successful career in accountancy and excited about a new job, "but all of the passion I had just went, it just wasn't important anymore."

Charlotte had long dreamed of working in the wine trade, but it was always, "something that we'll do one day in the future. We'll save some more money, we'll get some experience, maybe we'll do it like an early retirement."

Now there was the realisation that life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans,

The seeds of the wine dream were sown while on honeymoon, with wife Lorrie. "We were in the Ardéche, France and met a winemaker. It was the first time that I had really thought about what I was drinking. After that all of our holidays revolved around wine. We went to tastings and to wine fairs and I got more and more into it. When lockdown hit and we couldn't travel anymore, I started reading about wine. Then I did a Wine and Spirit Education Trust qualification with Newcastle Wine School. It got to a point where it was like an itch that I couldn't scratch. I needed to be closer to it.

"I was starting to get frustrated by not being able to buy the wines that I wanted. The lesser known regions were not that well represented. That was where the idea came from. Maybe there was a gap in the market for a good French wine shop?"

"We didn't want a pretentious French name so we came up with Victor Indigo November. VIN has got that nod to France, but it shows that we don't take ourselves too seriously. Wine should be something fun that you enjoy with friends."

Charlotte's experience of business planning now served her well. "I basically transferred all those skills and I built a financial model for the shop, which I kind of obsessed over. I think most people would've jumped in a bit earlier, but the accountant in me was like, let's check this scenario, let's check that scenario. I am quite risk averse and I have to know that the numbers are there. But then it got to the point where it was, we're doing this now."

The original plan was to be in Newcastle city centre, "but everywhere we looked at it, there was a licensing issue, or it wasn't the right size, or the right shape, or didn't get much footfall." Then a little article in Gateshead News caught her eye. The newsletter championed the success of a developing business community in the railway arches along High Level Parade.

"So we went down and had a look. It was a summer's evening, people sat outside, quite buzzy. And we knew straight away, this is it, this is the spot. Business Gateshead were very supportive and we live in Gateshead so to be part of a community, contributing to our neighbourhood economy was important to us."

With a business start-up loan and a bit of savings they set about the fit out. "Lorrie and both our dads did the vast majority of the work at the weekends and in the evenings to keep the costs down. Even I did some bits," laughs the more bookish Charlotte.

Charlotte met Lorrie through Roller Derby. A sport Charlotte discovered while studying in Washington D.C. as part of her degree in American History. "Lorrie, with her background in construction, is very practical. She's great in a crisis, a problem solver, good at thinking on her feet. I can have thought of every possible scenario and then if one comes in that I haven't thought about, I'll panic. Lorrie will say, why don't you just do this? I think we really balance each other out."

Charlotte still isn't used to the unpredictability of retail. "My day is going to be whoever walks through the door. You'll have a pinot noir, which sits on the bar menu for a few weeks and nobody asks about it. And then someone will come in and order it by the bottle as does the next table and the next. And you're like, what's happened there? It's as if memo went out about pinot noir. Or you think August, we're going to sell a lot of rosé and then it rains the entire month. Come September and we think, rosé's probably going to die off now and then the sun comes out."

Being new to the industry can be intimidating. "When you are round the tasting table with people who have worked in the business for ten or twenty years you ask yourself if you belong? The benefit of being quite new on the wine journey is that I feel that we're taking people on a journey with us."

When I ask Charlotte, where do you hope that journey will lead? Her answer is simple. "We just want to be happy." And, as every student of American history knows, the pursuit of happiness is an unalienable right.

victoriaindigonovember.co.uk



#### When the days shorten, nights darken and frost begins to bite, a smooth glass of wine can awaken the senses.

The bitterness of winter often steers people towards full-bodied reds, with classics like Malbec and Shiraz fitting the occasion. Whether it's for a hearty dinner or a quiet evening curled up under a blanket, these are some wines you won't want to sleep on.

#### Malbec

Notably produced in the wine regions of Argentina, Malbec is a red grape known for producing rich, velvety-textured wines, whose inky colouring blends well with the shadows of winter. While the grape originated in Cahors, by the name 'black wine', Argentinian Malbecs are more fruitforward, with softer tannins.

Darker flavours such as cherry and blackberry strike the palate, along with moderate acidity to complement stews and braised meats. Bianche Generación Gran Corte is a midnight-black Malbec created in the Mendoza region of Argentina that achieved best in show at the 2022 Decanter World Wine Awards.

Blended with a generous amount of Cabernet Sauvignon and a hint of Merlot, this is a naturally balanced wine whose fruity aromas are seasoned with pepper and thyme.

#### Shiraz

Medium to full-bodied Shiraz - referred to as Syrah in Old World wine regions - is commonly associated with the areas of Barossa Valley in Australia and Northern Rhône in France.

This grape stands as the base of several wines, including Hermitage and St-Joseph. Predominantly, fruit washes over the palate, with hints of black pepper and spices creating an intriguing blend that would pair well with steak and roast beef. High alcohol levels make it a substantial accompaniment to warm winter meals.

#### **Cabernet Sauvignon**

Following in popularity, Cabernet Sauvignon is another frosty favourite. Often mistaken for Merlot, this red originated from the crossing of Cabernet Franc and the white Sauvignon Blanc, creating a woody yet fruity essence. Bordeaux wines commonly blend Cabernet Sauvignon with another grape, such as Merlot, to create exceptional tastes. The combination of bold flavours with the higher alcohol content contributes to the cosy feeling upon drinking.

#### Spiced wines

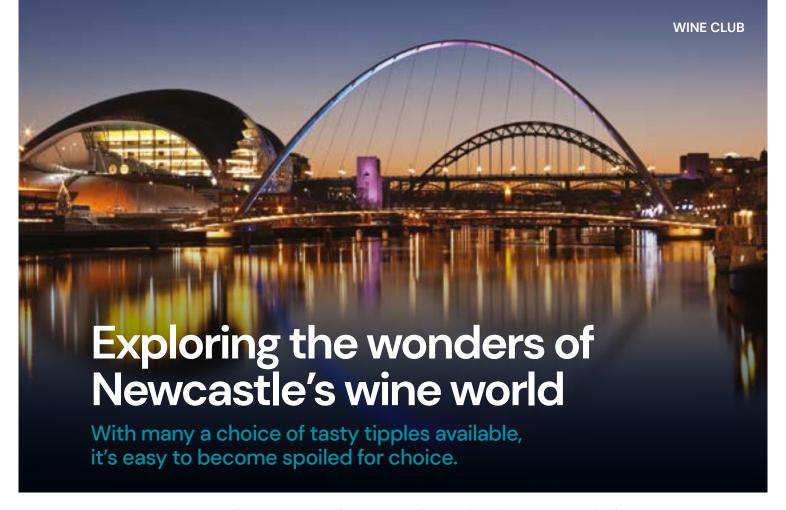
A firm favourite for the latter part of the year is spiced or mulled wines, particularly during the festive period. Originally created by the Romans, they are brewed by infusing an earthy red wine - Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon are apt choices - with spices, citrus and sweeteners to attain a smoky yet sweet mixture of your favourite reds. Being typical features of Christmas markets, mulled wine is the perfect remedy to guide you through the cold nights.

#### Chardonnay

Aside from reds, white wines such as the versatile Chardonnay can be fitting choices. With roots in the Burgundy region of France, this white grape commonly produces citrus pungencies, as well as softer, creamier flavours like vanilla. The golden hue of Chardonnay creates a festive aesthetic, enhancing the ambience that matches an elegant dinner party.

Sign up to Portfolio North's wine club here:





But for those who remain focussed on sipping a good glass of wine, whether in a sophisticated restaurant or stylish bar, Portfolio North bring you the top choices in Newcastle.

#### The Vineyard

Located in the heart of Newcastle on Grey Street, The Vineyard wine and cocktail bar is the ultimate upbeat area for those looking to try the delicacies of the wine world. Weekdays offer a more relaxed atmosphere, but the weekends bring a range of Latino, European pop, and old-school R&B music to uplift your drinking experience. With a broad selection of whites, reds, rosés, champagnes, and Proseccos, you won't be short of choice. For those feeling bolder, The Vineyard also provides champagne cocktails, including Kir Royal - a blend of bubbling champagne, Chambord, and raspberries.

thevineyardnewcastle.co.uk

#### The French Quarter

This established was opened in 2017 by founders Cédric and Catherine Boc-Ho with the aim to clear the stigma around French food so that customers can gain insight into their passion. They offer widely popular wines like Bordeaux and Provence, but also more unique vins oranges and apéritifs.

frenchquarternewcastle.co.uk

#### **YOLO Townhouse**

This quirky bar takes up three floors of High Bridge and aims to impress visitors with its minimalist décor and elegant setting. Real bricks walls and chic decorations make this a perfect place to enjoy a catch up with friends or spend a romantic evening with that special someone. With their uniquely named wines, such as Down Under Chardonnay and Luna Azul Merlot, there is a mixture of fruity and spiced flavours to suit every taste.

yolotownhouse.com

#### Kaltur Wine Bar and Restaurant

Based on Dean Street and High Bridge, Kaltur is a Spanish family and friend run business, the name originating from Kaltur in the Andalucia region of Spain. With a charming ambience and intimate setting, Kaltur is not one to sleep on. The wine list adheres to the restaurant's Spanish roots with its selection of vintage wines, along with a range of sherries for those wanting a change from the classic reds and whites.

kalturrestaurant.co.uk

#### Pleased to Meet You

High Bridge is home to another intriguing pick: Pleased to Meet You. This holds a bar and restaurant, as well as its very own Viceroy - a gorgeous gem that is available for private hire. Handpicked by their in-house sommelier, this venue has a flavoursome wine menu that includes whites such as the South African Acacia Tree Chenin Blanc and the Italian Soave Classico Suavia. They also serve the classic Argentinian Malbecs, along with champagne and Prosecco.

ptmy-newcastle.co.uk

#### St. Vincent

On Broad Chare, St. Vincent will be sure to fit the occasion. As wines are at the heart of this venue, they are said to be old-school, mainly originating from specially chosen independent producers. Visitors can enjoy wine from the glass or from the bottle in a setting that holds its own charm and charisma.

stvincentnewcastle.co.uk

Sign up to Portfolio North's wine club here:



24:2023



# A warm, winefilled welcome

Calling all wine-lovers.
Matfen Hall has upped its four-star offering with exclusive new wine tasting events to entertain and excite your palate.

Following months of anticipated renovations, Matfen Hall has opened its doors once again - this time with the addition of intimate wine tasting events for guests and corporate groups. Portfolio North Director, Cassie Moyse, attended the hotel's most recent vinofocused gathering.

Set in over 300 acres of parkland in rural Northumberland, Matfen Hall sits against a stunning backdrop and cuts an impressive figure in the countryside skyline. The boutique hotel has undergone significant transformation and reopened for guests in April of this year.

Their wine tasting events are designed to showcase the vast collection of exclusive wines on offer within its walls, while also providing a history and provenance of the estate and the wines that have been collected over the years.

Armed with an impressive wine cellar hidden under the Great Hall, the team



at Matfen are well-equipped with a vast range of unique worldwide wines to pair with its renowned food offering.

The evening was held in the hotel's Emerald Restaurant - a beautiful setting with views across the parkland. The room has recently undergone a facelift, along with the rest of the hotel, but the traditional features and atmosphere remain unchanged, ensuring a grand ambiance and backdrop, steeped in history.

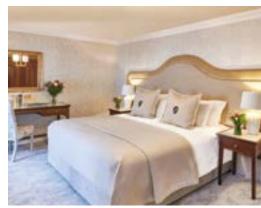
With green furnishings and large bay windows, the calming nature of the room extends out into the grounds outside. The high wood ceilings and gold detailing ensure the room feels grand and luxurious.

The event was an intimate affair, enhanced by the expertise of Matfen Hall's sommelier. The meal consisted of a delicious tasting menu, with each course paired with a specially-chosen wine from









around the world. The six-course menu included ingredients from local producers and farmers, too.

Each wine pairing complemented the individual courses, with bottles from Spain, Portugal and France offered to the evening's guests.

The evening was relaxed and friendly and the wine choices proved incredibly popular, with many sparking insightful discussions about the different tasting notes the night's grapes delivered and which vineyards they hailed from.

The staff were remarkably knowledgeable and provided plenty of information and fun facts about the wines and local food ingredients.

Following our final cheese course, we enjoyed a walk around the hotel's grounds. With over 300 surrounding acres, Matfen Hall is perfectly hidden away from the hustle and bustle of nearby Ponteland. Peace and tranquillity travels in

and out of the venue, across its gardens and impressive golf course.

To top off the evening, we enjoyed an overnight stay to fully immerse ourselves in the hotel's facilities and splendour.

Those who were lucky enough to live within 20 miles of the hotel, however, enjoyed their very own chauffeur ride home after their last drops of wine. A special added extra, courtesy of the hotel, to make its wine tasting events extra special.

Our bedroom was one of the hotel's luxury suites, recently refurbished to a high standard. With a spacious living area, Emperor-sized bed, marble baths and large chandelier, it lived up to its name. The epitome of luxury and a fantastic place to relax in, within the grandeur of the hotel.

When we arrived, we were greeted by a bottle of champagne and Lauden Chocolates, adding a special VIP touch to our stay and helping us draw to a close what was a fantastic and memorable tasting event for a selection of the region's lucky wine-lovers.

Matfen Hall, which is owned by the Walwick Estate Group, was recently nominated for 'Best Interior Hotel Renovation', following a multimillion-pound investment. The Grade II listed building underwent an impressive transformation, including a meticulous restoration of its Great Hall.

Additional dining areas have been created for guests, with the new mezzanine bar and Cloisters Restaurant being served by a state-of-the-art kitchen.

For more information on Matfen Hall, visit matfenhall.com



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